

# Share a Story, Light Your World Comparte una historia, ilumina tu mundo



## Book Discussion & Activity Guide

Jenni Arvin & Sylvia Garcia

# The Storyteller's Candle/ La velita de los cuentos



## Share a Story, Light Your World Comparte una historia, ilumina tu mundo

*The Storyteller's Candle* by Lucia Gonzalez. Illustrated by Lulu Delacre. San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 2008.

All over the world libraries are dedicated to the principle of sharing the gift of literacy with the people they serve. They house books containing the precious stories of world cultures. Some are written versions of tales which began as oral stories handed down through generations. Librarians also reach beyond their buildings with ingenious methods of delivering books to neighborhoods where access to libraries is limited or to remote areas where libraries do not exist. Many extend their library services with books and information on the Internet.

Pura Belpré introduced to the New York Public Library System, and thereby to libraries everywhere, the necessity of including all cultures in library service. She understood the importance of welcoming those who speak languages other than the one predominantly spoken in an area. She pioneered the concept of providing materials so that all children who come to the library may have the experience of seeing themselves, their language and their heritage reflected in words and pictures.

The objective of this program, intended for children in grades 1-3, is to honor the legacy of Pura Belpré by demonstrating the ways in which the richness of a culture is reflected in its literature. Children will see and create visual elements, and hear and repeat sound patterns and rhythms from the Latino cultures. This introduction to the contribution of Pura Belpré will foster an appreciation of how the blending of other cultures has enriched our national heritage. Her candle helped light the way to cultural understanding.



# The Storyteller's Candle/ La velita de los cuentos

## Introduction

### Buenos Días\*

(Opening song to the tune of *Frey Felipe* or *Are You Sleeping?*)

Buenos Días, buenos días,  
Cómo estás? ¿cómo estás?  
Muy bien, gracias,  
Muy bien, gracias,  
Y usted? ¿y usted?

Good morning, good morning,  
How are you? How are you?  
Very well, I thank you,  
Very well, I thank you,  
How about you? How about you?

(Note: Buenos tardes or Buenos noches may be substituted for Buenos Días.)

\*Song: Silberg, J., & Schiller, P. (2002). Buenos días. In *The complete book of rhymes, songs, poems, fingerplays, and chants* (pp. 62-63). Beltsville, MD: Gryphon House.

### Imaginary Ball Toss\*

The wonderful thing about an imaginary ball is that it can be any size or shape to fit all hands! Begin by asking the children to think about their place of birth. The leader will begin by holding the imaginary ball, saying his or her name and where he or she was born. The leader will "toss" the ball to a child and say, "¿Y tú, de dónde vienes? Where are you from?" That child then says his or her name, where he or she is from, and "tosses" the imaginary ball to another in the group. If a child does not know his birthplace, he may always say, "Aquí, here!"

\*Activity adapted from:  
<http://www.pdflibrary.info/en/ebook/Icebreaker%20Activities-1.html>



# The Storyteller's Candle/ La velita de los cuentos

## Introduction

### Meet Pura Belpré and author Lucía González



**Pura Belpré** was born around 1900 in Puerto Rico, but as a young woman she came to live in New York City. She eventually went to library school and became the first Puerto Rican librarian in the New York Public Library system. Working in a library branch in the area of the city where many Puerto Rican immigrants lived, she purchased books in the Spanish language, held bilingual story hours, and helped the children celebrate the holidays of their native land. She also wrote children's books which shared her native Puerto Rican folklore (Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Hunter College CUNY, n.d.). Today there is an award honoring the memory of Pura Belpré, which is given each year to Latino authors and illustrators whose children's literature best represents Latino culture.

Author **Lucía González** was born in Cuba but, like the children in the story, she came to live in the United States, and she understands the feeling of being in a new country with a new language. Like Pura Belpré, she grew up to become a bilingual librarian, puppeteer, and storyteller. Ms. González also works with organizations dedicated to making certain that library services are available for Latino and Spanish-speaking people ("Lucia Gonzalez," 2010).



Pura Belpré medal image from:  
<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/belpremedal/index.cfm>



# The Storyteller's Candle/ La velita de los cuentos

## Summary



Cold winters of the Great Depression are especially hard for residents of *El Barrio*, a neighborhood of newcomers who have left their native Puerto Rico in search of jobs in New York City. They long for Decembers in their balmy homeland.

Hilda and Santiago must daily pass the library, which they believe to be only for those who speak English. When a kind librarian visits their school with stories and puppet shows in English and *Español*, she assures them that the library is a welcoming place for all. She says that at the library someone will both speak with them and provide for them books in their language.

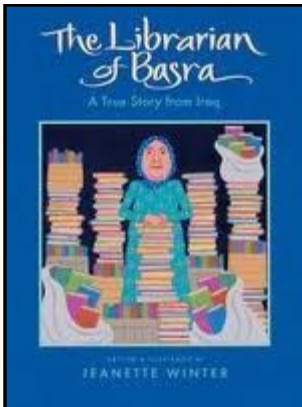
The children bring their family and friends to hear the librarian, Pura Belpré, light the storyteller's candle and tell the familiar tale of *Pérez and Martina*. When she suggests they bring their beloved celebration of *El Día de los Reyes* to her New York library, word spreads through the community. Together to transform the library into a tropical setting for a *fiesta* of traditional drama, dance, and music.

Illustrator Lulu Delacre's soft ambered drawings evoke the era. On each page she includes bits of newspaper clippings that capture information from the time period.



# The Storyteller's Candle/ La velita de los cuentos

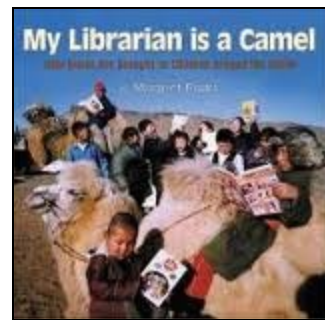
## Other Discussion Books on the Same Topic



*The Librarian of Basra: A True Story from Iraq* by Jeanette Winter. Harcourt, 2005.

Alia Muhammed Baker, the librarian of Basra, values her library's role as a place for the exchange of ideas and as the home of a historic collection. When war threatens, she is refused permission to move her treasured books to safety. She secretly begins to move books out of the library. As fire engulfs the town, she enlists the help of neighboring merchants. The books are saved by being moved first to a restaurant and then to storage in her own home and the homes of friends. Alia dreams of the return of peace and the opportunity to rebuild the Library of Basra.

*My Librarian Is a Camel: How Books Are Brought to Children Around the World* by Margriet Ruurs. Boyds Mills Press, 2005.

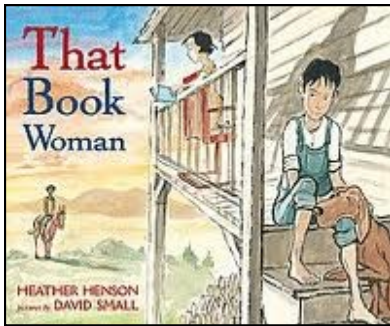


From a blue truck in Azerbaijan to a donkey cart in Zimbabwe, this story celebrates the dedication of groups and individuals bringing books to remote areas of the world. In Kenya camels haul books and a "tent library" to nomadic desert villages; elephants bring book cartons to isolated mountain areas of Thailand. By boat, van, bus, mail and wheelbarrow, the joy of books is shared with children who have no other sources of reading material. Some programs use book exchanges; others can only allow children to enjoy the precious cargo during the program visit. These mobile librarians live the belief that "Libraries are services, not buildings."



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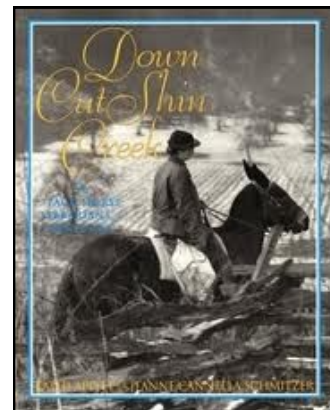
## Other Discussion Books on the Same Topic



*That Book Woman* by Heather Henson; Illustrated by David Small. Atheneum, 2008.

Living way up in the Appalachian mountains, Cal only wants to help Pap plow and fetch sheep. Unlike his sister, he wants no part of sitting "stoney-still a-staring at some chicken scratch." Then once each month and through all kinds of weather, a lady on horseback begins to bring books to their door. She asks nothing in return, and Cal marvels at her bravery. One snowy night he comes to sister with a book, and she patiently begins to teach Cal to read. On her next delivery, the Book Woman explains that this is how she is rewarded.

*Down Cut Shin Creek: The Pack Horse Librarians of Kentucky* by Kathi Appelt and Jeanne Cannella Schmitzer. HarperCollins, 2001.

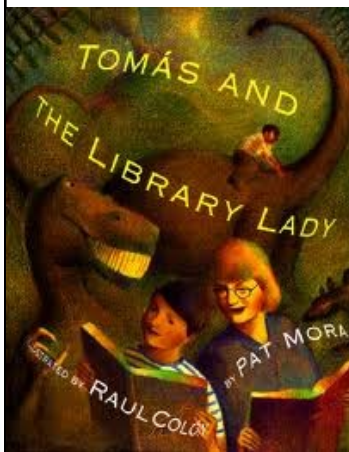


For older readers, this is the in-depth story of the Depression-era WPA project that placed Kentucky librarians on horseback to deliver books to isolated Appalachian schools and mountain cabins. These pack horse librarians saddled up each day, braving the weather and treacherous terrain. They brought books, magazines, health information and handmade scrapbooks of recipes and quilt patterns offered to them by grateful readers who wanted to give them something in return. One of WPA's most successful programs, the tough pack horse librarians provided for their isolated mountain region access to books and the vision of a wider world.



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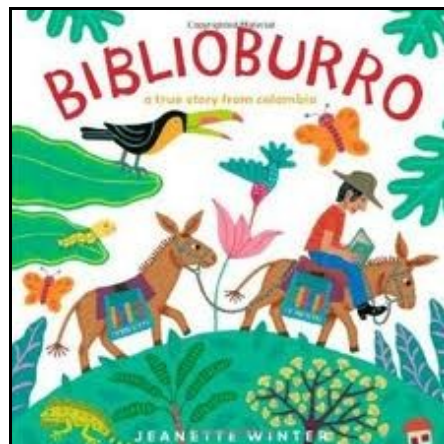
## Other Discussion Books on the Same Topic



*Tomás and the Library Lady* by Pat Mora; Illus. by David Small. Alfred A. Knopf, 1997.

Son of migrant farm workers, Tomás spends hot summers under a shade tree listening to stories told in Spanish by Papá Grande. Eventually Papá Grande sends him to a nearby library to learn some new stories. He finds a welcoming librarian who offers him books which transport him to places he has never seen. She allows him to take these stories home to share with his family at night. This is the true story of Tomás Rivera, who valued education and became a university chancellor and national educational leader.

*Biblioburro: A True Story from Colombia* by Jeannette Winter. Beach Lane Books, 2010



Wanting to share his book collection with others, Luis buys two burros, Alfa and Beto. Together they make the difficult journey to carry books to children in the faraway hillside villages of Colombia.

The children eagerly await his visits to hear the stories he shares and borrow books from the crates toted by his burros. Based on a true story, schoolteacher Luis Soriana understands the power of reading to change lives. Through donations his collection has grown to 4,800 books, and he brings the joy of reading to over 300 people each weekend.





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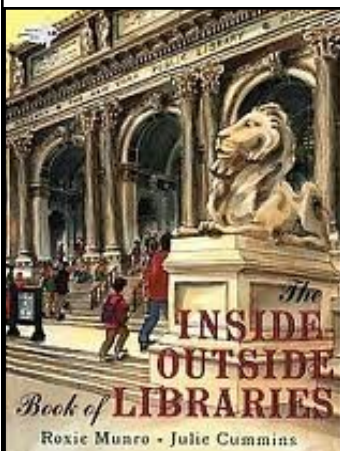
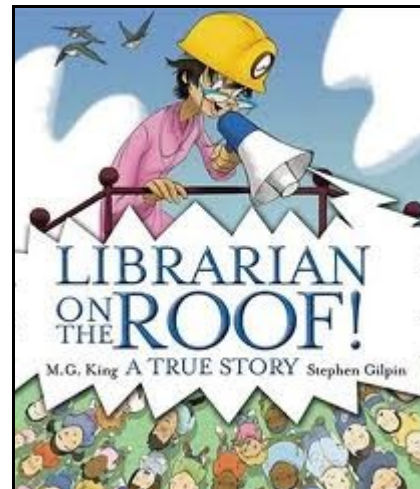
## Other Discussion Books on the Same Topic

### *The Librarian on the Roof*

by M.G. King; Illus. by Stephen Gilpin.  
Albert Whitman & Co., 2010.

Feisty new Head Librarian RoseAleta Laurell brings a fresh spirit to the oldest library in Texas. She renovates, updates technology, and adds books for her Spanish-speaking population. However, conventional methods fail to raise funds for a children's department to provide her

rural youngsters a first opportunity for exposure to books, reading, technology and art. RoseAleta takes her tent and ingenuity to the library's roof, vowing to camp there until the needed \$20,000 has been collected. RoseAleta braves fierce storms and winds, remaining at her post until the town rallies to gather twice the needed funds.



### *The Inside-Outside Book of Libraries*

by Roxie Munro and Julie Cummins  
Dutton Children's Books, 1996.

From the grandeur of the Library of Congress to the one-room library on Ocracoke Island, this is the story of how libraries across America serve the reading public. Libraries are found in homes, on Navy ships and in prisons. They lend books in Braille and in languages other than English. One library even lends tools!



# The Storyteller's Candle/ La velita de los cuentos

## Discussion Questions



- \* Have you ever visited a faraway place where everyone spoke a language that you could not understand? How did that make you feel? Would you be more comfortable if someone spoke a few words to you in your own language?
- \* How would you feel if your mother told you that you could not go into the library in your neighborhood because it did not contain any books written in a language that you could read?
- \* Have you ever moved to a new neighborhood where you did not know anyone? What things did you miss about the place you left? How might you welcome a newcomer into your school or your neighborhood?
- \* Do you think Pura Belpré would be honored to have her name given to a medal that is awarded for the best books written and illustrated by Latino authors or illustrators? Why would this make her happy?
- \* Do you enjoy visiting the library? What is your favorite part of visiting the library? Would you have enjoyed watching Pura Belpré light her candle and tell a story?
- \* How do you select books to borrow from the library? Do you like to find stories containing characters who look like you or have some of the same experiences that you have had?
- \* Do you tell stories at home with your family? What are some of your favorite family stories? Is there someone in your family who is a favorite storyteller? What makes that person's stories so interesting?



# The Storyteller's Candle/ La velita de los cuentos

## Activities & Crafts



### Make a Storytelling Candle\*

Supplies needed:

Construction paper  
Orange and yellow tissue paper  
Toilet paper rolls (one for each candle)  
Scissors  
A pencil  
Ruler  
Glue stick or tape

1. Cut a piece of construction paper the same length as the toilet paper roll.
2. Wrap the construction paper around the toilet paper roll and fasten it using a glue stick or tape.
3. Cut 2 12" squares of tissue paper: one from yellow, one from orange tissue. Turn them so that they are at a 45 degree angle to each other.
4. Placing your finger in the middle of the tissue paper, gather up the edges around your arm.
5. Remove your arm and carefully use the eraser end of the pencil to push the center of the gathered tissue paper into the toilet paper roll.
6. Fluffing the ends of the tissue which stick out of the candle will create a pretend flame.

\*Candle-making craft adapted from:  
<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/kwanza/candles/>



# The Storyteller's Candle/ La velita de los cuentos

## Activities & Crafts

### Tell a shared story

Libraries around the world hold stories written and illustrated from the traditions of the area. Many of those stories were first told orally, or aloud, and were passed in families from one generation to another. Pura Belpré was from Puerto Rico, where there is a long history of oral storytelling. While she was known for her puppetry and storytelling, she also wrote stories from her native country. One of those, *Perez y Martina*, has been retold by many authors.



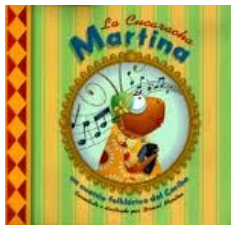
Belpré, Pura. *Perez and Martina : a Puerto Rican folktale*. Illus. by Carlos Sanchez. New York : Viking, 1991, c1960.  
High-born cockroach Martina must select from among many suitors the one she will wed.



Deedy, Carmen Agra. *Martina the Beautiful Cockroach: A Cuban Folktale*. Illus. by Michael Austin. Atlanta: Peachtree Publishers, 2007.  
Martina's *abuelita* devises a plan for her to select from among her suitors. She chooses a little brown mouse who also has a Cuban *abuelita*!



González, Lucía M. "Martina, the Little Cockroach." In *Señor Cat's Romance and other Favorite Stories from Latin America*. Illus. by Lulu Delacre. New York: Scholastic Press, 1997.  
Selecting him for the nice sounds he makes, Martina weds quiet Ratoncita Perez, who must later be rescued from a pot of onion soup.



Moreton, Daniel. *La Cucaracha Martina: A Caribbean Folktale*. New York: Turtle Books, 1997.  
Unhappy in her noisy urban setting, Martina chooses to wed a quiet cricket from among her many suitors. They move to the country to enjoy calm nights of making beautiful noises together.

Display these or various versions of other tales and discuss how a story can change by being retold. Have the children sit in a circle. The leader says "Once upon a time... *Había una vez...*" and begins with something familiar to the group. Go around the circle allowing each child to make a contribution to the tale. See how everyone's ideas change the story! Invite a family or community member to share a favorite story with the group.



# The Storyteller's Candle/ La velita de los cuentos



## Activities & Crafts

### Caribbean Musical Fun

#### Paper Plate Maracas\*

Supplies:

Large paper plate

Dried beans or rice

Crayons, marker, or paint

Stapler

- (1) Fold the paper plate in half and staple along the edges, leaving a small open space.
- (2) Decorate the plate with crayons, markers or paint.
- (3) Hold the plate up and fill with a handful of dried beans or rice.
- (4) Staple the edge of the plate so that it is completely closed.
- (5) Shake the maraca to the beat of the music!

#### A Conga Line Dance

Caribbean music combines African drum beats with music from Spain. The conga dance takes its name from the tall, narrow African conga drum (Petrillo, 2009, p. 117-118).

- (1) Some of the children form a line behind a leader, each placing hands on the waist of the person in front of him or her.
- (2) As music is played, the line moves around the room in the pattern: step, step, step, kick. The leader can use his or her free hands to move to the music.
- (3) The remaining children can keep the beat with simple rhythm instruments, such as their paper plate maracas.
- (4) After the first group has danced, the groups exchange places.

Suggested music: Los Yoyitos. "La Cucaracha-La Ratoncita."  
From *Los Merenguitos: Canciones Infantiles*. YOYO USA, Inc., 2006. (Audio CD)

\*Craft may be accessed <http://www.sproutonline.com/sprout/crafts/detail.aspx?id=db20680d-06aa-4d29-9d9a-997a01819c96>



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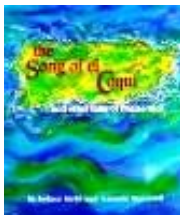


## Activities & Crafts

### The Beloved Coquí of Puerto Rico

On the island of Puerto Rico, home of Pura Belpré, lives a tiny frog called a coquí. Measuring about an inch long, it does not have webbed toes like other frogs and it is born from eggs rather than passing through a tadpole stage. Only the species of coquí found in Puerto Rico sing the sweet night song that is a distinctive "co-KEE coKEE," and many of the island children think of it almost as a lullaby. Pictures and more information about the coquí are available at <http://www.elboricua.com/coqui.html>

The coquí often appeared in the tales told by the first people of Puerto Rico.



*The Song of el Coquí and Other Tales of Puerto Rico* by Nicholasa Mohr and Antonio Martorel. Viking, 1995.

In this tale the gods of the indigenous Taina peoples of Puerto Rico were sad because the island was silent, so the tiny coquí were given their sweet night song.

### The Song of El Coquí\*

El coquí, el coquí  
a mí me encanta  
es tan lindo el cantar del coquí.  
Por las noches al ir a acostarme  
me adormece cantándome así:  
Coquí, coquí,  
Coqui-qui-qui-quí;  
Coquí, coquí,  
Coqui-qui-qui-quí.

The kokee, the kokee  
enchants me,  
It is so beautiful, the kokee's song.  
At night when I'm going to bed  
it makes me sleepy singing:  
Kokee, Kokee,  
Kokee-kee-kee-KEE;  
Kokee, Kokee,  
Kokee-kee-kee-KEE.

To hear the music for this song, "El Coqui" may be found on CD.



*De Colores and Other Latin American Folk Songs*  
by Jose-Luis Orozco, Arcoiris Records, Inc., 2009.

\* Song from: Berner-Grand, C. T. (2002). The song of el coquí. In *Shake it, Morena! And other folklore from Puerto Rico* (pp. 42-43). Brookfield, CT: The Millbrook Press.



# The Storyteller's Candle/ La velita de los cuentos



## A closing song\*

### Amigos, amigos, amigos

(Tono: *Tres ratones blancos*)

por Beverly J. Irby y Rarael Lara-Alecio

Amigos, amigos, amigos,  
amigos, amigos, amigos,  
¡Miren cómo juegan!  
¡Miren cómo juegan!

Yo quiero a mis amigos, y mis amigos me quieren a mí.  
Uno, dos, tres, y Bruno, ¡Como mis amigos no hay ninguno!

Amigos, amigos, amigos,  
amigos, amigos, amigos.

### Friends, Friends, Friends

(Tune: *Three Blind Mice*)

by Beverly J. Irby and Rarael Lara-Alecio

Friends, friends, friends,  
Friends, friends, friends.  
See how we play,  
See how we play.

I love my friends, and they love me.  
We love each other; it is fun to see.  
We're friends, and we are a family.

Friends, friends, friends,  
Friends, friends, friends.

\* Song from: Schiller, P., Lara-Alecio, R., & Irby, B. J. (2004). Friends/ Amigos. In *The bilingual book of rhymes, songs, stories and fingerplays* (pp. 91-95) Beltsville, MD: Gryphon House, Inc.

Image from: <http://www.clker.com/search/friendship/1>



# The Storyteller's Candle/ La velita de los cuentos

## Websites, etc...



### About Pura Belpré and the award in her honor

<http://www.reforma.org/PuraBelpre.htm> This is a concise biography (with photograph) of Pura Belpré, the first Puerto Rican librarian in the New York Public Library system.

<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/belpremedal/index.cfm> This is the Pura Belpré Award home page. A history of the award and the list of award winners is furnished.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D18azJ9Em8A> In a brief video, children's author Lucía González discusses the pioneering role of Pura Belpré in reaching out and bringing her Latino community into the library.

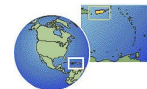
### Learn about and hear from Lucía González



<http://www.luciagonzalezbooks.com/author/index.php> Official website of Lucía González, author of *The Storyteller's Candle*.

[http://www.papertigers.org/interviews/archived\\_interviews/lgonzalez.html](http://www.papertigers.org/interviews/archived_interviews/lgonzalez.html) This is an extensive interview with Lucía González about her life, her writing, and her work on behalf of Latino families.

<http://www.colorincolorado.org/read/meet> The iColorín Colorado! site is a wonderful resource for families and teachers of English Language Learners. This link is for a page featuring video interviews with many of the best-known current authors of bilingual children's literature.



### Puerto Rican culture and wildlife

[http://library.thinkquest.org/CR0212700/final\\_website/stories.html](http://library.thinkquest.org/CR0212700/final_website/stories.html) Written by a third grader, this is a traditional Puerto Rican folktale telling the story of how the beetle got his beautiful colors.

<http://welcome.topuertorico.org/index.shtml> Contributed by an individual, this site features information about the geography, history, culture, people, economy, government, and foods of Puerto Rico.

<http://www.elboricua.com/coqui.html> This is information about the tiny Puerto Rican coquí tree frog. Many myths of the Taina people were created around the coquí.

Puppet image: <http://www.clker.com/clipart-29053.html>





# The Storyteller's Candle/ La velita de los cuentos

## Credits, References

### References

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<http://www.reforma.org/content.asp?contentid=43>

*Kwanzaa candles*. (2002). Retrieved May 22, 2011, from Enchanted Learning website: <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/kwanzaa/candles/>

Lucia González. (2010). *In other words*. Retrieved May 22, 2011, from <http://www.luciagonzalezbooks.com/author/index.php>

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Silberg, J., & Schiller, P. (2002). Buenos días. In *The complete book of rhymes, songs, poems, fingerplays, and chants* (pp. 62-63). Beltsville, MD: Gryphon House, Inc.

Stehulak, N. (2004). Imaginary ball toss. In *PDF library*. Retrieved May 22, 2011, from CYFERnet Parent/Family Editorial Board website:  
<http://www.pdflibrary.info/en/ebook/Icebreaker%20Activities-1.html>



# **The Storyteller's Candle/ La velita de los cuentos**

## **Credits, References**

**Book Discussion and Activity Guide**

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