

Focus Question:

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

Book Summary

Text Type: Fiction/Realistic

As Día de los Muertos is approaching, María and her family prepare to celebrate loved ones who have passed away, including one very special family member. *Día for María* is an engaging and entertaining story that provides readers with insight into this Mexican holiday, while giving students an opportunity to analyze characters and retell to understand text.

The book and lesson are also available for levels M and P.



Lesson Essentials

Instructional Focus

- ☐ Retell to understand text
- ☐ Analyze character
- ☐ Identify and use graphics
- ☐ Segment syllables
- ☐ Identify consonant *th* digraph
- ☐ Recognize and use quotation marks
- ☐ Identify and use suffix *-ed*

Materials

- ☐ Book: *Día for María* (copy for each student)
- ☐ Analyze character, quotation marks, suffix *-ed* worksheets
- ☐ Discussion cards
- ☐ Book quiz
- ☐ Retelling rubric

Vocabulary

Boldface vocabulary words also appear in a pre-made lesson for this title on VocabularyA-Z.com.

- **High-frequency words:** *day, gave, old*
- **Words to Know**
Story critical: *altar* (n.), *celebrate* (v.), *gravestone* (n.), *marigolds* (n.), *passed away* (v.), *sugar skulls* (n.)
- **Academic vocabulary:** *remember* (v.), *suppose* (v.), *though* (conj.)

Guiding the Reading

Before Reading

Build Background

- Write the word *celebrate* on the board and read it aloud to students. Explain that to celebrate something means to do something special to honor a person or occasion. Ask students to share examples of celebrations. Record this information on the board.
- Point out that different countries and cultures have different celebrations. Write *Día de los Muertos* on the board and read it aloud. Explain that *Día de los Muertos* is Spanish for *Day of the Dead*. Invite students to share any knowledge about the Day of the Dead. Discuss with students that it is a Mexican holiday in which people joyfully celebrate the lives of those who have died.

Introduce the Book

- Give students their copy of *Día for María*. Guide them to the front and back covers and read the title. Have students discuss what they see on the covers. Encourage them to offer ideas as to what type of book it is (genre, text type, and so on) and what it might be about.
- Show students the title page. Discuss the information on the page (title of book, author's name, illustrator's name).

Introduce the Reading Strategy: Retell

Explain to students that engaged readers stop now and then while they are reading to *retell* in their mind what has happened so far in the story. Stopping to retell the events of the story helps readers understand and remember what they are reading. Explain that when retelling a story or event, it is important that the details are explained in order. Use a book that the class has recently read or a familiar story, and demonstrate how to retell a story in correct order. Invite volunteers to help you with the retelling.

Introduce the Comprehension Skill:

Analyze character

- Explain to students that when reading a story, it is important to learn about and understand the main character. Write the word *Analyze* on the board

Guiding the Reading (cont.)

and read it aloud to students. Point out that when readers *analyze a character*, they are considering the character's words, actions, and thoughts. Create three columns on the board with the headings *Words, Actions, Thoughts*. Explain to students that as they read the story, they should consider the main character's words, thoughts, and actions, and what these traits tell about the character.

- Read pages 3 and 4 aloud to students as they follow along. Invite students to use information from this page to identify the main character, María. Then, have students identify María's words, thoughts, and actions. Record students' responses in the chart on the board and then discuss as a class what this tells them about María as a person.

Vocabulary

Have students turn to the "Words to Know" box on the copyright page. Discuss each word with students. Then, have students turn to the glossary on page 16. Explain that the glossary provides definitions for the vocabulary words in the book. Point out the use of each content word and academic vocabulary word in the book, and then use each word in a different model sentence. Have students work in groups to create posters for these words. Have them include on each poster the word and its part of speech, the definition, the word in an example sentence, and a picture illustrating the meaning of the word.

Set the Purpose

- Have students read to find out more about what María and her family do to celebrate loved ones who have passed. Write the Focus Question on the board. Invite students to look for evidence in the book to support their answer to the question.
- Have students make a small question mark in their book beside any word they do not understand or cannot pronounce. These can be addressed in a future discussion.

During Reading

Text-Dependent Questions

As students read the book, monitor their understanding with the following questions. Encourage students to support their answers by citing evidence from the book.

- *Why is María's mom setting up an altar for Tía Teresa?* (level 1) page 4
- *Why does María ask her mom if they can celebrate pets?* (level 2) page 3 and 4
- *What is Día de los Muertos?* (level 1) page 5
- *How do María and her friends celebrate their pets that have passed away?* (level 2) pages 7 through 11

- *How is the celebration for Ratona similar to the celebration for Tía Teresa? How is it different?* (level 3) multiple pages
- *How can you tell that Día de los Muertos is a happy celebration?* (level 3) multiple pages

Text Features: Graphics

Have students turn to page 5 and identify the sidebar labeled *What Is Day of the Dead?* Point out that although the story is fictional, the author has chosen to include this sidebar with facts about Day of the Dead. Have students work in small groups to discuss the following questions: *Why did the author choose to include this information? How does this information help you to better understand the characters in the story?* Invite each group to share their findings with the class.

Skill Review

- Have students retell the story from the beginning to a partner. Encourage students to use transition words such as *first*, *next*, *then*, and *finally* when retelling the story.
- Model analyzing character:
Think-aloud: *As I read the story, I paused often to consider the words, actions, and thoughts of the main character, María, so that I can better understand her. For example, I read that María asked her mom if she could have a celebration to honor her cat, Ratona, who passed away. On the basis of this information, I can tell that María is a thoughtful and loving girl. María also invited her friends to celebrate their pets that had passed away. María took the time to shop with her mom for the celebration, set up an altar, and shared stories about the pets with her friends. I can tell María is kind, inclusive, and a good friend. Pausing often while I am reading to consider the main character's words, actions, and thoughts helps me to better understand the character and to enjoy what I am reading.*
- Have students work in small groups to share one quality about María and one detail that supports this quality. Remind students to refer back to the text directly to show María's words, actions, or thoughts. Have groups share their responses with the class.
- Model how to complete the [analyze character worksheet](#). Remind students to use specific examples and details from the text.

After Reading

Ask students what words, if any, they marked in their book. Use this opportunity to model how they can read these words using decoding strategies and context clues.

Skill Review

Graphic Organizer: Analyze character

Review the analyze character worksheet that students completed. Invite volunteers to share their findings

Guiding the Reading (cont.)

with the class. Remind students that analyzing characters is one way to better understand and learn more about the characters in a story.

Comprehension Extension

Discussion cards covering comprehension skills and strategies not explicitly taught with the book are provided for extension activities.

Response to Focus Question

Have students cite specific evidence from the book to answer the Focus Question. (Students' responses should include: *María and her family celebrate loved ones who have passed away by creating and decorating altars, cooking special foods, telling stories, and celebrating in the graveyard.*)

Comprehension Checks

- **Book quiz**
- **Retelling rubric**

Book Extension Activities

Build Skills

Phonological Awareness: Segment syllables

- Explain to students that every word contains one or more parts. Point out that these parts are called *syllables* and one way to identify them is to clap out the parts in a word. Provide several examples for students using the following words: *dance, celebrate, Mamá, Teresa, happy, cat, altar.*
- Provide practice for students to identify the number of syllables in a word by having the class clap out the last names of several teachers in the building.
- **Check for understanding:** Have students work in small groups and invite each group to clap out the syllables in the first and last names of each group member.

Phonics: Consonant digraph th

- Write the word *month* on the board and read it aloud to students. Ask what sound they hear at the end of the word *month* and what letters make this sound. Underline the consonant *th* digraph.
- Explain that the letters *t* and *h* together make the /th/ sound. Write the following words on the board, leaving off the consonant *th* digraph: *thin, bath, thud, math, thick, sixth.* Invite volunteers to the board to add the consonant *th* digraph and read each word aloud as a class.
- **Check for understanding:** Review pages 4 through 8 with students and have them circle all of the words containing the consonant *th* digraph.
- **Independent practice:** Have students review pages 9 through 15 with a partner and circle all of the words containing the consonant *th* digraph.

Grammar and Mechanics: Quotation marks

- Read the first sentence on page 5 aloud. Ask students to identify which character is speaking and what the character is saying.
- Review or explain that *quotation marks* are used to show that a character is speaking. Have students circle the quotation marks in the first sentence on page 5. Have students locate the comma inside the quotation marks. Explain that the comma is placed inside the quotation marks to separate the character's words from the rest of the sentence.
- Invite volunteers to create examples of dialogue using the names of various classmates. For example: *Laura said, "It's time for recess!"* Record their sentences on the board and invite students to correctly add quotation marks to each sentence.
- **Check for understanding:** Have students work in small group to reread pages 8 through 10. Invite them to circle each set of quotation marks and identify which character is speaking and what is being said. Review each group's findings as a class.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the **quotation marks worksheet**. If time allows, discuss their answers.

Word Work: Suffix -ed

- Explain that a *suffix* is a syllable, or group of letters, added to the end of a word to change its meaning. An example of a suffix is *-ed*, as in the word *passed*. Point out that when the suffix *-ed* is added to a word, it shows that something happened in the past.
- Write the following words on the board: *jump, climb, invite, and talk.* Read each word aloud with students. Have volunteers add the suffix *-ed* to each word and use the past-tense form in a complete sentence.
- Read pages 3 and 4 aloud as students follow along. Encourage them to locate words containing the suffix *-ed*. Have students circle the suffix *-ed* and underline each root word. Review students' findings as a class.
- **Check for understanding:** Have students work in small groups to reread pages 12 through 14. Invite them to circle the suffix *-ed* and underline each root word.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the **suffix -ed worksheet**. If time allows, discuss their answers.

Connections

- See the back of the book for cross-curricular extension ideas.