



Charro Claus and the Tejas Kid

written and illustrated by Xavier Garza

About the Book

Genre: Fiction

Format: Hardcover, pages 40

ISBN: 9781933693248

Reading Level: Grades 3-4

Interest Level: Grades K-6

Guided Reading Level: P

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:
N/A

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

Themes: Bilingual, Holidays/Traditions, Latino/Hispanic/Mexican Interest, Mexico, Spanish, Texas

Resources on the web:

leeandlow.com/books/charro-claus-and-the-tejas-kid

SYNOPSIS

Let's welcome Santa's newest helper: his cousin Pancho, a farmer living down in South Texas who is so smart he speaks both Spanish and English. Back in the day, Pancho was a mariachi singer with a whole lot of style and a fancy sombrero. But as the years passed, Pancho got, well, a little older and a little wider all around. Then one night his primo Santa Claus showed up. Santa needed some help along the US/Mexico border. Pancho volunteered. And then, poof, Santa transformed Pancho into the resplendent Charro Claus with his incredible Flying Burritos. And Charro Claus, it turns out, even had his own surprise elf--his nephew Vincente!

All Christmas Eve, Vincente and Pancho deliver toys to the boys and girls on the border. Neither rain, cloudy skies, wire fences, or concrete walls keep them from covering every inch of their newly assigned territory. And they don't forget a single town or city. How could they? The border is their home.

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.

BACKGROUND

From Author's Note

"Like so many kids, I didn't even know that Santa Claus had a Mexican cousin. But that changed one day when I was around four years old. I was with my father at the grocery store in my hometown in South Texas – Rio Grade City. The store was having a special promotion. For not too much money, children could have their picture taken with Santa Claus. The prospect of seeing Santa Claus in the flesh was really exciting to me, so I stood in line with the rest of the kids.

As I got closer to Santa, however, I noticed right away that something wasn't right. Why was Santa Claus sitting in a horse – drawn wagon instead of his magical sleigh? He was also dressed in a very strange manner, even stranger than his usual red-and-white outfit. Even though he was wearing his traditional red jacket and trousers, those trousers were tucked neatly into black cowboy boots attached to a pair of oversized silver spurs. A grade serape decorated in the colors of the Mexican flag was draped across his left shoulder, and an oversized mariachi hat rested on his head.

"Who is this man?" I wondered. He certainly didn't look like any Santa Claus that I had ever seen. I grabbed my father's hand and told him in no uncertain terms that this man was an imposter – "Dad! This is not Santa Claus!"

My father turned to me and smiled. It was then that he uttered the words that served as the inspiration for this book.

"No mijo, it's true. This isn't Santa Clause," he answered me, "but he is his Mexican cousin."

"Santa Claus has a Mexican cousin?" I asked. How could this be? How was it possible? Who was this Mexican Santa Claus? Where did he come from? Did he deliver presents to all the children of the world too?

My father left all these questions unanswered. And they stay unanswered until the day when one of my elementary teachers played a song on the record player. It was the story of a Mexican Santa Claus!

A man named Lalo Guerrero had actually composed this song. It was called *Pancho Claus*. In a lot of way, the song was a Mexicanized version of *The Night before Christmas*. I loved that song and sang it over and over until I knew every word.

One year, I even met Pancho Claus. He delivered presents to all the kids who lived in my neighborhood. He did this by dropping tightly wrapped bundles from a low-flying airplane that zoomed over all our houses. These bundles were jam-packed with candies and toys.

Years later I found out about yet another Pancho Claus when I met actor Richard Reyes from Houston. He was in a musical based on a Mexican Santa Claus, a zoot suit-wearing good guy who drove around in a Fiesta low-rider delivering presents to all the kids in the barrio. As Pancho Claus, Richard Reyes has done a lot of work with young kids and the community through an outreach known as the Pancho Claus Art and Education Project.

After my son Vincent was born, I wanted to share with him the wonder and pride that I had felt when I first learned that Santa Claus had a Mexican cousin. I decided to write my own version of this tale, filtered through the many stories and encounters I had had with that esteemed celebrity. And I decided to give my Mexican Santa his own special name: Charro Claus! I got that name from my memories of the Mexican Movies that I saw as a child with my grandmother. Famed Mexican singers like Pedro Infante and Jorge Negrete would dress up as charros, Mexican cowboys who would sing captivating songs to beautiful women to win their hearts.

I wanted my little son Vincent to meet Charro Claus. What better way than to put him right into the story so he could become part of the mystery and lore surrounding Santa's primo? After much thinking and tinkering and drawing, the Tejas Kid was born. I told my wife Irma that our Vincent will have fun telling his friends that the boy behind the mask of the Tejas Kid.

Órale. So there you have it. These are all the things that led to the creation of the story of Charro Clause and the Tejas Kid. Why don't you come visit us down here in Texas right around Christmas time? If you do, maybe you can see Charro Claus riding alongside his cousin Santa Claus at the annual Holiday River Parade in San Antonio, or catch a glimpse of him in his magical burros flying over the roof tops of old Rio Grande City. You might even spy him and the Tejas Kid as they soar back and forth across the U.S. / Mexico border. If you do, make sure that you wave at the funny man in the large charro hat with the blinking Christmas lights. It will make him so happy.

And since you're in Texas, remember when you see him to call out, Feliz Navidad!" – Xavier Garza, author

U.S./Mexico Border

United States–Mexico Border: The US-Mexico border (<http://education.nationalgeographic.com/media/tijuana-border-fence/>) is an international boundary running from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Ocean, stretching 1,954 miles (3145 kilometers) and spanning six Mexican states (Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, and Tamaulipas) and four US states (California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas). In the United States, Texas has the longest stretch of the border of any state, while California has the shortest. There are forty-five border crossings with three hundred thirty ports of entry.

Christmas and Santa Claus in the United States

The Legend of St. Nicholas became popular in the United States near the end of the 18th century and he came to be known as Santa Claus. In the United States, Santa Claus is known for flying across the world and the country on Christmas Eve to deliver gifts with the help of his reindeer. (<https://www.history.com/topics/christmas/santa-claus>)

Please note that it is important to consider that not all students may observe Christmas and this title may not be reflective or inclusive of their culture. If necessary, ensure that parents are aware that this title will be read in class and that students will be learning about different cultures and holidays. Find ways to supplement what the meaning of Christmas is by teaching about the importance of kindness and what other holidays are celebrated around the world that are similar to Christmas. Edutopia's "The Christmas Dilemma" provides additional information and resources about culturally

responsive teaching and religious holidays (<https://www.edutopia.org/article/christmas-dilemma>). Colorin Colorado also provides ideas on integrating rich cultural content into their teaching about holidays that reflects students' lives (<https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/culturally-responsive-instruction-holiday-and-religious-celebrations>).

Noche Buena

translates as "good night" but refers to Christmas Eve. For Spanish-influenced cultures, noche buena is a big tradition and typically is a large feast with extended family members and friends. Noche buena is celebrated in many countries including Spain, Cuba, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. The meal has taken on the flavors and unique preferences of the countries and families, but often features roast pork and rice and beans as featured here in *The Road to Santiago*. Dominos like the cousins are playing in the book are a popular tradition for Cubans during noche buena. Many families attend Catholic mass during noche buena.

Mariachi (excerpted from *Finding the Music / En pos de la música* Author's Note)

More than two hundred years ago, musicians in Mexico began blending indigenous and Spanish musical traditions to create the mariachi sound. As Mexicans moved to the United States, they brought this style of folk music with them, and the art of mariachi continues to thrive in both Mexico and the US.... Sometimes described as the "musical voice of the people," mariachi music embodies the spirit of community. It is played at weddings, birthdays, funerals, baptisms, and other special moments in the lives of families and neighbors.... (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/finding-the-music-en-pos-de-la-musica>)

Musicians wear a three-piece suit, boots and custom embroidered ties, belts and buttons. According to the National Park Service, the mariachi uniform evolved directly from the uniform worn by the gentleman cowboys, or charros, in the Mexican rodeo. (<https://www.nps.gov/cham/learn/historyculture/mariachi-the-signature-of-mexico.htm#:~:text=The%20mariachi%20uniform%20evolved%20directly,charros%2C%20in%20the%20Mexican%20rodeo.&text=In%20traditional%20mariachi%2C%20instruments%20such,harp%3B%20and%20trumpet%20are%20played.>)

A mariachi ensemble usually includes violins, trumpets, a guitar, a bass called a guitarrón, and a vihuela. Photos of the instruments traditionally found in a mariachi ensemble can be found here (http://cityheightsmusicschool.com/?attachment_id=195). More information about each instrument is contained in this lesson plan (<https://www.teachervision.com/mexico/introduction-mariachi-music>). The Smithsonian article, "¡Que viva el mariachi!" provides more history about Mexican mariachi music and its origins (<https://folkways.si.edu/que-viva-mariachi-meaning-movimiento/latin-world/music/article/smithsonian>).

Mexican Cowboys

The history of charros is an important part of Mexican culture. Their history can be traced back to the Spanish conquest; ranch owners would outfit their cowboys with distinctive clothing which denoted status and wealth. (<https://tropicasa.com/blog/2018/08/07/the-history-of-the-charro/#:~:text=The%20history%20of%20the%20charro%20dates%20back%20to%20the%20Spanish,war%2C%20riding%20in%20private%20militias.>)

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

- What role does language play in staying connected to different aspects of students' culture?
- For non-Spanish speakers: Why might it be useful to know some words in Spanish?
- Tell students that this is a bilingual book in English and Spanish. If students speak Spanish and are comfortable sharing, ask them how it felt to read a bilingual book in both English and in Spanish. What was the experience like reading the book in English? What was it like in Spanish? Have students discuss the different translations.
- What role does music play in your life? What type of music do you like to listen to? Is there a type of music that your family prefers to listen to?
- Why do you think people look forward to holidays and seeing family or friends? What is special about spending time with family and friends? What do you like to do during the holidays?
- Invite students to share stories of their holiday traditions. What do they do to celebrate? How are holidays in the United States similar or different to the holidays they celebrate?
- Ask students to think about their family and what family means to them. How is family important to you? How do you interact with your family members? How do you help them?

You may want to have students journal their responses to these questions or pose the final question as a KWL discussion and chart so that you can refer back to it throughout and after the reading of the book to further their thinking on the topic(s).

Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1; Craft & Structure, Strand 5; and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

- **Book Title Exploration:** Talk about the title of the book, *Charro Claus and the Tejas Kid*. Ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?
- **Picture Walk:** Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, title page, and illustrations.
- **Encourage students to stop and jot in their reading notebooks during the read-aloud when they:** learn new information, see a powerful image, have an emotional reaction or an idea, have a question, or hear new words.

- **Have students write down their feelings in their notebooks during reading.** After reading, ask students why they wrote down those feelings and have them write journal entries about them.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- how Vincent and Tío Pancho help Santa Claus on Christmas Eve
- who is Charro Claus and how he is related to Santa Claus
- what is a mariachi outfit
- how does Santa Claus transform Tío Pancho from the beginning of the story to the end
- how holiday traditions can vary in different cultures
- what role mariachi music plays in the story of Charro Claus
- why the Texas/Mexico border is special to Tío Pancho and Vincent

Encourage students to consider why the author, Diana Cohn and Luis Rodriguez, would want to share with young people this story about Carlitos, his mamá, and their impact around in their community.

VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

Content Specific

abrazo, primo, chimney, tío, mariachi, trousers, burros, lucha libre, seguro, charro, ándale, dale gas

Academic

milking, stunned, frowns, sequined, grandly, clasps, magically, thumping, hurries

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages

and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite textual evidence with their answers.

Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. Where is Vincent spending Christmas eve? With whom?
2. Why is Vincent tired? What wakes him up?
3. Why is his uncle climbing up the ladder?
4. Who is his uncle talking to on the roof? What does he overhear?
5. Who is his uncle's cousin?
6. What outfit does Tío Pancho consider wearing to help Santa Claus out?
7. How does the mariachi outfit fit Uncle Pancho?
8. What condition is Uncle Pancho's guitar in?
9. What happens when Santa sprinkles the tiny colored stars over Pancho's head?
10. What condition is Pancho's wagon in before Santa fixes it?
11. What happens when Santa touches the burro's head?
12. What are the burros known as to the world?
13. Will Pancho ever run out of presents? Why or why not?
14. How does Vincent manage to sneak onto the wagon to go with Tío Pancho?
15. What does Vincent see while flying?
16. What happens at the first house Tío Pancho visits?
17. What does Tío Pancho respond to the little girl when she says he is not Santa Claus?
18. What is a charro?
19. What happens when Charro Claus plays the lullaby? What does Tío Pancho say the girl will think when she wakes up?
20. Where do Tío Pancho and Vincent deliver toys?
21. Did Vincent like helping Tío Pancho? What does Vincent say he wants to do every year?
22. What name does Tío Pancho give Vincent?
23. What are the names of the flying burritos?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. After reading the book, what is the significance of the title *Charro Claus and the Tejas Kid*?

2. What is one big thought you have after reading this book? Think about Tío Pancho and Vincent in the story and what they do on Christmas Eve. What is your takeaway from this book? What would you tell a friend about this book?
3. Why is this Christmas Eve special to Vincent? Why do you think that?
4. Who is telling or narrating the story? How would the story be different if Santa Claus or Tío Pancho were the narrator?
5. What do you think is the main idea of this story?
6. How do you think Vincent felt when he found out that his Tío Pancho is related to Santa Claus?
7. Why do you think the U.S. – Mexico border along Texas is so important to Tío Pancho and Vincent? What sentimental meaning does that area hold for them?
8. What role does mariachi music play in Tío Pancho's role as Charro Claus?

Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion. You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. **What do you think the author's message to the reader is?** Think about Xavier Garza's author's note. What do you think he wanted to tell young readers?
2. **Have students make a text-to-self connection.** What kind of connections did you make from this book to your own life?
3. **Have students make a text-to-text connection.** Did you think of any other books while you read *Charro Claus and the Tejas Kid*?
4. **Have students make a text-to-world connection.** What kind of connections did you make from this book to what you have seen in the world or on the news? Why did *Charro Claus and the Tejas Kid* make you think of that?

ELL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
 - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each

page, first orally, then in writing.

- Have students work in pairs to tell what they learned about one of the poems. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
- 4. Have students give a short talk about which spread they identified with the most from *Charro Claus and the Tejas Kid* and why.
- 5. The book contains some content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies.
- 6. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word. Also remind students to refer to the pronunciations and definitions in small print at the end of some poems when they encounter unknown words. Complete frequent checks for understanding

ACTIVIDADES EN ESPAÑOL PARA APOYO EN PROGRAMAS BILINGÜES Y DE INMERSION DUAL

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

For the CCSS in Spanish, please check out <https://commoncore-espanol.sdcoc.net/CCSS-en-Espanol/SLA-Literacy>

Estas estrategias se pueden usar en la clase de español o en la clase de inmersión dual igual cómo el resto de la guía de actividades.

1. Asigne el libro *Charro Claus and the Tejas Kid* a sus estudiantes. Coloque dos estudiantes juntos para leer el libro en voz alta. Compare las palabras en inglés y en español. ¿Cómo se comparan las palabras? Los estudiantes pueden practicar las palabras que tengan dificultad en pronunciar. Estudiantes pueden tener un cuaderno con las palabras difíciles para hacer referencia en el futuro.
2. Durante el tiempo de cuentacuentos, haz preguntas de comprensión a los estudiantes en inglés y en español para medir el nivel de comprensión en los dos idiomas. Preguntas pueden incluir: ¿de qué se trata el cuento? ¿Conectaste con uno de los personajes en el cuento? ¿Por qué sí o no? ¿Qué parte te gusta más en el cuento?
3. Elija palabras de vocabulario. Los libros ilustrados bilingües son una excelente manera para que sus estudiantes aprendan nuevas palabras de vocabulario porque el idioma se presenta en contexto. Mire a través del libro y asigne las palabras de vocabulario a las ilustraciones del libro. Si es posible, haga fotocopias de las páginas. Estudiantes pueden usar subrayadores en un color para inglés y un color para español para las palabras nuevas. También, puede recordar las palabras en un póster para referencia. Reflexione con sus estudiantes sobre cual palabras ya sabían y cuales palabras aprendieron.
4. En casa los estudiantes pueden pre-leer el libro con sus familias y puede sugerir que lean el libro juntos. Esto ayuda a practicar en leer y en el aprendizaje del vocabulario de los dos idiomas, inglés y español.

5. El uso de cognados puede ser útil en libros bilingües, en español y en inglés. En esta actividad estudiantes pueden buscar cognados en el libro. Los estudiantes pueden trabajar en parejas para identificar y formar una lista si las palabras son cognados verdaderos o falsos. Al final de la actividad es importante distinguir cómo clase la lista de los cognados verdaderos o falsos.

Estas actividades solo son sugerencias. Puede encontrar más recursos para apoyar las clases de inmersión dual y bilingües. Puede leer mas en (<https://blog.leeandlow.com/2013/11/04/using-dual-language-and-bilingual-books-in-third-and-fourth-grade/>)

Social and Emotional Learning

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4-6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1-3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4-6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of this book.

1. What is your favorite memory from a holiday celebration? What made that moment so special for you? What emotions did you feel during this celebration?
2. What Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) skills does Vincent exhibit over the course of the book? Some examples of SEL skills include problem-solving, grit and perseverance, and perspective taking? How does Vincent demonstrate these skills? Why was it important for him to demonstrate these skills?
3. How has a family member impacted your life? The story is told from the perspective of Vincent. How do you think his Tío Pancho inspired him? Provide evidence from the story to support your thoughts.
4. Which illustration in *Charro Claus and the Tejas Kid* best shows an emotion? Explain which emotion you think it shows. How does the image portray that emotion?
5. Choose an emotion that interests you: happiness, sadness, fear, anxiety, frustration, hope, perseverance and so on. Illustrate or act out what that emotion looks like in *Charro Claus and the Tejas Kid*.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

English/Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Have students analyze the use of similes and metaphors throughout the story.** How does author Xavier Garza use similes and metaphors in his writing? Where are they used during *Charro Claus and the Tejas Kid*? How is it used? Students can track their findings with sticky notes, and then share their findings with a partner or small group. Students can practice writing similes and metaphors in their own writing pieces after this activity.
- **Read another book about families and holidays: *Christmas Makes Me Think*** (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/christmasmakes-me-think>) and ***The Road to Santiago*** (https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-road-to-santiago/teachers_guide). Ask students to make connections between texts. What cultural traditions are discussed across texts? What about examples of more generalized family and community values? How do holidays allow people to spend time with their families? Provide students with a graphic organizer to differentiate between all 3 texts and then have students discuss the answers to the previous questions.
- **Conduct an Author's Study on Xavier Garza with his following title from Lee & Low: *Lucha Libre: The Man in the Silver Mask*** (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/lucha-libre>), How are the main figures similar? How are they different? What are their goals? What themes do both books have in common? How are the topics similar? How are they different? Provide students with a graphic organizer to differentiate the two titles, and then have students write an essay answering the previous questions.
- **Use *Charro Claus and the Tejas Kid* to teach descriptive writing.** Have students write a description of their favorite holiday tradition. Where would does this holiday take place? What is celebrated? When is this holiday? Encourage be as descriptive as possible. Students can accompany their writing piece with an illustration of their favorite holiday tradition. Reading Rockets' "Descriptive Writing" page provides additional resources and activities on how to support students' writing process in the classroom (https://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/descriptive_writing).
- **Encourage students to think about how this story would be different if told from Tío Panchos's perspective.** How was he feeling throughout the night? What was he thinking about? What made him happy? Have students write down their thoughts and share with their classmates.

- **Create a story map during reading that will help students follow the different elements in *Charro Claus and the Tejas Kid*.** Discuss the main components of the story (characters, setting, problem/solution, theme). You can do this together as a class on chart paper or you can provide students with individual copies of a blank story map organizer. You can find and read more about using story maps graphic organizers here (https://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/story_maps).
- **Encourage students to imagine they can interview the author, Xavier Garza.** Students should design interview questions they would ask the creators of *Charro Claus and the Tejas Kid* if they were on a talk show, news show, or radio show. What do students want to learn more about in terms of the writing process or the illustration process?
- **Have students read the Author's Note from Xavier Garza.** What did they learn from the Author's Note after reading the story? How did it make them think differently about *Charro Claus and the Tejas Kid*? Why did he decide to write this story? Have students write a reaction essay to the Author's Note, and present 3 follow up questions for Xavier Garza.

Social Studies/Geography

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Geography exploration.** Have students find the cities Tío Pancho and Vincent visited along the Texas / Mexico border (El Paso to Ciudad Juarez, Roma to Miguel Alemán, Rio Grande City to Camargo). For reference, have students start with a map of Texas to familiarize themselves with the cities Tío Pancho and Vincent visit. Have students write down the distance from each city in miles. How far are each city from each other? Have students reflect on their findings. Work with your school or public library to offer a variety of books on Texas and Mexico set today and in the past for students to explore the region, the histories, and the communities.
- **Research the history of Christmas and Santa Claus in the United States and other parts of the world.** PBS has a video and additional support materials for teaching about Christmas in the classroom (<https://ny.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/49bfe117-50fb-4bad-a86d-7887a8a90478/christmas-all-about-the-holidays/>). What does Christmas look like in the United States? What is Santa Claus known for in the United States? Is Christmas celebrated in other parts of the world? Is Santa Claus known worldwide? What do people refer to Santa Claus as globally? National Geographic has an article, "How Christmas is celebrated around the world" where students can begin their research (<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/how-christmas-celebrated-around-world>).
- **Study the history of Mariachis and Mariachi music.** What is the origin of Mariachi music? What instruments make up a mariachi? When did Mariachi music become popular in Latin America? What role does Mariachi music have in the United States? What is the history behind their outfits? Have students search for the answers of the previous questions. Here is a resource from the Smithsonian Museum to get students started on their study

(<https://folkways.si.edu/que-viva-mariachi-meaning-movimiento/latin-world/music/article/smithsonian>)

- **Have students read a book about Mariachi Music.** *Finding the Music/En pos de la música* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/finding-the-music-en-pos-de-la-musica>) is a Lee and Low title is a bilingual story about the tradition of mariachi music. Encourage students to take note of what they learn about mariachi music. What did they learn from reading this title? What did students think about the book? How does this title relate to *Charro Claus and the Tejas Kid*? Students can write an essay about the questions and reflect on what they learned about mariachi music from both books.
- **Research the history of the Charro, Mexican cowboys.** Have students research the answers to the following questions: what is the history of the charro? What is different about Mexican cowboys and American cowboys? How are they similar? What influenced the charro outfit? Students can discuss their findings with their classmates and discuss the answers to the previous questions. Students can watch the following videos to have an idea of what charros do and their traditions (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=03gQU-4Q0zI>) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jPW8bmbIALs>).

Art/Media

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10) (Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, and Range of Writing, Strand 10) (Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Have students create their own illustrations of their own outfit idea of *Charro Claus and Tejas Kid*.** What would they change about their outfits? What would they keep the same? Students can share their illustrations whole group.
- **Have students illustrate a feeling one of the characters experienced in the story.** What do they want to convey? What kinds of materials do they want to use? Have students share their pieces with a partner, small group, or whole class.
- **Play the song *Pancho Claus* for students** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=upKmOLOCWfI>). In the Author's note, Xavier Garza tells the reader about a Mexicanized version of *The Night before Christmas*, *Pancho Claus*. Have students listen to Pancho Claus by Lalo Guerrero and write down what they notice about the song then have students listen to *The Night before Christmas* and write down what they notice. What is similar about both songs? What is different about each song? Have students reflect on their findings with their classmates.
- **Consider having students come up with questions to interview the author and illustrator Xavier Garza.** What is his process behind creating the illustrations for a children's book? What medium did he use to create the illustrations? Why? What was it like to work on *Charro Claus and the Tejas Kid*?
- **Encourage students to select the illustration from *Charro Claus and the Tejas Kid* that resonated with them the most.** Have students write a reflection about the

illustrations chosen. What stood out to them? How did their illustrations make them feel? What did the illustrations make them think about?

School-Home Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **Have students talk with their families about what work goes into planning for the holidays that they celebrate.** What are some things they need to buy? What kind of food do they make? Do their families like to dance? What kind of dances could they do? What kinds of decorations could they put up? Students can share their findings with the class.
- **Have students talk with their families about what work goes into planning for the holidays that they celebrate.** What are some things they need to buy? What kind of food do they make? Do their families like to dance? What kind of dances could they do? What kinds of decorations could they put up? Students can share their findings with the class.
- **Have students research their family history.** Where were you born? Where were your parents and grandparents born? Who were your first relatives to come to the United States? What country were they from? What year did they arrive? For additional activity and lesson ideas, check out the "Family Ties and Fabric Tales" lesson plan from Teaching Tolerance (<http://www.tolerance.org/supplement/family-ties-and-fabric-tales/elementary-grades>). To use digital storytelling to capture immigration stories, explore Crossing Border with Digital Storytelling from the American Immigration Council (http://www.communityeducationcenter.org/sites/default/files/crossing_borders_with_digital_storytelling_teacher_unit_plan_0.pdf).
- **Read other books that discuss children's relationships with their families such as the titles in this collection** (<https://www.leeandlow.com/collections/family-diversity>). Create a chart comparing family relationships across different stories.
- **Have students bring home a copy of *Charro Claus and the Tejas Kid*.** Ask students to read with adults at home in English or Spanish. Encourage conversation and discussion after reading.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR

Xavier Garza

Born and raised in the Rio Grande Valley, author and lucha libre aficionado Xavier Garza is a prolific and enthusiastic author, artist, and storyteller whose work focuses primarily on his experiences growing up in the small border town of Rio Grande City and is a lively documentation of the dreams, superstitions, and heroes in the bigger-than-life world of South Texas. Garza has exhibited his art and performed his stories in venues throughout Texas, Arizona and the state of Washington. He has authored and illustrated fourteen books, and has received such prestigious awards as the Americas Honor Book Award in 2005, the Tejas Star Book Award three times from 2007-2010 and the Pura Belpré Honor Book award in 2012. In 2014 he was awarded both the NAACS Tejas Young Adult Book Award and the Texas Institute of Letters Children's Book Award. In 2019 Xavier Garza will be inducted into the prestigious Texas Institute of Letters. Garza lives in San Antonio, Texas with his wife Irma and their teen son Vincent.

Ordering Information

General Order Information:

leeandlow.com/contact/ordering

Secure Online Ordering:

leeandlow.com/books/charro-claus-and-the-tejas-kid

By Phone: 212-779-4400 ext. 25

By Fax: 212-683-1894

By Mail:

Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue,
New York, NY 10016

REVIEWS

"Vincent, a young Texan, is spending Christmas Eve on his uncle's farm near the Mexican border. When Santa shows up and asks Tío Pancho to help him out, he uses magic dust to transform an old mariachi outfit into a gold-and-silver sequined marvel and his old burros into lucha libre masked Flying Burritos. Vincent tags along, helping "Charro Claus" deliver presents along the border. The text is in English and Spanish, and occasional Spanish words are sprinkled throughout the English version. The full-spread paintings are bright and energetic, depicting a brunette-bearded and caped Tío Pancho and brown-eyed Vincent enthusiastically distributing toys. A cheerful purchase." – *School Library Journal*

ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

LEE & LOW BOOKS is the largest children's book publisher specializing in diversity and multiculturalism. Our motto, "about everyone, for everyone," is as urgent today as it was when we started in 1991. It is the company's goal to meet the need for stories that children of color can identify with and that all children can enjoy. The right book can foster empathy, dispel stereotypes, prompt discussion about race and ethnicity, and inspire children to imagine not only a world that includes them, but also a world where they are the heroes of their own stories. Discover more at leeandlow.com.