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Activity Guide

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Chato's Kitchen

ABOUT THE STORY

Chato is a cat – a hungry cat. When he sees a family of mice moving in next door, he invites them to dinner. The mice accept, not guessing that they are to be the main course. They ask if they can bring a guest, and Chato, expecting an extra mouse, agrees. But Chato is in for a surprise himself when Chorizo, the guest, arrives!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A finalist for the National Book Award for his adult poetry and winner of the Before Columbus Foundation American Book Award for his memoirs, Gary Soto is also the author of many novels and picture books for young people. He was born and raised in Fresno, California, and serves as Young People's Ambassador for the California Rural Legal Assistance and the United Farm Workers of America. *Chato's Kitchen* won the 1996 Pura Belpré Award for illustration. Gary Soto lives in Berkeley, California, where he is a professor at the University of California.

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

Ask children how they think mice, cats, and dogs interact. Explain that this book is about a cat that invites mice to dinner and gets a surprise guest.

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

- "Why does Chato invite the mice to dinner?"
- "What dishes does Chato prepare?"
- "What dish do the mice bring to Chato's dinner?"
- "What do the mice expect will happen at Chato's house? How does this differ from what Chato expects?" (*Compare and Contrast*)
- "Why does Chato change his plans?" (*Draw Conclusions*)
- "Do you think the mice, Chato, and Chorizo will become friends? Why or why not?" (*Make Predictions*)

Vocabulary

Write these verbs on the chalkboard. Have volunteers act out each verb. Then have the children work in pairs to look up the words in a dictionary and write the definitions.

vibrated	pranced	spiraled
cowered	suppressed	cruised

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Social Studies: Cultural Foods

The foods Chato and the mice prepare are Mexican. Have children look in ethnic cookbooks to find recipes for dishes from other lands and cultures. Ask them to copy a recipe for a dish they might like. Alternately, children can bring a recipe from home that reflects the culture their families are from. Collect all the recipes in a book of foods from other cultures.

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.

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.

INTERNET ACTIVITY

Before you send children to do research using any of the keywords listed below, you may wish to try them yourself to be sure the sites are suitable.

Mexican Food

Using the keywords "Mexican recipes", children can find interesting recipes for Mexican food on the Internet. They can search for the dishes Chato made, or they can look up other recipes. Ask them to copy or print out a recipe they might like to try. Collect the recipes in a class Mexican cookbook.