



# Classroom Guide

Title: **Borreguita and the Coyote**

Author: **Verna Aardema**

Illustrator: **Petra Mathers**

**Theme:** Music, art, stories, and language can reflect culture — in this case, the culture of a Mexican-American community.

**Program Summary:** A little lamb becomes very clever to keep a coyote from eating her up. This book introduces viewers to Mexican American culture which is reflected in music, art, stories, and language. LeVar spends time with a family who have made guitars for three generations, visits a mural painter and her students who are working on self-portraits, and joins Los Lobos as they share their music and cultural ties.

## Topics for Discussion:

Discuss the concepts of “prey” and “predator.” Have students brainstorm lists of animals that are considered predators and animals that are typically their prey.

Discuss how it is possible that a lamb, an animal that is smaller and weaker than a coyote, was able to save herself from being eaten.

Discuss the meaning of “folktale” and the use of “retold by” in reference to the author. Distinguish this as a type of literature. Have students identify other folktales they have heard. Locate Mexico on a map as the source of *Borreguita and the Coyote*.

As appropriate to the classroom community, discuss students’ cultural traditions, especially those relating to the celebration of special days, family stories, foods, etc.

Discuss ways in which items from Mexican culture have become integrated into our lives — food, language, music, etc.

## Curriculum Extension Activities:

Obtain a copy of the book and read it to the class. It contains many words and phrases that are sound effects. Allow the students to supply the sound effects as you read the story.

Begin a glossary of Spanish words. List those from the program and those listed at the beginning of the book. Add familiar words such as color and number words, people and animal words, and common phrases. Keep the glossary in a place where it can be added to as students learn new words. Use Spanish words and phrases routinely in the classroom.



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Listen to some music by Los Lobos (who are featured in the full program). Have the students describe how the music makes them feel. Invite them to move creatively to the music. Listen to the music again and encourage students to try to pick out the instruments they hear.

Explore the question, “In what ways can we tell stories besides reading them in books?” Identify art and music as two ways. Working with the art teacher, locate photos of paintings or murals that tell a story and discuss them with the class. With the assistance of the music teacher, locate songs that tell a story and listen to and/or sing some of them. Discuss the story elements in the songs.

Working with the art teacher, locate some examples (prints or books) of Mexican art. Compare the features of the artwork with the endpaper illustrations in *Borreguita and the Coyote*. Look for similarities in motifs. Discuss with students how a book illustrator often does research in such areas as landscape, clothing, architecture, people, and cultural traditions, before doing the illustrations.

Have students make stick puppets of the lamb and coyote and scenery cards for individual storytelling. To make a scenery card, they will need a piece of tagboard, approximately 9 by 12 inches. They need to identify two scenes from *Borreguita and the Coyote* in which most of the action takes place. An outdoor scene showing the mountains and a water scene of the river would be good choices. Have them draw one scene on each side of the tagboard. Punch two holes at the top and tie string or yarn cut to a length that allows the scenery card to hang comfortably around the neck of the storyteller, horizontally across the child’s chest. Students then tell the story by holding a stick puppet in each hand in front of the scenery card, flipping the card around when it is necessary to change the scene.

Obtain a copy of the book *The Tale of Rabbit and Coyote* by Tony Johnston. In this book, Rabbit uses some of the same tricks (and a few more) that Borreguita uses to outwit the coyote. After hearing both stories, have the class make a chart comparing and contrasting the two stories.

Cinco de Mayo (May 5) is a Mexican holiday in celebration of a famous battle fought against French invaders on that date in 1862. The Mexican Army, although the underdog, won the battle, and Mexico retained its freedom. Have students compare how the people of Mexico celebrate Cinco de Mayo with ways that people of the United States honor freedom on the Fourth of July. Invite them to find out what they can about the history of the day and the foods, decorations, family activities, public



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events, special performances, and other characteristics of the fiesta surrounding Cinco de Mayo. Use a chart to record their findings about Cinco de Mayo on one side and their experiences with the Fourth of July on the other.

## **Book Reviews:**

*Diego* by Jonah Winter, illustrated by Jeanette Winter

*The Three Little Javelinas* by Susan Lowell, illustrated by Jim Harris

## **Supplementary Booklist:**

*A Day's Work* by Eve Bunting, illustrated by Ronald Himler

*The Little Red Ant and the Great Big Crumb: A Mexican Fable* retold by Shirley Climo, illustrated by Francisco X. Mora

*Family Pictures* by Carmen Lomas Garza

*My Mexico-México Mío* by Tony Johnston, illustrated by F. John Sierra

*The Tale of Rabbit and Coyote* by Tony Johnston, illustrated by Tomie dePaola

*Uno, Dos, Tres; One, Two, Three* by Pat Mora, illustrated by Barbara Lavallee

*Uncle Nacho's Hat* by Harriet Rohmer, illustrated by Mira Reisberg

*The Old Man & His Door* by Gary Soto, illustrated by Joe Cepeda

## **Related Themes:**

- cultural diversity
- food chain
- storytelling
- Spanish language

## **Related Reading Rainbow Programs:**

- Program #45 — My Little Island
- Program #85 — Sophie and Lou



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**About the Author:** Verna Aardema is a storyteller of traditional tales whose adaptations of cultural variants have won numerous awards. Her book *Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain* is a *Reading Rainbow* feature book.

**About the Illustrator:** Petra Mathers grew up in Germany and moved to the United States as an adult. She has no formal training in art, but states that she “has to be painting all the time to be happy.” Her work has also been featured on *Reading Rainbow* in Sophie and Lou.