

**BY MARK VALDEZ**

ADAPTED FROM THE BOOK BY  
**GARY SOTO**

DIRECTED BY **MARK VALDEZ**

**THE BIG IDEA:**

*Acceptance and  
Community*

## WHAT THE PLAY IS ABOUT

Gary Soto's hilarious book comes to life in this charming new play about Chato, the coolest low-riding cat in the barrio. When a family of ratoncitos, or little mice, moves in next door, Chato invites them over for dinner. What they don't know is that they are on the menu! But things don't go quite as planned for Chato. The mice bring a surprise guest of their own who may be more than this cool cat can swallow.

## CONNECTION TO STANDARDS

**5.RL.3** Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

**WNL.COMP.N.2** Identify and compare products and practices (e.g., celebrations, dances, oral stories, food) typical of a culture with his/her own culture (as applicable).

**21st Century Skills:** Communication and Social Skills

### Start a conversation before the show:

- ★ What do you know about the story of *Chato's Kitchen*? How do you think the play that you are going to see will be different than the book version? How might it be the same?
- ★ What makes a community? What are different kinds? What communities are you part of?

### Start a conversation after the show:

- ★ What similarities and differences did you notice between the book and the play?
- ★ Have you ever moved to a new neighborhood, or welcomed someone new to your neighborhood? What are welcoming actions? Did you see these in the play?
- ★ Chato and Novio Boy love to cook together. What is something that you love to make with your family?
- ★ Which characters wanted to learn about others? How did they show it? Which characters were hesitant to learn? Why? How could you teach them to be more accepting?
- ★ What are some of the lessons the characters learn in the play? What do they learn about the place around them? What do they learn about themselves?

## TALK ABOUT IT

## WRITE ABOUT IT

### Journal entry or free-writing prompts for before or after the show:

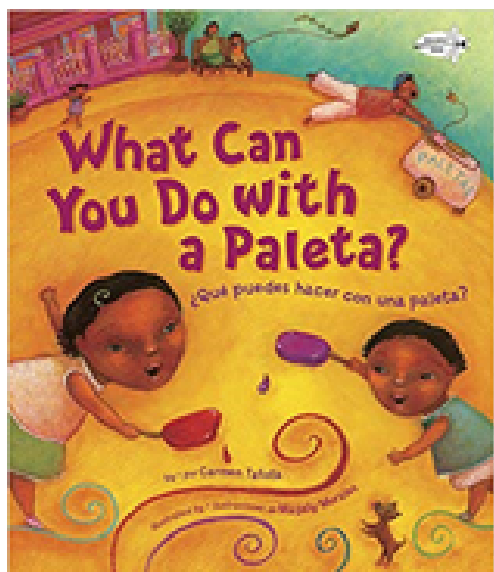
- ★ Have you ever made assumptions about someone different than you when you first met them? Why do you think you did that? Has someone made assumptions about you? How did it feel? What would you say to that person to get them to learn who you really are?
- ★ Chato expresses his culture through his music and cars and cooking. What are some ways you express your identity and culture? How could you share that with others?



Our amazing volunteer librarian Sharon Ewers has put together a great list of books connected to ideas and themes in *Chato's Kitchen*.

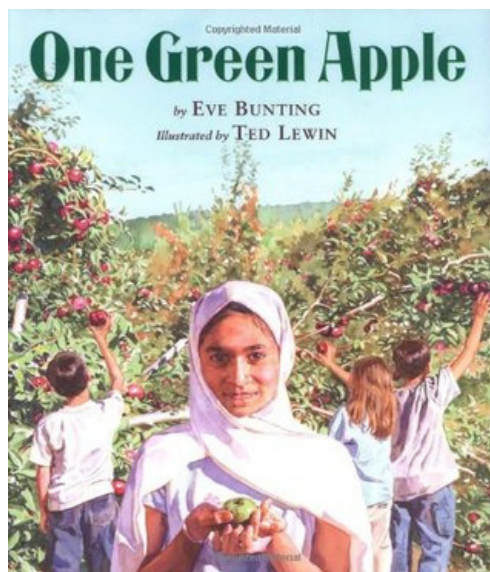
## READ ABOUT IT

Find the full list by going to <https://bit.ly/2YzIWry> and clicking Book List



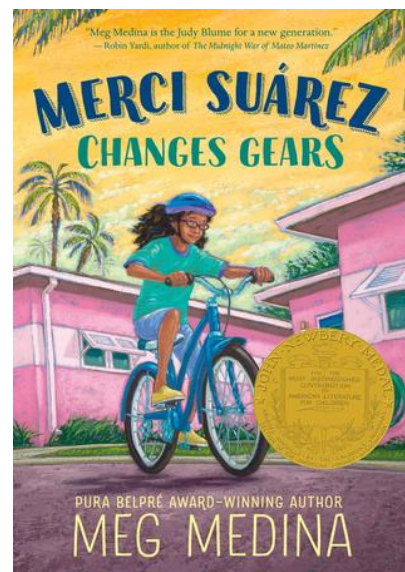
*What Can You Do with a Paleta?*

By Carmen Tafolla  
Grades PreK-2



*One Green Apple*

By Eve Bunting  
Grades 1-4



*Merci Suarez Changes Gears*

By Meg Medina  
Grades 4-7

## EXPLORE IT

### Close Reading Activity: Actors as Close Readers...

Theatre is a collection of choices. A choice is an artistic decision that is made to highlight a component of the character's personality, the story, or the theme. An actor's job is to draw evidence from the text to make choices that bring characters to life on stage.

### Activity: Vocal Choices

The next page of this document contains a scene from *Chato's Kitchen*. Read, or have the students read, the scene. Work together to decide on vocal choices for the characters based on the text. Play around with different choices to allow them to see how the meaning of the scene changes. Tell them to pay close attention to the text to find information about what the characters are feeling and doing. When making choices, think about pacing (fast or slow), pitch (high or low), emotion (what the character is feeling), and subtext (underlying meaning). Share the scenes with others!

The following scene from *Chato's Kitchen* by Mark Valdez to be used for educational purposes only.

**FATHER:** Here we are everybody! Our new home!

**MOTHER:** This whole street was all mice families back in the day...I didn't notice any other mice? You don't think we're the only ones on the block, do you?

**ROSIE:** This is our new house?

**FATHER:** Yeah. You have your own room...

**MOTHER:** ...and the school's nearby. You can walk there in 10 minutes.

**ROSIE:** I can't walk to school. This neighborhood is too dangerous.

**FATHER:** This neighborhood is not dangerous. Just give it a chance.

## Glossary of Spanish used in *Chato's Kitchen*

<b>vecino</b>	neighbor
<b>barrio</b>	neighborhood
<b>hola</b>	hello
<b>órale</b>	all right
<b>carnal</b>	bro
<b>simon</b>	of course
<b>mira</b>	look
<b>jefe/a</b>	the boss
<b>cena</b>	dinner
<b>grillo</b>	cricket
<b>¿qué no?</b>	right?
<b>ratoncitos</b>	little mice
<b>provecho</b>	enjoy
<b>vato</b>	dude
<b>arroz</b>	rice
<b>chorizo</b>	sausage
<b>chiv(it)a</b>	goat
<b>poll(it)o</b>	chicken



<b>mole</b>	a sauce made with chocolate and chili
<b>antojito</b>	snack
<b>relleno</b>	stuffed
<b>flan</b>	caramel-coated custard
<b>¿que onda?</b>	what's up?
<b>te watcho</b>	see you later

## LEARN ABOUT IT

### Art and Culture of East Los Angeles

**Murals are paintings created on the sides of buildings where everyone can see them.**

In East Los Angeles there are murals on almost every street corner! Artists use murals to tell stories, record historic events, and express their emotions.



Think about a mural you have seen here in Phoenix – what did you like about it? What story did it tell?



**“We’re like Picasso’s of the boulevard. The cars son our paintings and the streets son our museums.” – Chato in Chato’s Kitchen**

- A **lowrider** is a customized car with painted colorful designs used as a form of self-expression and art. It can be raised or lowered at the owner's command.
- The first lowriders were created in the 1940's and 50's in East and South Los Angeles. They became a source of pride and heritage for the Chicano community.
- Today, there are lowrider clubs all over the country, including here in Phoenix. Families work together to build and show cars, and the craft is passed from parents to children.

## Acceptance and Culture<sup>1</sup>

**Culture** refers to a group or community we share common experiences with that shape how we understand the world.

**Here are some tips** to build relationships with people from other cultures:

- Think about your own background first. Do you identify with a culture or cultures?
- Ask respectful questions about customs. Read about other cultures and histories
- Listen to people tell their stories. Notice and appreciate differences in communication.

### Activity: Connections

Pair up with another student, preferably with someone you don't know well. Take 5 minutes to interview each other to find out things you have in common. Come back to the group, introduce each other to the group with at least one thing you have in common. Discuss the activity after: What did you learn from this activity? How does this relate to acceptance?

1. Find more information on Community Tool Box at [www.ctb.ku.edu](http://www.ctb.ku.edu)



## ENGAGE WITH IT

Explore something that is exciting to you!

- ★ **Bilingual Story Time:** Identify your local library and find information on their bilingual story time programs to hear books and do activities in English and Spanish!  
<https://www.raisingarizonakids.com/free-family-fun/>
- ★ **Cook like Chato:** Find a fun cooking class near you. Or, with the help of a parent or guardian, look up some recipes and get cooking!  
<https://www.raisingarizonakids.com/2016/06/cooking-classes-for-kids-arizona/>
- ★ **Chato's Playlist:** Chato loves the old-school songs. Here is a suggested playlist of songs Childsplay chose to include in its production of Chato's Kitchen:  
*Lowrider* by War, *Whittier Boulevard* by Thee Midnights, *Tears On My Pillow* by Little Anthony and the Imperials, *A Change is Gonna Come* by Sam Cooke, *Soy del Pueblo* by Flor del Pueblo

## EXTEND THE EXPERIENCE!

Bring a professional Teaching Artist to your classroom to lead an arts-based, standards-driven lesson connected to the play:

(480)921-5750

[lberger@childsplayaz.org](mailto:lberger@childsplayaz.org)

## #SHAREWITHUS

Follow us on social media and share your comments and photos!

**#ChildsplayAZ**  
**#ChatosKitchen**



## ABOUT CHILDSPLAY

Childsplay is a nonprofit professional theatre company of adult actors who perform for young audiences and families.

Our Mission is to create theatre so strikingly original in form, content, or both, that it instills in young people an enduring awe, love, and respect for the medium, thus preserving imagination and wonder, those hallmarks of childhood that are the keys to the future.

For more information:  
[www.childsplayaz.org](http://www.childsplayaz.org)