



## BEFORE YOU SEE THE SHOW

### *Tomás and the Library Lady*

By José Cruz González  
Adapted from the book by Pat Mora

#### WHAT THE PLAY IS ABOUT

Tomás Rivera travels with his Amá, his Apá, his Papá Grande (grandfather), and his little brother Enrique from Texas all the way to Iowa to find work picking corn, spinach, and beets. Tomás is haunted by memories of a teacher in his Texas school who punished him for speaking Spanish. His parents are worried about him, but reassure him that he is smart and talented. When the Riveras arrive in Iowa, they discover that their new home is little more than a chicken coop. One day Tomás' Amá sends him to the post office, and he discovers the Carnegie Library next door. The Library Lady invites him in and introduces Tomás to books. Tomás enthusiastically shares the new stories that he has found with his family, and he and his brother Enrique find other books in the town dump. Tomás teaches the Library Lady some Spanish, becomes more confident in English, and realizes that he doesn't need to be afraid of his Nightmare Teacher back in Texas any longer. Then comes the day when Tomás comes to visit the library lady and tells her that he must teach her a sad word in Spanish: *Adiós*. Tomás Rivera grew up to become the father of Chicano literature, as well as the Chancellor of the University of California at Riverside. The library there bears the name of the boy who was encouraged to read by a library lady in Iowa.

#### THE BIG IDEA

*The Power of Books*

#### ABOUT CHILDSPLAY

Childsplay is a nonprofit professional theatre company of adult actors who perform for young audiences and families.

Our Mission is to create theatre so strikingly original in form, content or both, that it instills in young people an enduring awe, love and respect for the medium, thus preserving imagination and wonder, those hallmarks of childhood that are the keys to the future.

#### CONNECTION TO STANDARDS

##### LITERACY:

##### Reading Foundations (4.RF.3)-

Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis in decoding words.

##### Reading Literature (3.RL.3) -

Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events

##### 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY LEARNING:

##### Leadership and Responsibility (K-12)-

Inspire and Guide Others

# BEHIND THE SCENES OF A TOUR

## ***What is a touring show?***

Childsplay creates a production with professional actors, a full set, costumes, props, and sound, then packs everything in a van and brings the show to theatres across the United States and Canada.

## ***How does it all come together?***

The design team and production staff have many challenges when creating a tour. They have to consider how many months the production will be on the road, how to fit all the elements (including the actors) into a van, and how to make the load-in, assembly of the set, pre-set of props and costumes, sound check and load-out as easy for the actors as possible. This is accomplished by countless meetings and planning sessions that occur as much as a year before the first performance.

## ***Where do we go and how do we get there?***

We travel all across the nation in a large van. In a week's time, a touring company may perform up to 14 shows in as many as 8 different locations. Tours can be on the road anywhere from 6 to 12 months, sometimes even longer. By the end of the tour, the actors may have performed as many as 200 performances.

## ***How do you put everything in just one van?***

All of the scenery, props, and costumes that you see in a Childsplay tour must fit into a van. The scenery usually comes apart into several pieces and then stacks, folds or nests together in the van. There is also room in the van for the sound system, toolbox and the cast – which could be as many as 5 actors. If the cast is lucky there is usually room to squeeze in a few suitcases when they go out of town!

## ***What happens when you arrive at a theatre?***

Once the cast arrives at to their destination, they have to set everything up in less than one hour, and depending on the size of the cast, with as few as 3 people. The Childsplay scene shop uses what they like to call “tool-less technology” to create tour shows. This means tour sets get assembled with as few tools as possible, sometimes none! Pieces are held in place by screwing in knobs; pieces interlock or rest on posts and sometimes fabric appliqués are Velcroed on to hard scenery frames. Tours also have a portable sound system with sound effects pre-programed on a computer. Once the sound system is set up all the actors have to do is hit one button on the computer to run sometimes very complicated sound sequences.

## TALK ABOUT THEATRE ETIQUETTE

It's helpful to review the rules of theater etiquette before seeing a show, especially since this may be the first live theater experience for some of your students.

Please take a moment to discuss the following pointers prior to seeing the performance:



➤ Use the restroom before seeing the show as we do not have intermission during our student performances.

➤ Stay seated during the performance.

➤ Be respectful to the performers and other people in the audience by not talking during the performance.

➤ Appropriate responses such as applause or laughter are always welcome.

➤ Food, candy, gum and beverages will not be allowed in the theater.

➤ Use of cell phones (including text messaging), cameras or any other recording device is not allowed during the performance at any time.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE SEEING THE SHOW

- Does your family speak a language other than English at home? Have you ever been in a situation where you didn't understand the language someone was speaking? How did it make you feel?
- What is an example of an adult who has influenced your life or shared something special with you?
- If you could become part of one of your favorite books, which book would it be and what part of the story would it be?
- What is your favorite story that you like to hear again and again? Why do you think we like to hear stories more than once?
- When did you first learn to read? What was the first book you read by yourself?
- We all have dreams when we sleep. Sometimes they are pleasant and sometimes they are nightmares. Share a dream that you've had. Have you ever had the same dream more than once? Why do you think that happens?

## CLOSE READING ACTIVITY

### Actors as Close Readers...

Theatre is a collection of choices. A choice is an artistic decision that is made to highlight a component of the character's personality, the story, or the theme. An actor's job is to draw evidence from the text to make choices that bring characters to life on stage.

#### Activity: Vocal Choices

Page four of this document contains a cutting from the script between siblings Tomás and Enrique, and their grandfather Papá Grande. Have the students read the play synopsis on page one to learn more about the story and characters. Next, have them read the scene in groups of three and then make vocal choices for their characters based on the text. Students should pay close attention to the stage directions to find information about what the characters are feeling and doing. When making a vocal choice, think about pacing (fast or slow), pitch (high or low), emotion (what the character is feeling), and subtext (underlying meaning).



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## BOOKS TO CHECK OUT

*Pepita Talks Twice/Pepita Habla Dos Veces*  
by Ofelia Dumas Lachtman

*Cesar: Si, Se Puede/Yes, We Can*  
by Carmen T. Bernier-Grand

*Calling the Doves/El canto de las palomas*  
by Juan Felipe Herrera

*Doña Flor: A Tall Tale About a Giant Woman with a Great Big Heart*  
by Pat Mora

*A Library for Juana: The World of Sor Juana Inés*  
by Pat Mora

From *Tomás and the Library Lady* by José Cruz González

ENRIQUE

*Papá Grande* tell us the *cuento* about the man in the forest!

PAPÁ GRANDE

*En un tiempo pasado*, once long ago on a windy night--

(ENRIQUE creates the wind.)

PAPÁ GRANDE

--a man, *un hombre*, was riding a horse through a forest.

(YOUNG TOMÁS creates the hooves of the horse galloping.)

PAPÁ GRANDE

The wind was howling, whoooooooooo, and the leaves were blowing, whish, whish...

YOUNG TOMÁS

All of a sudden something grabbed the *hombre*.

PAPÁ GRANDE

He couldn't move.

ENRIQUE

He was so scared to look around.

PAPÁ GRANDE

All night, *todo la noche*, he wanted to ride away.

YOUNG TOMÁS

But he couldn't!

PAPÁ GRANDE

How the wind howled, whoooooooooo. How the leaves blew.

ENRIQUE

How his teeth chattered!

PAPÁ GRANDE

*Finalmente*, the sun came up. Slowly the *hombre* turned around. And who do you think was holding him?

YOUNG TOMÁS

A thorny tree!

ENRIQUE & PAPÁ GRANDE

*¡Tomás!*

PAPÁ GRANDE

You know all my *cuentos*! *Tomasito*, you're going to have to learn some new ones!