



**Classroom Guide for  
Say Hola to Spanish SERIES**  
by Susan Middleton Elya  
illustrated by Loretta Lopez

### Reading Level

Interest Level: Grades K-5

Reading Level: Grades 3-4

(Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula)

Lexile® Measure: 570AD

Scholastic Reading Counts!™: 3.10

(Lexile® Measure and Scholastic Reading Counts!™ reading levels are for *Say Hola to Spanish* only)

Themes: Learning Spanish, Cultural Customs, Food, Animals, Circus

### Themes

Love of Learning, Determination, Prejudice/Discrimination, Freedom

### Synopsis

Using rhymed text in a combination of English and Spanish, these books provide lively and colorful language lessons. Each book introduces over 70 Spanish words in a playful and appealing way. Imaginative illustrations support the text enabling readers to use visual clues as well as contextual ones to learn new words. For example, “A dog is a *perro*, a cat is a *gato*” provide straightforward translations of words, while the lines that follow, “You drink from a *vaso* and eat from a *plato*” rely on humorous pictures (a dog drinking from a glass and a cat eating from a plate) for meaning. A glossary at the end of each book provides a useful summary of the words introduced including a definition and simple pronunciation guide.

*Say Hola to Spanish* includes a potpourri of basic words. *Say Hola to Spanish, Otra Vez (Again!)* contains many words for animals and foods, and *Say Hola to Spanish at the Circus* focuses on the popular event in its title.

### Background

Spanish explorers were among the first Europeans to explore North America and South America and constitute an important part of American history. In the twentieth century,

Spanish, the official language of most Caribbean and South American nations, became a widely spoken language in the United States as many new immigrants from Latin America came to live in the U.S. The *Say Hola* books offer the perfect pressure-free format for introducing students to basic Spanish words.

With more and more Spanish-speaking people living in the United States (according to the 2000 Census, there are 35.3 million Hispanics in the U.S., a 58% jump since 1990), the SAY HOLA books offer an inventive way to introduce non-Spanish-speaking children to reading and speaking beginning Spanish. The books also offer an excellent opportunity to enhance your class celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15 to October 15). Established by the United States Congress 20 years ago as Hispanic Heritage Week to recognize the contributions of Latinos to American life, this annual observance became Hispanic Heritage Month in 1989. Many communities in the United States celebrate with parades, festivals, and concerts. School celebrations include exhibitions of art, folk dance, and crafts. Authors, illustrators, and other speakers with Hispanic heritage often address students.

## BEFORE READING

### Prereading Focus Questions

Before reading any one of the books, you may wish to have students discuss one or more of the following questions as a motivation for reading.

1. How do you feel about learning new things? What do you think it would be like to learn a new language?
2. Whom do we know who speaks Spanish? How and where did these people learn Spanish? After pointing out that many people learn and speak Spanish in the United States, help students locate Spanish-speaking countries on a globe or world map.
3. Why might it be useful to know some words in Spanish?

### Teaching Tip

If you have students in your class whose primary language is Spanish, promote self-esteem and pride in heritage by inviting them to take the lead in reading the book aloud and in helping teach the Spanish words to the rest of the students.

### Setting a Purpose for Reading

Read aloud the book title. Invite students to speculate on what the word *hola* means.

Encourage students to examine the cover and to flip through the book. Read aloud one page of the book and help students discover the rhyme. Ask students to name some other stories or poems with rhyming text.

Show students the glossary at the back of the book. If necessary, explain that a glossary is similar to a dictionary and is an explanatory list of words used in a book. The words included in a glossary are usually technical or difficult words, or words in a foreign language. Ask students to locate other books in the classroom that have glossaries, such as social studies or science textbooks.

**READING, RESPONDING, AND LEARNING****Discussion Questions**

After reading the book, use these questions to generate discussion and expand students' understanding and comprehension. Encourage students to refer back to the text as needed.

1. Where and when might you use some of the Spanish words in this book?
2. Why do you think the author wrote the story in rhymes?
3. What are some ways Spanish and English are similar? What are some ways Spanish differs from English? Draw attention to accent marks as in *avión* and the use of "upside-down" exclamation marks and question marks in front of words.
4. Why does some of the art show people doing human activities and other pictures show animals doing them?
5. How do the author and illustrator use humor in the book?
6. For *Say Hola to Spanish at the Circus*: Have you ever been to a circus? How was the one you saw different from the one in the book? Why might the author and artist have included some animals not normally seen at the circus?

**Develop Visual Literacy**

Pose questions in which students must use the illustrations as well as the context to understand the words. For example, with *Say Hola to Spanish*:

- The text says, "you live in a *casa*." What is a *casa*?
- The text says, "you sit on a *silla*." What is a *silla*?
- The text says, "Your hair is your *pelo* . . . your grandmother's *pelo* is probably *gris*." What color is the grandmother's hair?

Encourage students to explain how both the text and the illustrations create meaning for the Spanish words.

**Strategies for Learning Words**

To help students review and practice the Spanish words in the book, try one or more of the following strategies.

1. Use the glossary in the book to help students develop correct pronunciation.
2. Have students work with partners to write each word on one side of an index card and its pronunciation and meaning on the other side. Students can use their cards to play a game in which they hold up a card for a partner to pronounce the word and give its meaning.
3. Students can work in pairs to take turns rereading pages from the book and leaving out the Spanish words. As one partner reads, the other must supply the missing words.

4. Make a word wall with the Spanish words from the book. Post a large piece of white paper on a wall. Invite students to write the Spanish words they learn on the paper. From time to time, revisit the wall and review the words written there. Encourage students to add other Spanish words they come across as well.

### **Reader's Response**

Help students personalize what they have read by encouraging them to respond to one or more of the following. Students may respond in sketchbooks or journals, or with oral discussion.

1. How do you feel about learning words in another language?
2. How is learning words with this book different from the way you learned English (or your primary language)?
3. What would you tell a friend about this book? Why?

### **Other Writing Activities**

Ask students to respond to one or more of the following writing activities.

1. Write a letter to a Spanish-speaking pen pal using some of the words from the book. Students might also communicate with Spanish-speaking pals via e-mail. They should learn how to type letters with accent marks if they use email.
2. Have students make a mini illustrated English/Spanish dictionary using the words from the book. You may wish to point out that many of the words given are nouns. Suggest that students leave room under each letter in their dictionary for additional Spanish words that they learn throughout the year.
3. Create a simple crossword puzzle using English definitions for Spanish words.

### **ESL Teaching Strategies**

The following activities may be used to help students who speak English as a second language.

1. If you have students who read and speak Spanish in your class, invite them to teach additional words to the rest of the class. Suggest that these students teach words that are requested by their classmates.
2. Pair students to make tape recordings of English words and their Spanish translations. Instruct students to pronounce the words, then use them in a phrase or sentence. Encourage students to listen to one another's tapes.
3. Direct students to other Spanish language books. Pair Spanish-speakers with English-speakers to read these books together. (You can find Lee & Low's Spanish titles at [www.leeandlow.com/Spanish](http://www.leeandlow.com/Spanish).)
4. If you have French- or Italian-speaking students in your class, work with them to note the similarities between their language and Spanish.

## INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

To help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas, introduce some of the following activities.

### Language Arts

1. Tell students that many words commonly used in the English come from other languages, including Spanish. Give as examples "rodeo," "plaza," "patio," and "lariat." Challenge students to find other English words borrowed from Spanish. They can use a print or an online dictionary to check the origins of words.
2. Have students make Spanish/English word charts using words from the books. Under the category Family, for instance, students might list words for grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncle, mother, daughter, son, mom, and father. Encourage students to come up with their own categories to include on their charts. Some suggestions are: animals, food, and kinds of transportation.

### Social Studies

1. Suggest that students work in small groups to research the dates and accomplishments of various Spanish explorers in the Americas. In addition to Christopher Columbus, students might find out about Ponce de León, Hernando Cortés, Francisco Coronado, and Hernando De Soto. Suggest that students make a time line or map showing when these Spaniards came to the Americas and where they explored. For information on Columbus, you may wish to direct students to the Library of Congress Web site exhibit titled "1492: An Ongoing Voyage." The Web address is: [lcweb.loc.gov/exhibits/1492](http://lcweb.loc.gov/exhibits/1492).
2. The dates of independence for a number of Latin American nations fall within Hispanic Heritage Month. These include Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, which all gained independence on September 15, and Mexico which celebrates its independence on September 16. Have students locate these countries on a map and have them research the circumstances of their independence.
3. To celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, plan a meal using foods mentioned in the books. These include burritos, cheeses, pears, strawberries, hot chocolate, peas, oranges, and lettuce.

### Art

1. After reading Say Hola to Spanish AT THE CIRCUS, students might have fun making circus posters with Spanish words identifying the animals and other acts. Plan to display these in a school hallway or other public area.
2. Have students make diagrams of the human body and label them with Spanish words from the books. These include the words for mouth, neck, hand, toe, knee, head, arms, legs, feet, teeth, nose, and hair.

### Music

Play the music of popular Spanish performers. Challenge students to listen for Spanish words they have learned.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR

**Susan Middleton Elya** is a native of Urbandale, Iowa, and now lives in Danville, California, with her husband and three children. Elya, who has a degree in Spanish and a masters in English from Iowa State University, taught Spanish for ten years to junior high school students.

Calling on her experience both as an educator and a parent, Elya conceived of *Say Hola to Spanish* and its follow-up titles as a way to make learning a new language fun. *Say Hola to Spanish* received a pointer review from *Kirkus Reviews* and was a Children's Book-of-the-Month Club Selection which called it "the most pressure-free, fun-filled way we've found to introduce youngsters to a second language." Elya's latest book published with LEE & LOW is *Home at Last*.

**Loretta Lopez** is originally from El Paso, Texas, and feels that her work is inspired by her personal experiences there. She says, "I relish the color, the flavor, and the humor inherent in much of the Mexican American culture." Lopez earned a degree in fine art from Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York, and currently resides in Montclair, New Jersey. In addition to the three *Say Hola* books, she is the author/illustrator of LEE & LOW's *The Birthday Swap*, which was a "Choices" selection by the Cooperative Children's Book Center.

Says Lopez of her work, "I consider my illustrations to be a celebration of the love I have for my cultural heritage, my native southwest, and life in general."

### Resources on the Web

For the latest reviews and awards related to *Say Hola to Spanish* visit:  
<http://www.leeandlow.com/spanish/hola.html>

For the latest reviews and awards related to *Say Hola to Spanish, Otra Vez (Again!)* visit: <http://www.leeandlow.com/spanish/hola2.html>

For the latest reviews and awards related to *Say Hola to Spanish at the Circus* visit:  
<http://www.leeandlow.com/spanish/hola3.html>

For the latest reviews and awards related to *Home at Last* visit:  
<http://www.leeandlow.com/books/homeatlast.html>

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<http://www.leeandlow.com/booktalk/lopez.html>

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**Book Information**

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THEMES:

LEARNING SPANISH, LATINO FAMILIES

*Say Hola to Spanish Otra Vez (Again!)*

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THEMES: LEARNING SPANISH, LATINO FAMILIES

*Say Hola to Spanish at the Circus*

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THEMES: LEARNING SPANISH, CIRCUS

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