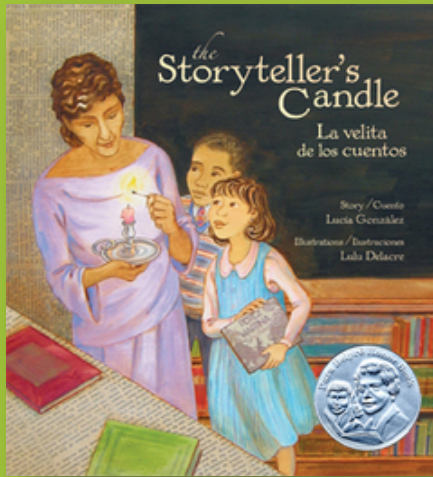


## TEACHER'S GUIDE



LEE & LOW BOOKS



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

written by *Lucía González*

illustrated by *Lulu Delacre*

## About the Book

**Genre:** Historical Fiction

**\*Reading Level:** Grade 3–4

**Interest Level:** Grades 1–6

**Guided Reading:** O

**Accelerated Reader® Level/**

**Points:** 3.9/0.5

**Lexile™:** 730L

\* Reading level based on the Spache  
Readability Formula

**Themes:** Librarians and Libraries,  
Mentors, Neighbors, Friendship,  
New York City, New York History,  
United States History, Immigration,  
Cultural Diversity, Puerto Rico,  
Empathy and Compassion,  
Optimism and Enthusiasm,  
Storytelling and Reading,  
Latino/Hispanic Interest, Historical  
Fiction

## SYNOPSIS

The winter of 1929 feels especially cold to cousins Hildamar and Santiago—they arrived in New York City from warm, sunny Puerto Rico only months before. Their island home feels very far away indeed, especially with Three Kings' Day rapidly approaching.

But then a magical thing happens. A visitor appears in their class, a gifted storyteller and librarian by the name of Pura Belpré. She opens the children's eyes to the public library and its potential to be the living, breathing heart of the community. The library, after all, belongs to everyone—whether you speak English, Spanish, or both.

Hildamar and Santiago spread the news that Spanish is spoken at the New York Public Library, much to the residents' surprise. Pura Belpré, the librarian, welcomes the newcomers to the story room with a traditional tale from Puerto Rico about Martina, a Spanish cockroach, and Ratoncito Pérez, a mouse. The familiar story and Spanish books on the library shelves comfort the children and their families.

The library announces that there will be a fiesta and play to celebrate Three Kings' Day on January 5. The community comes together to create the music, costumes, and stage. Pura Belpré concludes the event, like she does with all of her stories, by having the children blow out the storyteller's candle so their wishes will come true.

The award-winning team of Lucía González and Lulu Delacre has crafted homage to Pura Belpré, New York City's first Latina librarian. Through her vision and dedication, the warmth of Puerto Rico comes to the island of Manhattan in a most unexpected way.



## BACKGROUND

**On Pura Belpré (from the Afterword):** Pura Belpré was born sometime between 1899 and 1903 in the little town of Cidra, Puerto Rico, in a home full of storytellers. The stories she heard from her grandmother had been handed down by word of mouth for generations. These stories came with her to the United States in the early 1920s.

Pura Belpré began her career as a children's librarian when she became the first Puerto Rican librarian to be hired by the New York Public Library system. She had great passion for library work, and her passion lasted a lifetime. Pura Belpré was also a magnificent storyteller and puppeteer with a deep and evocative voice. Her story *Pérez and Martina*, first published in 1932, remains a classic of children's literature. In 1996, the Pura Belpré Award was established to honor Latino writers and illustrators whose children's books celebrate the Latino cultural experience.

Over the course of her long career as a writer, storyteller, and librarian, Pura Belpré inspired generations of young people in the communities she served. Pura Belpré wished to be like Johnny Appleseed—she had read about him in one of her books in Puerto Rico. And so, as a storyteller, she planted her story seeds across the land.

—Lucía González

**On the New York Public Library:** The New York Public Library was founded in the mid-nineteenth century. Today NYPL offers many classes and events, including Adult Learning Centers that help adults work on basic English and literacy skills. The Library currently includes more than 51 million items in research and circulating collections, among them materials for the visually impaired, English Language Learners, and studies in foreign languages (<https://www.nypl.org/help/about-nypl>). NYPL is one of the largest library systems in the world. Others include the British Library in the United Kingdom and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

**On English-Only Movements:** With various waves of immigration over the course of United States history, movements emerged starting in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to institutionalize English as the official language, discourage bilingualism, and stamp out minority languages. Currently the United States has no official language, although thirty-one states have passed legislation making English the official state language. For a thorough history on English-Only Movements, explore PBS' Official American series:

<http://www.pbs.org/speak/seatosea/officialamerican/>.

**On Puerto Ricans in New York:** According to the Library of Congress, immigrants from Puerto Rico have been settling in New York since the mid-nineteenth century. Immigration to New York ebbed and flowed throughout the time Puerto Rico was a Spanish colony, of the Spanish-American War, and when Puerto Rico became a commonwealth of the United States. Puerto Rico experienced a serious economic depression in the early twentieth century, spurring many Puerto Ricans to seek out a new life in New York City (<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/immigration/cubana3.html>). Leading up to the Great Depression, Puerto Ricans in New York competed with other immigrant groups for well-paying jobs. Language and discrimination provided significant barriers, causing many to settle for low-paying, unskilled factory work. Riots in the 1920s were the result of racial and economic tension. In 1937 East Harlem, Oscar Garcia Rivera Sr. became the first Puerto Rican to be elected to public office in the continental United States as a member of the New York State Assembly. According to the PBS Puerto Rico timeline, the largest wave of migration to New York occurred after World War II (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece/americancollection/woman/timeline.html>). For information on the Puerto Rican population in America today, check out the Pew Research Hispanic Trends Project: <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/06/19/hispanics-of-puerto-rican-origin-in-the-united-states-2011/>.



### VOCABULARY

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

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

Great Depression, Nueva York, Manhattan, barrio, Navidad, Titi, luceros, biblioteca, maracas, nenes, bodega, guiro, habichelas, vecinos, cucurachita, El Día de los Reyes

### Academic

harsh, tropical, chimed in, slender, countertop, declared, handsome, doubting, gallant, cockroach, applause, carpenter, preparations, impatiently, tiptoe, concluded, gentle, twinkling, storyteller

If your class has Spanish-speaking students, encourage them to volunteer to translate the Spanish words in the English text for the class. The book also provides a small glossary of terms on the last page for reference.

## BEFORE READING

### Prereading Focus Questions

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

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

1. Take a look at the front and back covers. Take a picture walk. Ask students to make a prediction. Do you think this book will be fiction or nonfiction? What makes you think so? What clues does the author/illustrator give to help you know whether this book will be fiction or nonfiction?
2. What is a librarian? What does a librarian do? What are some ways people use libraries? Why are libraries important? Why does almost every community offer some type of library? Share a memory you have of a librarian or a library helping you in some way.
3. What do you know about New York City (in the 1920s)? What are some challenges immigrants face when they move to the United States? Why might people immigrate to New York City from other countries? Describe how you felt when you when to a new place.
4. What do you know about Puerto Rico?
5. Why do you think I chose this book for us to read today?

### Exploring the Book

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

Read and talk about the title of the book. Ask students what they think the title, *The Storyteller's Candle*, means. Then ask them what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. Ask students to make a prediction on whether this book takes place now or in the past. What places might be talked about in the text? What do you think might happen?

Then take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, title page, introduction, English and Spanish text, illustrations, backmatter, dedications, author's note, illustrator's note, and glossary and pronunciation guide.

Read the illustrator's note and point out the newspaper used throughout the artwork. Have students discuss why the illustrator, Lulu Delacre, uses newspaper from 1930 in the book.



## Setting a Purpose for Reading

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

Have students read to find out:

- who Pura Belpré is
- how Pura Belpré makes the library an inclusive space
- how the community solves a problem

Encourage students to consider why the author, Lucía González, want to share this story with young people. Have students also consider why the text is presented in both English and Spanish.

## 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 evidence with their answers.**

### Literal Comprehension

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

1. What information is provided in the introduction? What is the purpose of an introduction?
2. Where was El Barrio? Who lived there?
3. How do the people of El Barrio feel about New York's weather? About living in New York? What challenges do people face who live in El Barrio?
4. How do Hildamar and Santiago feel about winter? Why?
5. What is Three Kings' Day? Who celebrates this holiday? When is it? How is it celebrated?
6. Why is celebrating Three Kings' Day important to Hildamar, Santiago, Pura Belpré, and the community of El Barrio?
7. On page 8, what does Hildamar ask Titi María? What does this tell you about Hildamar's life? How is her experience different from or similar to yours?

8. What does Hildamar and Santiago think of Pura Belpré? What important information does she give them?
9. How do the people in El Barrio respond to Pura Belpré? What is their impression of her?
10. What does Pura Belpré do to bring people from the community into the library? Why is it important to have Spanish books in the library?

### Extension/Higher Level Thinking

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

1. Think about the way the English and Spanish text is presented in the book. Where are the Spanish words? Where are the English words? Why do you think they are positioned this way?
2. In this book, sometimes the Spanish words are included in the English text. What do you think is the author's reason for doing this? How does the inclusion of Spanish add to the experience of reading Pura Belpré's story?
3. What kind of person is Pura Belpré? Think about what she says and does. Think about her career and contributions to her community. Does the author want you to aspire to be like Belpré or not?
4. What is "Navidad"? What clues in the text help you figure out what the word means?
5. Why does Pura Belpré use a candle every time she shares a story? How does it set the mood for the children? What makes the candle important to the story? What rituals do you, your family, or classroom have when you set out to read?
6. Take a close look at Lulu Delacre's illustrations. What unique material does she use? How does this choice effect the mood and tone of the story?
7. What is special about the first story Pura Belpré tells the children in the book? Why does her story impact Hildamar and Santiago particularly?
8. Reread page 16. Why do you think the adults have doubts about going to the library? What is holding them back?



“The well-written text is presented in both Spanish and English. . . . Sepia tones evoke the time period and the setting. A lovely offering about the role of librarians in the lives of children.”  
**–School Library Journal**

★ “With this simple and affectionate story, González and Delacre. . . broadcast Belpré’s welcome message to new generations of immigrants.”  
**–Publishers Weekly, starred review**

“This is a warm, winning introduction to the work of the first Puerto Rican librarian in New York, whose name was given to the [ALA]’s annual award that honors Latino authors and illustrators.”  
**–Booklist**

9. What is the author’s message in the story? What do the adults learn in the story? What do the children learn?
10. Why do you think the New York Public Library wanted to hire Pura Belpré? How does she change the library?
11. Why do you think it is important for libraries to offer books, resources, and spaces for many languages and cultures? How would our communities be affected if languages other than English were not allowed?

### Reader’s Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)  
 (Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3, Craft & Structure, Strands 4, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9)

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. Why does the author, Lucía Gonzalez, choose to call this story *The Storyteller’s Candle*? Do you think this is a good title for a book about Pura Belpré? Why?
2. Which parts of the book do you connect to the most? Why? Describe a time a librarian or library helped you in some way.

3. Why are libraries important to a community? What do you think would happen to your community if there was no library? Who benefits from a library? What does a library provide? What can someone do at a library in addition to reading books?
4. Read the author’s note on the next to last page of the book. Why is Pura Belpré an important historical figure? How did her actions and choices make a positive change in her community? How might El Barrio have been different if Pura Belpré hadn’t worked at the library there?
5. What do you think the children, Hildamar and Santiago, wish for when they blew out the candle? What do you think the adults wish for? What would you wish for if you were given the chance? Why?

### ELL/ESL Teaching Strategies

(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 book with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader. Students who speak Spanish can help with pronunciations of the Spanish or read the Spanish alongside a student reading the English.
2. Have each student write three questions about the text. 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 retell either the plot of the book or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about a character or central figure in the story they admire or connect to the most.
5. The story contains some content-specific words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. 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.

## INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

*(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Student 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 may also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

### Social Studies

*(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7 & 9)  
(Writing Standards, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–8)*

1. Break students into small teams or pairs and ask students to research immigration to the United States in the 1920s and 1930s. Have pairs research one group to present to the whole class. Who immigrated to the United States and where were they from? Why did people choose to move to this country? What challenges did they face once they arrived? Where did many of the immigrants settle? How did their lives change? What traditions did they try to preserve?
2. Have students research New York City in the 1920s and 1930s. What immigrant groups were living there? In what neighborhoods or areas were they living? What type of work was available to new immigrants? What languages other than English were spoken? What was school like for new students, especially if they didn't speak English? Have students write an essay making a case whether it would be easier to immigrate to New York City now or back then.

### English Language Arts

*(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 9)  
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3)*

1. Several of Pura Belpré's stories are still in print. Help students find a copy of the story *Pérez and Martina* (in your local library or through inter-library loan). Read the story together and then let volunteers act it out. You may also wish to follow this procedure with some of Pura Belpré's other stories that are available.
2. Invite a local storyteller to visit the class for a storytelling event.
3. Read the book *Richard Wright and the Library Card* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2441>). Have students compare and contrast the librarians in the two books. Students may also compare and contrast the treatment of different groups of people in the stories. How have libraries changed



from the 1920s to today? Why do Hildamar and Santiago in *The Storyteller's Candle* and Richard Wright in *Richard Wright and the Library Card* have such different experiences? Why are libraries so important to the characters in both books?

## Art/Media

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3)

1. Have students split the story of *Pérez and Martina* into parts and let them illustrate scenes from the story. Some students may also wish to make puppets for the story as Pura Belpré does.
2. Lulu Delacre, illustrator of the book, includes newsprint in every illustration. Have students search the pages to find the newsprint and then talk about what they discover. Interested students may also wish to make their own collage illustrations incorporating discarded newspapers, magazines, and/or other print materials.

## Home-School Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7 & 9)  
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strand 2, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strand 7)

1. Invite students to interview their parents or caregivers: When did your family first come to the United States? Was the decision to come to the United States voluntary or forced? What challenges did they face when they arrived? What motivated their family member to leave their home country?
2. Encourage students to research what immigrant groups live in their community. What languages are spoken? What countries are represented? How does the town accommodate and include people who speak different languages in public spaces and resources? Have students draft a proposal or letter to the mayor or city council with ways to make the community more inclusive of non-English speaking residents.
3. Invite students and their families to join you at the public library. Arrange for students to interview a

## Additional Pura Belpré Award and Honor titles:

### **Family Pictures / Cuadros de familia**

by Carmen Lomas Garza

[www.leeandlow.com/books/2796](http://www.leeandlow.com/books/2796)

**The Pot That Juan Built** written by Nancy Andrews-Goebel, illustrated by David Diaz

[www.leeandlow.com/books/2434](http://www.leeandlow.com/books/2434)

**First Day in Grapes** written by L. King Perez, illustrated by Robert Casilla

[www.leeandlow.com/books/2391](http://www.leeandlow.com/books/2391)

**Marisol McDonald Doesn't Match / Marisol McDonald no combina** written by Monica Brown, illustrated by Sara Palacios

[www.leeandlow.com/books/2769](http://www.leeandlow.com/books/2769)

### **¡Olé! Flamenco**

by George Ancona

[www.leeandlow.com/books/2720](http://www.leeandlow.com/books/2720)

librarian, check out books, and see what events are coming up. Have students prepare a list of interview questions in advance. For example: What motivated him or her to become a librarian? What is his or her favorite part of being a librarian? What are some of the challenges? How have libraries changed? Why is it important to have libraries in a community? How does this library serve people who speak and read languages other than English?

4. Have students interview a family member or caregiver about a story or folktale they remember from growing up. Encourage students to bring the story to school and allow children to share the stories with the class or in small groups. Use a “storyteller’s flashlight,” instead of a candle, to set the mood, and allow students to make a wish at the end of the story. Some of the adults could also be invited to share their stories to the class.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Lucía González** is an award-winning author, a bilingual storyteller, a puppeteer, and a children's librarian. Born in Cuba, she has lived in Florida, California, Spain, and Venezuela. She is a dynamic performer celebrated for her storytelling technique. González performs string stories, puppetry, and anecdotes about growing up in Cuba and coming to the United States. She also tells the legends of various Latino cultures. A two-time recipient of a Pura Belpré Author Award Honor from the American Library Association, González lives in Miami, Florida, with her family and two cats.

### ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**Lulu Delacre** is the author and illustrator of many award-winning children's books, including *How Far Do You Love Me?*, *Jay and Ben*, and *Olinguito, from A to Z: Unveiling the Cloud Forest*. Winner of several Pura Belpré Illustrator Award Honors from the American Library Association, Delacre has been named a Maryland Woman in the Arts and has served as a juror for the 2003 National Book Awards. She first learned how to illustrate picture books by looking through the collection in the children's room of her local public library. A common thread in Delacre's work, which has been exhibited internationally, is the celebration of her Latino heritage. Born and raised in Puerto Rico, Delacre's Latino heritage informs many of her works. Delacre lives with her husband in Silver Spring, Maryland. Visit her online at [luludelacre.com](http://luludelacre.com).

### 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](http://leeandlow.com).

### ORDERING INFORMATION

#### On the Web:

[www.leeandlow.com/contact/ordering](http://www.leeandlow.com/contact/ordering) (general order information)

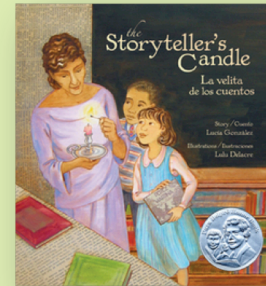
[www.leeandlow.com/books/2804](http://www.leeandlow.com/books/2804) (secure online ordering)

**By Phone:** 212-779-4400 ext. 25

**By Fax:** 212-683-1894

**By Mail:** Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

## Book Information for *The Storyteller's Candle*



\$9.95, PAPERBACK

978-0-89239-222-3

32 pages, 9-1/2 X 11

\*Reading Level: Grade 3–4

\*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

Interest Level: Grades 1–6

Guided Reading Level: O

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:  
3.9/0.5

Lexile™: 730L

**THEMES:** Librarians and Libraries, Mentors, Neighbors, Friendship, New York City, New York History, United States History, Immigration, Cultural Diversity, Puerto Rico, Empathy and Compassion, Optimism and Enthusiasm, Storytelling and Reading, Latino/Hispanic Interest, Historical Fiction

### RESOURCES ON THE WEB:

Learn more about *The Storyteller's Candle* at:

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2804>

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