

LOS GATOS BLACK ON HALLOWEEN

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by Marisa Montes, illustrated by Yuyi Morales
Themes: Halloween, Spanish, Poetry, Scary Creatures
Grade Level: PreK-3; Ages: 4-8
Running Time: 8 minutes

SUMMARY

It's Halloween night and everyone is getting ready for the party in the haunted mansion. *Los gatos black* are slinking out from the shadows, *las brujas* are flying in on their broomsticks, and *los muertos* are crawling out of their coffins. It is a spooky night indeed! As the ghosts and skeletons join their friends, the party really begins. The monsters throw a fabulous ball in the haunted hall and everyone begins to dance. Until... three knocks echo at the door. Who could it be? The creatures hide behind curtains and chairs, certain that the scariest of them all is about to come in!

OBJECTIVES

- Students will make flashcards for Spanish vocabulary.
- Students will learn about the Mexican holiday *Día de los Muertos*.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Discuss Halloween with students. Guiding questions:

- Do you celebrate Halloween?
- What do you do to celebrate?
- How do people decorate their houses for Halloween?
- Why do they decorate them that way?
- Why is Halloween scary?
- What is the date of Halloween?

After the discussion, tell students that they will be watching a movie about Halloween night. Encourage students to make text-to-self connections by watching and listening for things or events that they can connect to their own experiences of Halloween.

Introduce using context clues as a strategy for figuring out unfamiliar words. Define context clues as: *words and pictures around an unfamiliar word that help the reader understand the meaning of the word*. Show students examples of unfamiliar words from different texts and demonstrate using context clues to infer the meanings of the words. Emphasize that pictures are often powerful context clues. Tell students that they are going to watch a movie about Halloween that will contain some unfamiliar (to many), Spanish words. Provide students with a list of some of the words that they will hear and practice their pronunciation. Encourage students to watch

and listen for these words and to use the context clues in the film to guess what the words mean.

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Revisit the context clue strategy from the Before Viewing Activities. Review the word list that students received. Were they able to figure out any of the words? Give students a simple graphic organizer with spaces for 3-4 of the Spanish words. The organizer should have 3 columns: "Unfamiliar Word/Meaning/Clues."

Example:

Unfamiliar Word	Meaning	Clues
<i>brujas</i>	"guide their broomsticks high"	witches
	picture of witches on broomsticks	

As a class, choose 3-4 Spanish words to use context clues to understand. Fill in the graphic organizer, and use a Spanish/English dictionary or the glossary at the back of the book *Los Gatos Black on Halloween* to check the meanings.

Using the words from the graphic organizer, as well as some of the other common Spanish words in the book, have students make flashcards for the words. Provide students with index cards that are lined on one side and blank on the other. On the lined side, have them write the Spanish word. On the blank side, have them draw a picture of the meaning of the word. They can also write the word in English on the blank side if they prefer. Give students time to quiz each other using their flash cards. Assist with pronunciation when necessary.

Introduce students to the Mexican holiday, *Día de los Muertos*. Translate the name of the holiday, Day of the Dead, for them. Elicit background knowledge and predictions. Guiding questions:

- Does anyone celebrate *Día de los Muertos*? What do you do to celebrate this day?
- Why does the name of this holiday make you think of Halloween?
- What do you think that people do on this holiday? Why do you think that?

After students have shared some of their ideas, tell them that *Día de los Muertos* is a day celebrated by Mexicans and other Latin Americans to remember their relatives who have passed away. It is believed that on this day (November 2), that the souls of the dead can more easily visit the souls of the living. Emphasize that this is not a scary holiday, but a day that people look forward to as a way to remember their loved ones. Show students pictures or real examples of some of the symbols of the Day of the Dead, including: skeleton dolls, sugar or chocolate skulls, altars with offerings for the dead, and *pan de muerto* – a type of traditional sweet bread. If appropriate, ask a representative from the local Mexican American community center, or other organization to share more artifacts and further describe the practices of this holiday. Other resources are:

<http://www.mexonline.com/daydead.htm>

<http://www.holidays.net/dayofthedead/index.htm>

<http://www.inside-mexico.com/featuredead.htm>

Pablo Remembers: The Fiesta of the Day of the Dead, by George Ancona
Day of the Dead, by Tony Johnston

OTHER STORIES ABOUT HALLOWEEN FROM WESTON WOODS:

By the Light of the Halloween Moon, by Caroline Stutson, ill. by Kevin Hawkes

A Dark, Dark Tale, by Ruth Brown

Georgie, by Robert Bright

Teeny-Tiny and the Witch-Woman, by Barbara Walker, ill. by Michael Foreman

A Very Brave Witch, by Alison McGhee, ill. by Harry Bliss

OTHER STORIES ABOUT SPANISH CULTURE FROM WESTON WOODS:

Chato and the Party Animals, by Gary Soto, ill. by Susan Guevara

Chato's Kitchen, by Gary Soto, ill. by Susan Guevara

The Pot That Juan Built, by Nancy Andrews-Goebel, ill. by David Diaz

Too Many Tamales, by Gary Soto, ill. by Ed Martinez

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