



# EDUCATOR GUIDE

## Abuelita and Me

by Leonarda Carranza

illustrated by Rafael Mayani

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**GENRE:** picture book, children's fiction

**THEMES:** family, communication, language and language barriers, culture, community, intergenerational relationships, emotions and feelings, self-empowerment, racism and discrimination

**SUITABLE FOR:** Pre-K–2, Ages 4–7

**GUIDED READING LEVEL:** Fountas and Pinnell J

**LEXILE:** AD530L

**COMMON CORE STANDARDS:** RL.2.2.1,2,3,4,5,6,7  
W.2.1,3,5,6  
SL.2.1,1a,1b,1c,2,3,4,5,6  
L.2.2,3,4,4a,4b,4c,4d,4e,5,5a,5b,6

### SUMMARY:

Spending time at home with Abuelita means pancakes, puddle jumping, and nail painting. But venturing out into the city is not always as fun. On the bus and at the grocery store, people are impatient and suspicious—sometimes they even yell. Sad, angry, and scared, the story's young narrator decides not to leave home again . . . until a moment of empowerment helps her see the strength she and Abuelita share when they face the world together. Warm, expressive illustrations by Rafael Mayani highlight the tenderness in the relationship between the narrator and Abuelita.



Please remember that the suggested questions and activities within this educator guide are meant to serve as a starting point. Educators are encouraged to select items from each part of the guided inquiry process that work best for their style of teaching and will help them meet their goals when covering the topics in this book. Activities and prompts should be tweaked and/or reformatted to best fit your students, context, and community to ensure equity and inclusion.

## BEFORE READING THE BOOK

These activities build the context, introduce the topic of the book, and establish prior knowledge and interest.

1. Ask students if they are familiar with the term *abuelita* (grandma). If there are Spanish-speaking students in the group, ask them if they are comfortable sharing what *abuelita* means. If there are no students who are familiar or comfortable sharing what it means, then go ahead and explain the term.
2. Ask students if they have names for their grandparents in different languages. Make a list of the names students have for their grandparents. Use this as an opportunity to discuss the languages spoken by students and their families at home.
3. Ask students to draw a picture of their grandparents or, if they do not know or have grandparents, an older person who plays a special role in their lives. Ask them to share more about the people they have drawn: Where do they live? How often do they see them? What is special about the times they spend with them?
4. Introduce the term *accent*. We all have a way of speaking and that is an accent. People speaking the same language can have different accents. Sometimes, we are unaware of our accent because we are used to hearing it. Americans might notice a Canadian accent, but in Canada we might notice the different ways people speak English in Canada. Ask students if they are familiar with a French-Canadian accent or a Cape Breton accent. Even if we have different accents, we can still try to understand each other. Ask students about different ways that they can show each other they are listening. Ask them how they can try to understand each other even when someone's accent makes words sound unfamiliar, (e.g., asking parents/relatives for help, trying to learn new words, drawing pictures, acting out words, listening attentively).



5. Explain to students that everyone has a racial identity. Sometimes language connects us to a different country and race, sometimes it does not. Emphasize that all people have experiences with race, whether they are overt, hidden, unconscious, or implied. People might experience those encounters directly, witness them happening to others, or have opportunities or privileges as a result of their racial identity. Ask students if they have ever been teased or left out because of a part of their appearance, or if they have seen these things happen to someone else. Ask them how it made them feel. Emphasize that regardless of our race or the language we speak, we should all be treated with kindness and respect. Ask students what they can do if they are being treated unfairly or if they witness someone else being treated that way (e.g., asking parents/relatives or a trusted adult for help).

## WHILE READING THE BOOK

These activities check on comprehension, stimulate interest, involve readers in reflection as they read, and encourage consideration of other readers' reactions.

1. Help students understand the different emotions illustrated in the book and how they contribute to telling the story by giving them meaningful time to look at the details in the illustrations. Ask them what emotions are portrayed in the illustrations by the narrator and her abuelita as they play inside and run errands outside. As you read the story, ask students how they think the narrator feels at that moment. Why does she feel this way?
2. Encourage students to repeat the Spanish words from the story as you read. This may require practicing how to pronounce the words. Students may already be familiar with these words, but if not, use the opportunity for them to learn about new languages. You can also ask students if they know how to say the words in their own languages.
3. The bus driver yells at Abuelita and accuses her of trying to steal. Ask students to discuss what is going on and whether they think the bus driver is being fair by yelling. How do they think the narrator and Abuelita feel after being yelled at? In the past, have they had anything like this happen to them to help them relate to the characters in the story?
4. After the incident on the bus, ask students why they think the narrator is determined to stay inside. Examine the illustrations of the narrator staying indoors with students. They may point out that she is sad because of the bus driver, scared, or angry. Remind students that it is okay to feel all these feelings. Ask students what they can do if they are treated this way or if they see someone else being treated this way (e.g., asking parents/relatives for help or a trusted adult).

# AFTER READING THE BOOK

These activities inspire continued reflection and response to the text, bring conclusion to the experience of reading this particular text, and stimulate further extensions.

1. In the story, people find it hard to understand Abuelita. Ask students to think about a time when they were trying to say something, but the other person did not listen to them. How did it make them feel? The shopkeeper swats Abuelita away like she's a mosquito. Ask students what they think Abuelita is feeling. If they say she seems fine, ask them how they felt when they were ignored. What are the ways that they can show others that they are listening? How can they try to understand one another even when it is hard? Ask students to revisit the scene with the grocery clerk. What would they have done to try and understand Abuelita (e.g., asking parents/relatives for help, trying to learn new words, drawing pictures, acting out words, listening closer, asking her to say it slowly)?
2. Ask students if they have ever felt too scared to do something, and if yes, what helped them face that fear. Make a list of all the things that help them do difficult situations or experiences. Some examples might be to have someone be with you, believe in you, and love and encourage you.
3. Revisit the scenes where Abuelita was treated unfairly. Discuss why the scenes where Abuelita is mistreated are harmful using the language of race and racism. Reread the story, but this time, ask students to point out the moments where Abuelita and the narrator are experiencing racism. Ask them to rewrite those sections by saying how Abuelita and the narrator should be treated in each of the scenes. Using the students' responses, construct a list of guidelines for treating all people fairly and with kindness.



# EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

These activities are only a start. They are designed to support the goal of helping students explore the story and their own creativity.

## EMOTION PUPPETS

In the story, the characters experience various emotions: happiness, joy, sadness, frustration, fear, silliness, and anger. Using paper plates and popsicle sticks, teachers and students can create puppets depicting various emotions. Have the students hold up their puppets at the different points in the story where emotions are present. Talk about the importance of making space for all our emotions as a way of dealing with hard feelings. Ask students how they make space for those emotions and what helps them feel better (e.g., drawing, talking about their feelings with a trusted adult, playing, thinking about things that they are grateful for). Make a list that students can revisit.

## WORD WALL

The experience of a language barrier is another recurring element in *Abuelita and Me*. As you asked students about their home language when introducing the book, revisit the topic and create a “Word Wall” of keywords and phrases in your students’ home languages. Children’s language is strengthened in all areas when their home languages are brought into the classroom. Through this activity, multilingual students will gain confidence by acting as learning resources to both their teachers and peers. We can all learn from each other!

## SPECIAL GUESTS

When reading *Abuelita and Me*, students may be excited to talk about their own grandparents and family members. This is an excellent chance to bring their grandparents into the classroom based on the abilities and needs of the room. Building relationships with families is an important way to connect with the classroom and can provide enriching experiences for the students.

## FREEZE

Freeze is a fun and stimulating way to have students become active participants in transforming stories. Have children play different characters and scenes in the story. For example, someone can play Abuelita and the narrator going to the store and trying to find yuca, and another student can be the grocery clerk. Have students act out the scene as it is written. As the story progresses, any student can yell, “Freeze!” and then step into any of the characters and then change the story. Initially they can play out the story how it is written, but with each freeze, the story can change so that the community can become more loving and kinder to one another. A good way to explain a freeze is that it is like pressing the pause button on a remote control, taking a photo, or making a statue.