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Activity Guide

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Chato Y Su Cena

ABOUT THE STORY

Chato, the coolest cat in East L.A., is thrilled when a family of plump mice move into the *barrio*. He and his pal Novio Boy invite the new neighbors for a feast that includes *chiles rellenos*, *enchiladas* and *chorizo con mice*! But, their plan to turn their quests into the main course goes awry when the mice bring along a surprise friend!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gary Soto is an acclaimed poet, essayist, fiction writer and film producer. The son of Mexican-American parents, Mr. Soto was born in Fresno, California and now lives in Berkeley, California with his wife, Carolyn and daughter, Mariko.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Susan Guevara has traveled all over the world. She lived in Paris and Belgium, where she studied with an impressionist painter and took courses at the Royal Academy of Fine Art. About her children's book illustrations, she says, "Illustrating books is a journey fraught with danger and excitement...It satisfies me to the bone."

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Discuss with the children what a *barrio* is and ask them what their neighborhoods are like – do they live in a city neighborhood, a suburb, or the country? Are there sidewalks, storefronts, lawns, or fields? What are the people like who live in their neighborhoods? Talk about what it means to be a good neighbor.

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension / Thinking Skills

- Why are the mice afraid of Chato?
- Why does Chato want to invite the mice to dinner?
- Why does Papa Mouse think they should accept Chato's invitation?
- Who is Chorizo? Why is he named that?
- What are some of the foods that Chato and his friends prepare?
- Why are the two cats afraid of Chorizo? What do they do?
- Do you think the cats will be friends with the mice?

Past and Imperfect Past

The past tense is used when an action is done and complete: Chato se bajó de la cerca. (Chato got down off the fence.) The imperfect tense is used when an action is ongoing: Los gatos estaban ocupados en la cocina. (The cats

were cooking in the kitchen.) Using the following sentences, decide whether to use the past or the imperfect tense. Have the children find other examples in the book.

- Los ratones se (quedaron, quedaban) petrificados.
- Chato se (bajó, bajaban) de la cerca.
- Se puso a silbar mientras (saco, sacaba) los frijoles.
- Después de cinco horas, (tuvieron, tenían) mucho hambre.
- Que hacen ahí? – (preguntó, preguntaba) Mamiratón.

Adjectives

Adjectives are words that describe nouns and give the reader a clearer mental image. For example, Chato is described as "el gato mas alto" (the tallest cat). Have children go through the book and find other adjectives. Then have them match these Spanish adjectives with the English. For extra practice, have children use each word in a sentence.

peludo	delicious	dulce	good
sabrosa	old	ocupado	busy
encantadoran	ice	enorme	sweet
simpatico	charming	pequena	small
antiguo	furry	buena	huge

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Social Studies: Cultural Foods

Bring in some of the foods that are described in the book to share with the children. Salsa, beans, avocados and guacamole are readily available. You might want to try making some of the dishes with the class as a cooking project. Here's a simple recipe for guacamole: 1 ripe avocado, juice of half a lemon, 2-4 tablespoons mayonnaise or sour cream, hot peppers to taste, if desired. Mash all ingredients together and serve with tortilla chips.

Science: Growing

Rice is a staple of Mexican cuisine, as it is of many other cuisines around the world. Have children work in small groups to find out where and how rice is grown and harvested. Children can present the information they find about rice to the rest of the class.

Music: Move to the Mambo

Chato feels the rhythm of the mambo. Find examples of mambo recordings from artists such as Tito Puente, Tito Rodriguez, and Machita Orchestras to play for the class. Encourage children to move or clap to the mambo beat so they can understand how Chato moves.

Mexican Traditions

Ask children to work in groups to find out more about Mexican culture and customs. Children can investigate a Mexican holiday of their choice, such as Cinco de Mayo, Day of the Dead, or Flag Day. Have them report on when and how the holiday is celebrated and what special foods and traditions are associated with it.