

SURPRISING CECILIA

Teacher's Guide

Chapter 1

Hay que bailar al son que le toca.

One must dance to the tune that is played.

1. Why is today such a special day for Cecilia?
2. Who is Belle, and what does she suggest Cecilia do to her hair?
3. How does Cecilia's mother feel about her dream of getting an education?
4. Compare Cecilia's attitude about school to her older brother Elías' attitude.
5. Where is Cecilia's farm located?
6. Who owns the mercantile store and also runs the post office?
7. Johnny has to spend the summer in El Paso. Why does Cecilia have mixed feelings about receiving a letter from Johnny?
8. What evidence can you find in this chapter that Mamá does not spoil her children?
9. Cecilia doesn't want her parents to know the shame and misery she feels at school because of having to wear her brother's boots. What does this tell you about her as a person? What is your opinion of Cecilia as a daughter?
10. What can you conclude about Virginia as a friend?
11. At the end of the chapter, Mamá has a surprise for Cecilia. Why do you think the news upsets Cecilia so much?
12. Discuss with a partner why you think the authors chose the proverb that begins this chapter.
13. Write your feelings about what happened in this chapter and predict what you think will happen next.

Chapter 1 Activities

1. Write about your first day of school this year. What did you do? How did you feel? What was good or bad about it? If you prefer, write about a first day of school that really stands out in your mind.
2. In a group, list the things you like about your school. Then list the things you would like to see changed. Individually choose one of these and write a letter to your principal persuading him or her to make that change.
3. Have you ever had to wear something you hated, or did you ever have a really bad hair day? Write a description of how you looked and felt that day.
4. Write about a time when you felt scared, insecure or out of place.
5. Cecilia daydreams about Johnny and what high school will be like. Write about one of your favorite daydreams.



Chapter 2

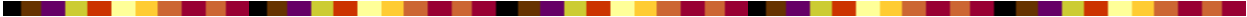
Tras la tempestad viene la calma.

After the storm comes the calm.

1. What chore do the boys run off to do at the beginning of the chapter so the family can make chicos?
 2. Why do you think it is important for the family to keep the kitchen very clean?
 3. How did Tía Sara solve the problem of Cecilia's shoes? What can you conclude about the kind of person she is?
 4. What evidence do you see that Cecilia's attitude toward the new baby is changing?
 5. What does Miss Gustafson tell Cecilia that makes her happy? What color do you think looks best on you? Is it the same as your favorite color or is it different?
 6. Describe Cecilia's cousin Belle. How is she different from Cecilia?
 7. Belle tells Cecilia it's easier to "beg forgiveness than to ask permission." What do you think this means? Do you agree with this advice? Why or why not?
 8. What does Cecilia think is the problem with being the oldest girl in the family? Who do you think has it the hardest in your family? Why?
 9. Cecilia's favorite time of day is the evening when the family gathers on the porch. What would you like about sitting on the porch with the family in the evenings?
 10. How does Tío Santiago make sure Roberto hurries when he sends him to buy tobacco?
 11. What interrupts Cecilia's daydream of Johnny, and what do you think happens next?
- Discuss with a partner why you think the authors chose the proverb that begins this chapter.

Chapter 2 Activities

1. In this chapter we learn there are differences between the town girls and the farm girls like Cecilia. Use your imagination and draw a picture of a town girl and a picture of a farm girl that illustrate some of the differences. Use cartoon bubbles to have them say something to each other.
2. Chapter 2 is filled with color words and phrases. Reread pages 40-43. Working in pairs, make a list of at least 10 color words or phrases (such as "blonde curls"). Then look around the classroom and make a list of at least 10 color phrases that describe the things you see.
3. Tía Sara was always making sacrifices for the family. Write a paragraph about a family member or friend who has done something nice for you.
4. Is there a book or story you have enjoyed that you think Cecilia would like to read? Write her a letter telling her about it and explaining why you think she would enjoy reading it.
5. Write about how you would like to spend a perfect day and who you would like to spend it with.
6. Look up Helen Keller in an encyclopedia or on the Internet. What do you think Cecilia and Helen Keller have in common? Do you think they would have liked each other if they had met?
7. Helen Keller wrote, "When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has opened for us."



Discuss what you think this means with a partner. Talk about whether there have been any examples of this in your own life.

Chapter 3

*No juzgues al hombre por su vestido;
Dios hizo el uno, el sastre el otro.*

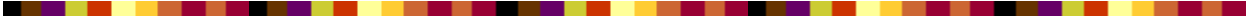
Do not judge a man by his clothing;
God made one, the tailor the other.

NOTE: *This book takes place during the Great Depression. It might be helpful to have several students read about it and then explain this time period to the class. This will help them understand why the Vetter family from Oklahoma was on the road to California.*

1. What surprising thing does Cecilia witness at the beginning of the chapter?
2. Use evidence from the chapter to show that Mamá is a generous person.
3. Why was the Vetter family forced to leave Oklahoma? What evidence is there that Jeannie is not happy with their situation?
4. As Cecilia hears the Vetter family's story, what advantages does she realize her family has?
5. What is it about Jeannie that surprises Cecilia?
6. Compare Loretta Peacock's life to Cecilia's. Whose life would you prefer? Why?
7. Although Cecilia agrees to help Loretta with her math lessons, it is Cecilia who learns a lesson in this chapter. Compare how she feels at the beginning and end of Loretta's visit and explain the lesson you think she learned.
8. Tía Sara says, "*si escupes para arriba, te va a caer en la cara.*" (If you spit up into the air, it will fall on your face.) Think about what this means and explain how it is similar to the English saying, "What goes around, comes around."
9. Turn back to the picture at the beginning of Chapter 2. What do you think the woman with the baby might be thinking?
10. Discuss with a partner why you think the authors chose the proverb that begins this chapter.

Chapter 3 Activities

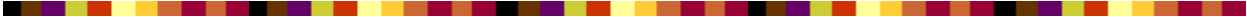
1. Draw and label the members of the Vetter family (including the dog). If you like, you can also draw their old jalopy (old, broken-down car).
2. The children fixed up the *jacal* (adobe shed) so the Vettters could move in. Think of the changes they made. Then draw the inside and outside of the shed as you imagine it looked.
3. With a partner discuss what Cecilia means when she realizes "there were many different types of poverty" (page 71). In what ways can some rich people be poor? In what ways can some poor people be rich? List your ideas on paper and share them with the class. You may want to list the ways in which you feel rich too.

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4. Make a list of the main events in this chapter. Write them down in a scrambled order. Then trade with a partner and have him/her put the events in the correct order. Do the same thing with the scrambled list of events he or she has made. Correct each other's papers.
 5. Write a letter to Mrs. Peacock and explain what she should do to be a better mother to Loretta.
 6. Rewrite a part of this chapter as a picture book or a comic book you could read to a younger child. Draw illustrations for your story.
 7. Work with a partner. Divide the descriptive phrases below and draw and color a quick picture for each one. Do them on chart paper and post them for the class to see.

A wooden paddle
A wooden vat or barrel
A watermelon rind
A buzzard on a perch
A crocheted doily
A shabby dress
Someone gritting his teeth
A toothless person
A frail lady
A girl with a chin-length bob
Slimy muck on a cracker
A pug nose
A gaunt-looking tramp or hobo
A roaring fire
A bent twig
A pair of overalls
Green foliage on a stalk
A roosting chicken
A bolt of fabric
A hearty meal (label the food on the plate)
A tow-headed child

8. Use magazines or newspapers to find pictures of:

A frail person
A person with a serene look
A hearty meal
Something enormous
Something expensive
An elegant person or thing
Something you think is fabulous
An example of foliage
Someone looking exhausted
A sprawling house



Someone with frizzy hair
A person who looks forlorn

Cut out the pictures, glue them on paper, and label them.

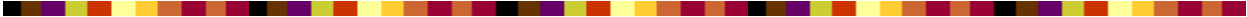
Chapter 4

En la casa llena, pronto se cena.
In a full house, supper is soon ready.

1. What is a confidante? Do you have one?
2. Explain Cecilia's problem with Mamá. In what way do you think Mamá is being unfair to Cecilia?
3. How do you feel about Belle's surprising announcement?
4. Describe Mamá's reaction to Cecilia's haircut. If Cecilia were your daughter, how would you feel about what she did?
5. On the other hand, how would you defend Cecilia's action to her mother?
6. Chapter 4 begins with a picture of a postcard Cecilia receives. How is Cecilia both disappointed and pleased by what comes in the mail?
7. In Chapter 3, the Gonzales family makes cane syrup. In this chapter their big job is the *matanza*. If you lived with them on the farm, which job would you prefer doing? Why?
8. What evidence do we have that the Veters really love their little dog Jeep?
9. How do Jeannie and Cecilia show their love for each other at the end of the chapter?
10. How do you think the Gonzales family feels the day the Veters left? What do you think the Veters were thinking and feeling?
11. Predict what you think will happen to the Veters.
12. Discuss with a partner why you think the authors chose the proverb that begins this chapter.

Chapter 4 Activities

1. In this chapter, Cecilia makes her mother very angry. Write about a time you made someone very angry or upset. If you have never experienced this, write about a time you made someone happy.
2. Jeannie was Cecilia's confidante. With a partner list the qualities you think a confidante should have. Then use your list to write a paragraph explaining the characteristics you would like in a best friend.
3. Cut the middle out of a paper plate so you are left with a ring. Write the following words around the ring—"A ring is round and has no end; so is my love for you my friend." Then list some of the things you like about your friend or a friend you would like to have. Write these on diamond-shaped pieces of colored paper and glue them to the ring so they are the gemstones on the ring. You might also make them in the shape of faceted stones, or they can be round if you prefer a ring of pearls. These friendship rings can be displayed in class.
4. Pretend you are Cecilia and you keep a diary. Write a passage you think Cecilia might write about her feelings toward her mother.

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5. The Gonzales family worked together to get big jobs done. Write about a time when your family came together to do a big job.
 6. Read about the things the family had to eat the day of the *matanza*. On a large piece of paper draw an oval or circle to represent a plate. Then draw and label what you would have put on your plate to eat that day. Include your drink and desert.
 7. Pretend a sheet of paper is the top of a table. Then draw and label:

A glass of *atole*
A blue corn tortilla
A can of lard
A pan of pig's blood with raisins
A pot of *chile verde con carne*
A plate of *chicharrones*
A plate of *chorizo* (sausage)
A pot of *frijoles*
A *sopita* of rice

8. Write a short poem about a friend. If you don't like writing poetry, use the following form:

On line 1—write the word “Confidante”
On line 2—write 3 words that describe a friend
On lines 3 and 4—write phrases or sentences that describe the friend
On line 5—write the word “Friend”

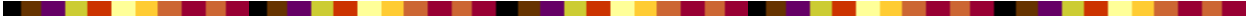
Or:

On line 1—write the word “Confidante”
On line 2—write 3 descriptive words
On line 3—write 3 words ending in -ing (such as caring, laughing, etc.)
On line 4—write: “And most of all _____ (fill in the blank)”
On line 5—write the words “My friend”

Chapter 5

Quien bien te quiere te hará llorar.
The one who loves you well will make you cry.

1. Why is Mamá hardly speaking to Cecilia?
2. Give one example of Cecilia's success in school.
3. Why does Cecilia visit Padre Arteta?
4. Do you agree with Padre Arteta's advice? If you do, tell why. If you don't, explain what you think Cecilia should do.
5. Describe Doña Carlota.
6. What evidence shows Cecilia her mother does love her?
7. Why are Fito and Roberto afraid to go to Doña Carlota's house?

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8. What is Mamá's reaction when Cecilia says she would like to enter the writing contest? Why does her reaction upset Cecilia?
 9. How does Papá stand up to Mamá? How does Tía Sara encourage Cecilia?
 10. The heroine of Cecilia's story is named Betty. What qualities do you think Cecilia admires in the character she created?
 11. Explain the difference between a witch and a curandera.
 12. How does Mamá feel about a girl moving to the city to live alone? How does she feel about Cecilia wanting to leave the farm?
 13. What does Fito dare his cousin to do at Doña Carlota's?
 14. Describe what happens after Leo trips on a wire.
 15. Discuss with a partner why you think the authors chose the proverb that begins this chapter.

Chapter 5 Activities

1. The boys think Doña Carlota is the widow of the former emperor of Mexico, Maximilian. Use the Internet or an encyclopedia to learn who he was and the tragedy that befell him and his wife Carlota.
2. Cecilia loves the snow globe Jeannie gave her. Draw a large circle on a sheet of paper and add a small base. Use this to create your own special snow globe. Color it and share it with the class. (See activity handout)
3. Write Belle a letter encouraging her to delay her marriage and stay in school. Persuade Belle by giving her good reasons for continuing her education.
4. Use your imagination to draw Doña Carlota's house. Then draw Doña Carlota as well.
5. Use a shoebox or some other small box and make a diorama or shadow box of Doña Carlota's house. After you read Chapter 6, you can make the inside of your box look like the inside of her house too.
6. Use the following form to write a poem about Cecilia's mother:

JOSEFINA

_____ and _____ (2 words that describe positive things about her)

Always _____ (use word ending in -ing)

Never _____ (use word ending in -ing)

_____ and _____ (2 words that describe positive or negative things)

Mamá

7. Look at the picture at the beginning of Chapter 6. Predict what you think the chapter will be about. How does the picture make you feel?



Chapter 6

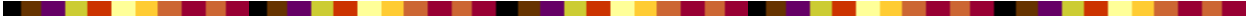
Caras vemos, corazones no sabemos.
Faces we see, hearts we don't know.

1. Why does Doña Carlota live alone? What happened to her family?
2. How does Doña Carlota support herself?
3. Explain how Roberto escapes being punished for getting home so late.
4. How does the family tell the twin girls apart?
5. Explain how the whooping cough epidemic affects the family.
6. How does Mamá feel about Cecilia having to work so hard?
7. In what ways does Cecilia feel guilty when the baby dies?
8. What surprise does Belle have for Cecilia?
9. Is there a part of the chapter you wish had been different? What change would you have made?
10. Discuss with a partner why you think the authors chose the proverb that begins this chapter.
11. Write your feelings about what happened in this chapter and what you think will happen next.

Chapter 6 Activities

1. Use your imagination and draw a picture of the room in which Doña Carlota takes Roberto.
2. Complete a character map of Doña Carlota or use the teacher handout. Draw a small circle in the middle of a piece of paper and write “Doña Carlota” inside the circle. From the circle draw 4 short lines—each one should point toward a corner of the paper. At the end of each line draw an oval that almost fills up the corner of the paper. This will leave you with the circle in the middle that is attached to 4 ovals. Label the ovals: Physical Traits (what she looks like/smells like), Character Traits (what kind of person she is), Things She Believes, and How She Lives. Use what you learned about her in Chapters 5 and 6 to fill in the information in each oval. (See activity handout)
3. Illustrate each of the following and then describe briefly what Doña Carlota believes about each:

a crucifix of needles and a crucifix of straw
a gourd
chile seeds on a person's forehead
a glass bottle filled with a potion (label what it is for)
a cup of *te de manzanilla*
a bullet with a cross cut into it
a flying ball of fire
el mal ojo (draw a scary eyeball)
an egg buried under a tree

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4. Working with a partner, pretend one of you is a newspaper reporter writing an article on superstitions, and one of you is Doña Carlota. The reporter should prepare questions, interview Doña Carlota, and then write the article. Doña Carlota's job is to prepare for the interview and have good answers to the reporter's questions. She should also edit the reporter's article and talk to the reporter about any changes she thinks should be made.
 5. Write a ten-question quiz about events in this chapter. Then trade with a partner and take each other's quizzes. Trade again to check the answers.

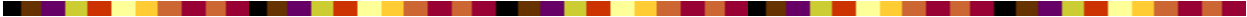
Chapter 7

Cada cabeza es un mundo.
Every mind is a world.

1. What effect does the whooping cough epidemic have on the students and schools in the county?
2. What inference does Cecilia make when she sees Dr. Steele's car at her house? Is her inference correct?
3. How do you feel about the way Mamá punishes Roberto? If you disagree with her method, what would you have done to discipline the child?
4. No one knows what happened when Papá took Roberto behind the barn. Based on what you know about Papá, what do you think happened?
5. How do you think Georgia Dine's gift to Cecilia will help her achieve her goals?
6. What evidence is there that Mamá is somewhat superstitious?
7. How does Papá treat a cow that has eaten bad alfalfa?
8. Explain what you think Cecilia is feeling as she holds the old valentine from Johnny in her hands?
9. If you had lived in New Mexico when Cecilia did, would you have rather been a town kid or a farm kid? Explain why.
10. Why does Belle like PE even though she doesn't like to sweat?
11. Cecilia's story wins first place and she saves the prize money. If you won \$50 today, what would you do with the prize money?
12. What are some of the special "treasures" the family keeps in the chest?
13. Name one major event Cecilia's grandfather wrote about in his diary.
14. Discuss with a partner why you think the authors chose the proverb that begins this chapter.

Chapter 7 Activities

1. Describe and draw your favorite scene from this chapter.
2. Draw a picture of the family chest with the lid open. Inside the chest, draw and color the things the family kept inside.
3. Draw a picture of your own family chest and draw and label the special things you would put inside it.
4. In this chapter Cecilia is proud of the suit she has made. Write about something you are proud of having made or proud of having done in your life. Then illustrate it.

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5. With a partner, compile a list of questions to ask as you interview an older person about his or her birth and childhood. You might want to interview a grandfather, grandmother, aunt, uncle, godparent, etc. Use the list to conduct the actual interview. Write down the answers to your questions, and then share some of the interesting things you learned about the person with the class.
 6. In this chapter Cecilia holds a valentine Johnny had made for her the year before. Imagine what it looks like and draw and color it. If you prefer, you can design a valentine you would like to get from someone special or give to someone special.
 7. In pairs, discuss the character of Papá. Work together to find examples of the following in this chapter:
 - a. Papá's pride in his children
 - b. Papá's protectiveness toward them
 - c. Papá's sense of humor
 - d. Papá's skill as a farmer
 - e. Papá's resilience (ability to make the best of things)
 8. Make a list of the events in this chapter. Scramble them and write them out of order. Then trade with a partner and ask him to put the events in order. You can put his scrambled events in order too. Then trade lists and check each other's work.
 9. The first sentence of this chapter is a simile (a comparison using the words "like" or "as"). Notice how it helps you picture the snow. Toward the end of the chapter Papá says the family is "as strong and hardy as the wild mustang." This is also a simile.

Complete the following similes:

The water was as cold as
The room was as dark as
The baby is as pretty as
The thin man eats like
The huge cloud looks like
The lady with the squeaky voice sounds like
She swims as gracefully as
That huge man is as strong as
The fuzzy blanket is as soft as
The piece of metal is as sharp as
Her hair is as black as
Her lips are as red as

10. Write your feelings about what happened in this chapter and predict what you think will happen next.



Chapter 8

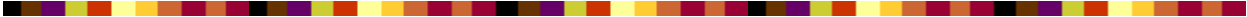
Ya llegó por quién lloraba.
The one you cried for has arrived.

1. Why does Belia say she would rather be a boy?
2. Describe the fishing method the children use. Is it successful?
3. How do you feel about Mamá's refusal to attend the talent show?
4. Describe the setting for the student field trip.
5. What do you think of Belle's behavior on the trip?
6. Summarize the cause and the effect of the bus incident.
7. Summarize the argument Cecilia has with Mamá after the accident and tell how it ends.
8. How does Papá explain Mamá's protective attitude toward Cecilia?
9. How does Mamá respond to Cecilia's offer to drop out of school? What does this tell us about Mamá?
10. What surprise does Tía Sara have for Cecilia?
11. What causes the butterflies in Cecilia's stomach to "flap their wings?"
12. Discuss with a partner why you think the authors chose the proverb that begins this chapter.
13. Write your feelings about this chapter and predict what you think will happen next.

Chapter 8 Activities

1. Write a letter from the Hatch High School principal to Mamá and Papá inviting them to the talent show and persuading them to attend.
2. Write a diary entry for Cecilia in which she writes about the talent show and how she feels when her parents don't attend.
3. Write about a time you went on a trip. Be sure to include who you were with and what you liked and didn't like about it. Include what you learned on the trip.
4. Do you think Mamá is a good mother or a bad mother? Come to a conclusion and give examples from the book to support your opinion.
5. Have you ever had a serious disagreement with a parent, guardian, brother, sister, or good friend? Write about it and explain how it was resolved.
6. Pretend you are a reporter working for the Hatch newspaper. You are sent to write a story on the bus accident that occurred in this chapter on April 12, 1936. Write a newspaper article about the accident and answer the questions who, what, when, where, and why?
7. Write a ten-question quiz about the events in this chapter. Then trade with a partner who has also written a quiz. After taking the quizzes, check each other's answers.
8. Draw a scene from this chapter.
9. Below is a list of topics associated with New Mexico, the setting for the book. Use the Internet or books in your library to research one of the topics. Write a short report and present it to the class.

White Sands National Monument
Lincoln National Forest
Smokey the Bear




Elephant Butte Lake and Dam
Rockhound State Park
Carlsbad Caverns
Ft. Selden
Ft. Sumner
Albuquerque
Santa Fe
Chimayó
Taos
Alamogordo
Las Cruces
Rio Grande
Gila Wilderness/Gila Cliff Dwellings
Kit Carson
Billy the Kid
St. Isadore/San Isidro
Roadrunner (state bird)
Black bear (state mammal)
Mescalero Apache Reservation
Acoma Pueblo
Pueblo cultures
Four Corners
Chile
Farolitos/luminarias
Georgia O’Keeffe (artist)
El Rancho de las Golondrinas
Camino Real

Chapter 9

Amor, salud, y pesetas, y tiempo para gozarlas.
Love, health, and wealth, and time to enjoy them.

1. Why is Tía Sara embarrassed and nervous about seeing Edmundo Lucero again?
2. What does Cecilia find exciting about the city?
3. Why do you think Belle takes Cleofas to admire the trees and flowers in the plaza?
4. What explanation does Johnny give for not having written Cecilia?
5. What difficult decision does Tía Sara have to make? How does Cecilia help her make that decision?
6. What are the qualities Cecilia loves about Tía Sara? How does she feel about losing her?
7. What surprising opportunity does Tía Sara offer Cecilia?
8. What evidence is there that Mamá is starting to realize Cecilia is growing up?
9. What decision does Cecilia make? Do you think she makes the right one?
10. At the end of the book, the family is sitting on the porch. Where is Cecilia sitting? Who is sitting in her old spot? What does this tell you about the girls?

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11. Cecilia goes to her room and looks in the mirror. Look at yourself in a mirror. What does the mirror reflect to you?
 12. Discuss with a partner why you think the authors chose the proverb that begins this chapter.

Chapter 9 Activities

1. Reread the letter from Jeannie to Cecilia. Then write a letter to Jeannie as if you were Cecilia. Think carefully about what you want to tell her.
2. Fold a piece of paper lengthwise. On the left list the reasons you think Tía Sara should stay on the farm. On the other side list the reasons you think she should get married. At the bottom tell if you think she made the right decision.
3. Write a ten-question quiz on this chapter. Trade with a student and take each other's quizzes. Trade again to check the answers.
4. Read a few wedding announcements in your local newspaper. Write an announcement for Sara's and Edmundo's wedding.
5. Draw a scene from this chapter. You might even want to draw the alligators in the plaza or the wedding cake.
6. Write a letter from Cecilia thanking Tía Sara and explaining her decision. Be sure to have Cecilia tell Sara how much she loves her and how grateful she is to her.
7. Draw at least 5 things that are mentioned in this chapter. You can choose from the following list if you like:

Alligators

A mantilla

A *corona de azahar*

Las arras

El lazo

A plate of *bizcochitos*

A pot of *frijoles*

A tiny cup and saucer with pink roses

A little dog carrying a basket of flowers

A decoration for the top of a wedding cake

A bouquet of flowers

A car with "Just Married" written on the window and tin cans tied to the bumper

A bride and groom

Chapter 10

A donde el corazón se inclina, el pie camina.

Where the heart leads, the foot follows.

1. Why do you think the authors chose this *dicho* to begin the chapter?
2. What do you think Cecilia is thinking and feeling as she reads the letter from Johnny?
3. Why do you think this book is called *Surprising Cecilia*? What things surprise Cecilia in the book? Is she a surprising person? In what way?



CONCLUDING ACTIVITIES

1. Pretend you are Cecilia. Write Johnny a letter in reply to his letter in Chapter 10.
2. With a partner, discuss what you think should be included in a sequel to this book and make a list of things you would like to see happen.
3. Design a new book cover for this book. Include a short summary of the book on the back of the cover and a short recommendation. You can also give the book a different title if you like.
4. Draw a picture of your favorite part of the book.
5. Write your own title for each chapter of the book.
6. Create a bookmark for the book.
7. Make a poster advertising the book.
8. Make a timeline of the events in the book.
9. Make a shadow box of a scene from the book.
10. Read the list of *dichos* in the back of the book or use a list provided by your teacher. Choose 2 or 3 and explain what they mean. Illustrate them.
11. In the book, we learn what life was like for a girl or boy on a farm in the 1930s. Make a collage of things that show what your life is like today. You can use pictures cut from magazines or newspapers or pictures you draw yourself.
12. Below is a list of some of the values that were important to the Gonzales family. Write each one on a piece of paper and then write one example of where you find that value in the book.

Compassion
Hospitality
Hard work
Respect
Faith
Love
Friendship
Gratitude
Honesty
Generosity

13. Which character in the book is most like you? Make a collage that represents you as a person. Include the things you like.
14. Write down a family story that is often told by members of your family and share it with the class.



About the Authors

Susan and Denise Gonzales Abraham are daughters of Cecilia Gonzales Abraham, the title character of *Cecilia's Year*. The sisters were born and raised in El Paso, Texas, but spent holidays and every summer on their grandparent's farm in Derry, New Mexico. They both graduated from the University of Texas at El Paso with a B.S. in Education. This, their first novel, is a tribute to their mother and to the deep roots of their family in rural New Mexico. They have written a sequel to *Cecilia's Year*, which is titled *Surprising Cecilia*.

Susan taught in the El Paso Independent School District for twenty-nine years as a high school English and business education teacher before retiring in 2002.

Denise received a master's degree in reading education from Arizona State University. She has taught Spanish, English, reading skills, and English as a Second Language in Phoenix, Arizona and El Paso. She is an elementary school librarian with the Ysleta Independent School District in El Paso.