

Educate. Inspire. Connect.

ARTS INTEGRATION LESSONS



**Planting Stories: The
Life of Librarian and
Storyteller Pura
Belpré**

WRITTEN BY **ANIKA ALDAMUY DENISE**

ILLUSTRATED BY **PAOLA ESCOBAR**

Who is Arts for Learning WNY?

Formerly Young Audiences of Western New York, Arts for Learning WNY is the leading arts education organization in Western New York seeking innovative ways to integrate the arts into learning. For more than 60 years, Arts for Learning has empowered teachers to inspire young people through meaningful creative experiences, seamlessly integrating the arts into the classroom.

WHAT IS ARTS INTEGRATION?

Arts integration is an approach to teaching where the arts (e.g., music, dance, drama, or visual arts) are woven into lessons from other subject areas such as math, science, language arts, or social studies. The goal is for students to learn both the art form and the academic content at the same time.

WHY IT WORKS!

Arts integration is a powerful educational tool because it unlocks how kids naturally learn. This type of instruction utilizes the whole brain and hands-on experiences connect academic content to real-life. It supports different learning styles, bolsters relationship-building skills, and naturally boosts motivation.

How to Use this Arts Integration Guide

THE ARTS ARE ALL AROUND US and everyday moments can become creative adventures when we pause to look, listen, and imagine together.

Whether you are dancing in the kitchen, drawing your favorite story characters, or acting out scenes from a book, you are using the power of the arts to make learning stick in joyful, meaningful ways.

This guide is designed to help you and your family dive deeper into the story, beyond just reading the words on the page. With this book, the suggested art supplies, and a little imagination, you will explore the characters, setting, and themes in a whole new way.

You do not need to be a trained artist or teacher – just be willing to play, create, and explore. Along the way, you will support your child's learning, build memories, and maybe even discover your inner artist!



Visit our website to explore more arts integration ideas!



Visual Arts meets Science

In the book *Planting Stories*, the illustrator Paola Escobar uses many colorful flowers to help express how Pura Belpré shared Puerto Rican stories. Let's look for flowers around your neighborhood and draw them!

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- ▶ *Planting Stories: The Life of Librarian and Storyteller Pura Belpré*
- ▶ Paper or sketchbook
- ▶ Pencil and eraser
- ▶ Markers/crayons/colored pencils
- ▶ Camera (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Look at the illustrations in the book. Nearly every page depicts flowers of various shapes, sizes, and colors. Go outside and look at the flowers in your neighborhood. Don't pick them--observe them. Do you see any that look similar to those in the story? If you have a camera, you can take pictures of your favorite ones.

2. Select one flower to draw. Do not pick the flower but stretch it outside or take a photo to draw inside. Start by sketching the main shape of the flower on your drawing paper: think of the general shape--is it Circular? Square? Trapezoidal? Oval?

3. Next, draw the petals inside that shape. Draw very lightly with the pencil. When your shapes look good, trace over the lines to make them darker.

4. Erase lines you don't need. Add color to your drawing!

5. Label the different parts of your flower drawing. Can you identify the petal, bulb, and stem? Are these the same or different shapes?

VOCABULARY

Shapes - The form or outline of something that you can see, like a circle or square.

Sketch - A simple drawing that shows an idea or plan.

Outline - The outside edge or border of a shape or drawing.

Illustration - A drawing or picture that helps to explain or tell a story in a book, magazine, or other text.

Petal - The colorful part of a flower.

Bulb - The round part at the bottom of some flowers where petals grow from.

Stem - The long thin part of the flower that holds it up.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

You can press picked flowers to save them. Here's how:

- Arrange the flowers between two pieces of parchment paper.
- Place the parchment inside a large book, close the pages, and put heavier books on top.
- Wait one day (24 hours). Then carefully remove your flowers.

You can use your pressed flowers to decorate cards, letters, or bookmarks. Want to keep them longer? Ask an adult to help you iron the flowers between two pieces of wax paper.

Dance meets Social Studies

Pura Belpré told the story of Perez and Martina with puppets. Let's tell the Pura Belpré's story using movement!

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- ▶ *Planting Stories: The Life of Librarian and Storyteller Pura Belpré*
- ▶ Music (like bomba, plena, or merengue)
- ▶ Scarves (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Throughout the story, Pura Belpré is always on the move. Use your whole body to act out different parts of her journey. How do you think she felt at each moment? Was she nervous about moving to New York City? Disappointed when she couldn't find Puerto Rican stories in the library? Excited when her book is finally published? Show her emotions through both your movements and facial expressions.

2. When Pura Belpré notices the library has no Puerto Rican folktales, she sees an opportunity to share her culture. In the children's room, she uses puppets—and her face, voice, and body—to tell stories like Martina y Pérez. Imagine how the animals in the story might move. Can you move like a cockroach? Or a mouse? Try acting it out with your body!

3. After each storytime, the children make a wish and help blow out a candle. What would you wish for after hearing Pura's story? Take a moment to think, make your wish, and pretend to blow out a candle—just like the children in the book. How did it feel to make that wish?

INSTRUCTIONS CONTINUED:

4. Now, put all your movements together—from Pura's journey, to the animal motions, to making a wish. Can you create a sequence that tells the whole story through movement?

VOCABULARY

Bomba and Plena - Music with lots of drums and call and response between dancers and drummers.

Accompany - To play music with someone singing or playing another instrument.

Sequence - A series of movements that follow each other in a certain order.

Culture - The shared way of life for a group of people, including their common beliefs, traditions, food, music, and language

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

With the help of a trusted adult, look online to explore the full folktale of Martina y Pérez. Did you know the first published English translation of this Spanish folktale was written by Pura Belpré? Can you use body movement to act out each part of this story? Add bomba or plena music to your movements to create a performance!

Gather friends and family and have them help you play each of the characters. Call and response is a common music and dance technique—you create a dance move, and the other dancers echo the same move. In what way does this change how you dance your story?

Music meets

Social Emotional Learning

Songs are another way people share stories, much like Pura Belpré shared her stories. Let's create a güiro--a rhythm instrument that comes from the Taino people in Puerto Rico, to accompany your own storytelling!

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- ▶ *Planting Stories: The Life of Librarian and Storyteller Pura Belpré*
- ▶ Rigid water bottle or 6 stacking cups
- ▶ Paint, markers, or stickers to decorate
- ▶ A fork, chopstick, or pen to use as a "pua" or scraper

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Music plays an important role in Pura Belpré's life, especially after marrying musician Clarence Cameron White.** The story tells us how they traveled to different cities together to share Puerto Rican stories accompanied by music. Gather your ridged water bottle or stacking cups to make your own instrument. If you are using cups, tape or glue them together.
- 2. Decorate your bottle or stacked cups using paint, markers, or stickers.** Allow the instrument to dry if you are using paint.
- 3. Use a pen, chopstick, or fork to strum the ridged side of the güiro.**
- 4. Reread the story.** Use your güiro to add musical sound effects to the story. Think about the tempo you are playing. What emotions do you feel with a fast tempo? How about a slow tempo?

VOCABULARY

Güiro - A traditional Puerto Rican instrument shaped as a notched, hollowed-out gourd.

Pua (Scraper) - A stick used to scrape the ridges of the Güiro.

Taino: The indigenous people of Puerto Rico.

Accompany - To play music with someone singing or playing another instrument.

Tempo - How fast or slow a rhythm is.

Emotion - The feeling you have (e.g., happiness, sadness, anger).

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Add rice, dry beans, stones, or crinkly wrappers to make a shaker. Make sure you seal the material inside your güiro. How does using the instrument as a shaker change the feeling you have when you hear the music?

In the Community

You can become an author like Pura Belpré and share stories with people in your community. Let's create a story that you can give to others!

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- ▶ *Planting Stories: The Life of Librarian and Storyteller Pura Belpré*
- ▶ Zine template or piece of paper
- ▶ Markers/crayons/colored pencils
- ▶ Scissors

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In the story, Pura Belpré writes and publishes stories about her culture to bring the vibrant history of Puerto Rico to children and communities across the country and the world. Let's write and illustrate a story of culture and community right in your own neighborhood.

2. Find a trusted adult in your community, it could be a parent, grandparent, family friend, or local business owner. Ask them to share a story from their past. It could be a folktale like Martina y Pérez or a personal story. Write down key points of the story to remember later.

3. Now it is time to fold your zine (mini book). Use these instructions to fold and cut the template:

- Fold your paper in half the long way (like a hot dog).
- Open it, then fold it the short way (like a hamburger).
- Fold the top and bottom edges to the middle fold to make 8 rectangles. Each solid line in the template should be creased with a fold.
- Use scissors to carefully cut halfway through the middle (hot dog) fold—just one cut in the center on the dotted line.
- Push the ends together so a square forms in the middle 4 pages. Fold into a little book with 8 pages!

4. Using the template as a guide, add your name next to the author line and the title of your story on the cover. Use the lines provided on the interior pages to tell the story you learned. Reference your notes as needed to ensure it is accurate.

INSTRUCTIONS CONTINUED:

5. Add illustrations to the boxes on each page. Your illustration should represent the words you wrote on each page to tell the story. What image can you use for the cover? This image should capture the reader's attention and give hints to what the story is about.

6. Share this story with your community, just like Pura Belpré! You can give your story back to the person you learned it from or leave it in a local Little Free Library.

VOCABULARY

Author - A person who writes a story.

Illustrator - A person who draws pictures to accompany an author's story.

Storyteller - Somebody who tells a story using words, movement, or music.

Zine - A miniature homemade book.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

With the help of a trusted adult, go online and research a folktale from your culture. Create another zine to tell this story. Share it with your community!

Education ▶ For over 60 years, we have been the leading arts education organization in Western New York seeking innovative, equitable, and inclusive ways to integrate arts into learning.

Inspiration ▶ We are committed to empowering local artists to teach and inspire young people and educators through new and meaningful creative arts experiences.

Connection ▶ By serving as a reliable connector between artists and organizations and providing high-quality education, we seamlessly fill a need to integrate arts into the classroom.



2495 Main Street
Suite 443
Buffalo, NY 14214
artsforlearningwny.org



Affiliated with the national Young Audiences Arts for Learning