

LEVELED BOOK • J

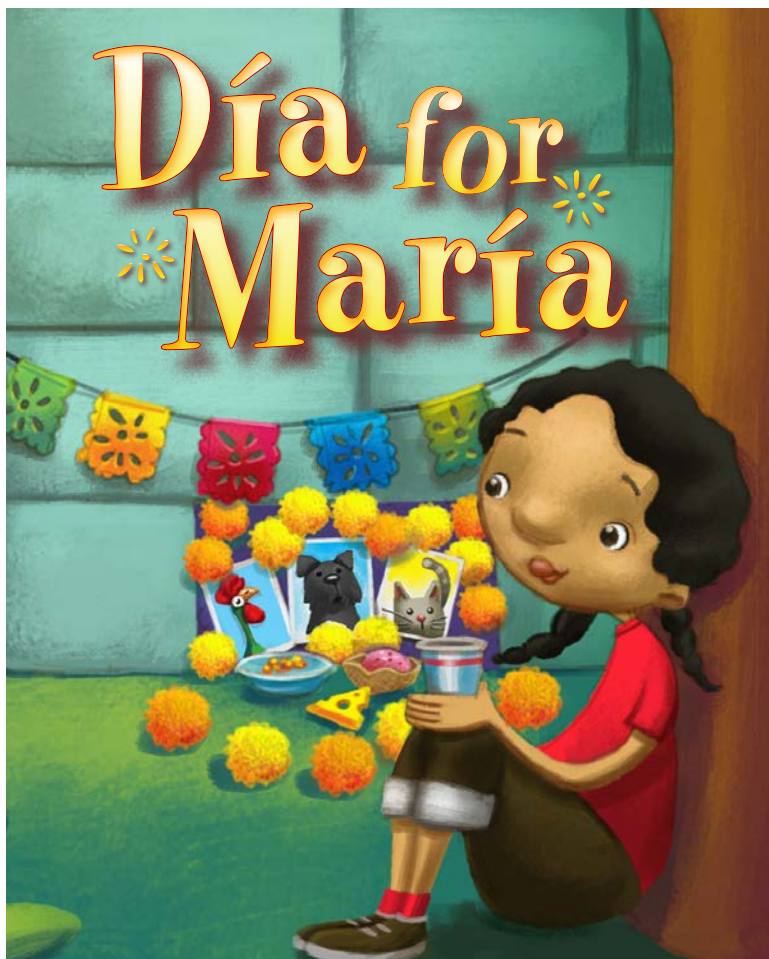
Día for María



**Multi
level
J•M•P**

Written by Katherine Follett
Illustrated by Carolina Farías

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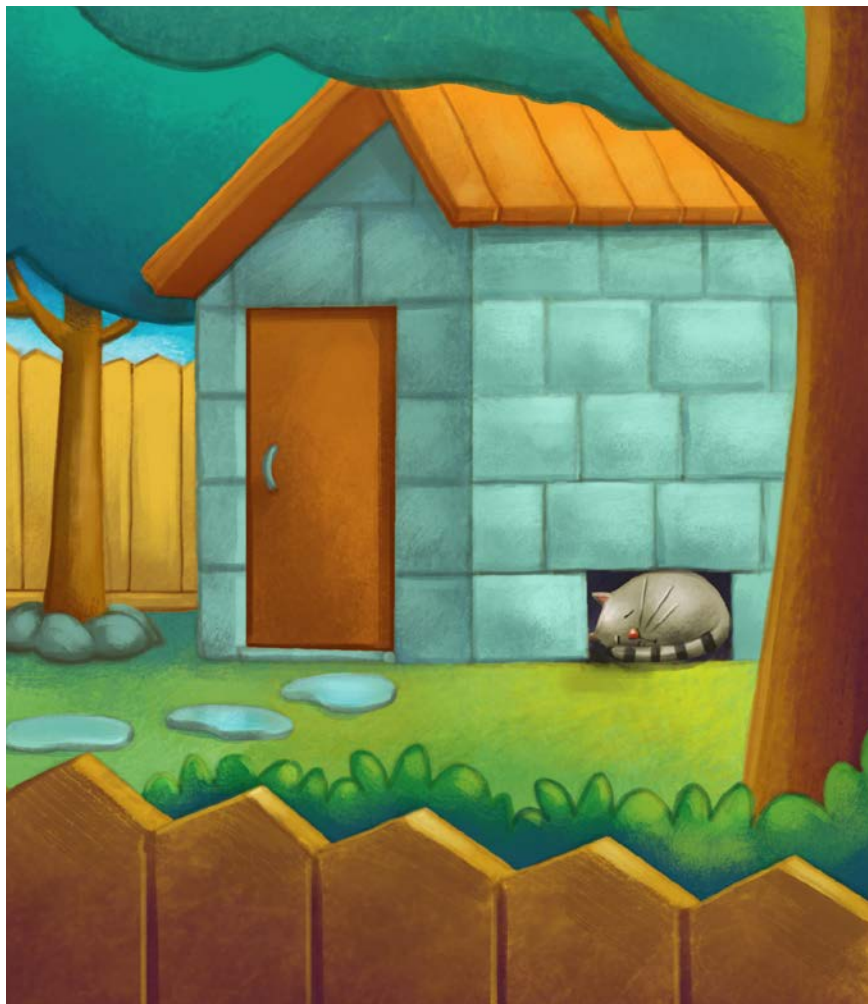


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Focus Question

How do María and her family celebrate loved ones who have passed away?



Ratona was a cat named Mouse.
She was small and gray, and had
a tiny squeaky meow.
She liked to sit in a hole in the
shed wall.

Ratona lived for a long time.

Eight months ago, she died.

I'm not sad anymore, but I think about her often.

One day, Mamá was setting up Tía Teresa's *ofrenda*, a special **altar**, for Day of the Dead.

Teresa **passed away** when I was a baby.

"Mamá, can we **celebrate** pets?"

I asked.





“This is mostly for family, though I suppose Ratona was part of ours,” Mamá said.

“We can celebrate her the day before,” I suggested.

What Is Day of the Dead?

Día de los Muertos, or Day of the Dead, is a Mexican holiday. It is celebrated around the world and usually happens on November 1 and 2. *Día de los Muertos* is a happy holiday. People celebrate family and friends who have passed away. People may build ofrendas, march in parades, visit graveyards, and make special foods. Some people believe that the spirits of loved ones visit during this time.



Later, Mamá and I went to the market in Puebla.

We got paper banners, **sugar skulls**, and **marigolds**.





On October 31, my friends came over.

Adriana brought her dog, *Sal*, or *Salt*.

She had a photo of *Sal's* sister, *Pimienta*, or *Pepper*, who died last summer.

Gloria had a picture of *Raúl* the rooster, a pet she had lost.

We set up the banners, marigolds, and photos where *Ratona* used to sit.

“Once, Pimienta stole a pound
of cheese from our cooler.
She got into the trash and ate
it later!
I have cheese for Pimienta,”
Adriana said.





“My mother makes pumpkin seeds
for my great-grandfather’s ofrenda.
Raúl jumped up and ate them!
My mother was so mad.
I brought some for Raúl,” Gloria said.

“If someone had ice cream, Ratona
went *Squeak! Squeak!* until you let
her lick the bowl.

I have ice cream for Ratona,”
I said.





I gave Adriana and Gloria
sugar skulls before they left.
I thought about funny little Ratona.



On the last day of celebrations,
my family walked to the graveyard.
Everyone from the area came.
There were fireworks and even
a band.

Tía Teresa's **gravestone** was
piled with flowers, sweet bread,
and candles.

Mamá smiled to herself.



“One day, María, your Tía Teresa heard a tiny squeak coming from the grass.

It was a little gray kitten.

Teresa named her Ratona,” Mamá said.

She continued, “When Teresa died, I took Ratona.

You loved her right away.

You reminded me of Teresa.”





Everyone was laughing and dancing.
I was too young to remember
Tía Teresa, but we had both loved
Ratona. That made me happy.
Mamá took my hand.
“I think it’s time to dance!” she said.

Glossary

- altar** (*n.*) a table or other raised area that is used for religious purposes (p. 4)
- celebrate** (*v.*) to do something special to honor an event (p. 4)
- gravestone** (*n.*) a marker at the head of the place where a dead body is buried (p. 13)
- marigolds** (*n.*) flowers in the daisy family with orange or yellow petals (p. 6)
- passed away** (*v.*) stopped living; died (p. 4)
- sugar skulls** (*n.*) brightly colored skulls made from sugar cane, used in the Mexican celebration of Day of the Dead (p. 6)

Words to Know

altar

celebrate

gravestone

marigolds

passed away

sugar skulls

Día for María
Level J Leveled Book
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Correlation

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| Fountas & Pinnell | J |
| Reading Recovery | 17 |
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Día for María

A Reading A-Z Level J Leveled Book

Word Count: 387

Connections

Writing and Art

María celebrates family members by telling stories about them. Write and illustrate a favorite story about one of your family members.

Social Studies and Art

As a class, discuss how the ofrenda is an important part of Día de los Muertos. Make paper banners and decorations for an ofrenda and set it up in your classroom.

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