



Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Division

About the Book of the Month: This collection of featured books is from our Recommended Multicultural and Anti-Bias Books for Children. The books teach about bias and prejudice, promote respect for diversity, encourage social action and reinforce themes addressed in education programs of [A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE® Institute](#), ADL's international anti-bias education and diversity training provider. For educators, adult family members and other caregivers of early childhood and elementary aged children, reading the books listed on this site with your children and incorporating them into instruction is an excellent way to talk about these important concepts in your classroom.

How Tía Lola Came To Visit Stay

Julia Alvarez (Author)

When ten-year-old Miguel moves to Vermont with his mami after his parents' divorce, guess who flies up from the Island to help take care of him and his little sister, Juanita? Tía Lola! *How Tía Lola Came To Visit Stay* is the first in a series of books called [The Tía Lola Stories](#). (This book is also available in Spanish.)

ISBN: 978-0440418702

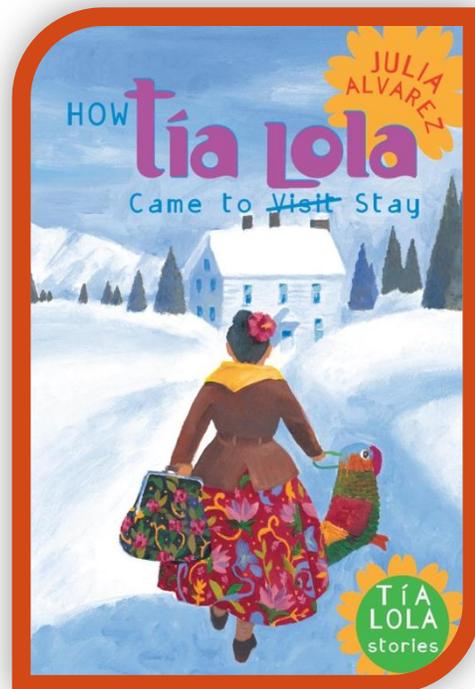
Publisher: Yearling

Year Published: 2002

Grade Level: 3–7

Book Themes

Culture, identity, family



Key Words

Discuss and define these words with children prior to reading the book and remind children of their meanings as they come up in the book. See ADL's [Glossary of Education Terms](#).

- assumption
- bodega
- culture
- divorce
- embarrassed
- feminine
- foreign
- haunted
- masculine
- memory
- palette
- peculiar
- psychologist
- ritual
- Santeria

- sensitive
- stereotype
- turban
- “Spanglish”
- superstitious
- unwelcome

Discussion Questions

If the students read the book in a small group or as a whole class, ask discussion questions throughout their reading in order to check comprehension and engage them on a deeper level. When students have finished the book, choose from these questions to guide a group:

- Why does Miguel feel different from everyone in his new town in Vermont?
- In the beginning, why does Miguel have “mixed feelings” about Tía Lola?
- Why did Miguel want to keep Tía Lola a secret from his friends?
- What does Miguel’s father mean when he says Miguel should “be proud of who he is?”
- The author says, about Becky and Tía Lola, “The two women aren’t speaking the same language and yet they seem to understand each other perfectly.” What does she mean by this? Have you ever had that experience?
- When Miguel’s friend Dean says that being Dominican make Miguel “a natural for baseball,” how does Miguel feel? How is this a stereotype?
- What do Miguel and Juanita learn from Tía Lola? What does she learn from them?
- When she is learning English, why does Tía Lola misunderstand some of the English/American expressions like “green thumb.”
- How does Tía Lola feel when they are walking around NYC in Abuelito and Abuelita’s neighborhood? How do you know?
- How would you describe Miguel, Juanita and Tía Lola’s visit to Papi in NYC?
- Why do you think Tía Lola painted the house purple?
- How does Colonel Charlesbois feel about the purple house? How does Tía Lola change his mind?
- What did the story Tía Lola tell (on Mami’s birthday) mean? In the story, she talks about when you’re in one place, you often want to be in a different place. Can you give an example of that from your own life?
- Juanita wonders “where she is from;” her parents are from the Dominican Republic, she was born in New York City and now she lives in Vermont. How would you characterize where Juanita is from?
- What is culture? What did you find out about Tía Lola’s culture? What other things make up someone’s culture besides their country of origin or where their ancestors lived?
- What kind of person do you think Tía Lola is?
- When Miguel, Juanita and Tía Lola go to the Dominican Republic, Miguel tells the customs agent, “We are real Americans!” What does he mean by this?
- How does Miguel feel about meeting his extended “familia” in the Dominican Republic?

- How does the writer use a combination of Spanish and English in the book? Were you able to understand the Spanish (if you don't know how to speak Spanish already)?
- Do you think Tía Lola will be coming back to Vermont with the family? What makes you think so?

Extension Activities

Below are activities that you can do with students in order to extend the learning from the book.

1. Talk About Culture

Take out a world map and ask if anyone knows where the Dominican Republic is, noting that this is where Tía Lola is from and where Miguel and Juanita's parents were born. Then show students where New York and Vermont are, the two other places where they lived. Ask if students know where their ancestors are from and if so, point those countries out on the map. Explain that the through Tía Lola, the book explores Latino culture and specifically, the cultural aspects of being Dominican. It also explores the other parts of Miguel and Juanita's identity as young people who live in Vermont, used to live in NYC and whose parents are divorced. Ask students: *What is culture?* Define **culture** as: *Parts of daily life that are seen in food, customs, holidays, music and more that a group of people share.* Have students consider their own cultural backgrounds including food, customs, holidays, music, clothing, arts/crafts, language, religion and beliefs. Culture can originate from a specific country and can also include central aspects of their home and family life, parts of the country they live now and other parts of their identity. In Miguel and Juanita's case, having lived in NYC and now living in rural Vermont are aspects of their cultural identity. Students can explore their "culture" by: (1) interviewing their parents and other family members to learn more about where they are from and the cultural parts of their identity; (2) conducting internet and other research to learn more about aspects of their cultural identity; (3) creating culture collages or flags that include different aspects of their cultural identity; and (4) inviting parents and other community members to the classroom to discuss their cultural identity.

2. Readers' Response Essays

Have students write a reader's response essay about the book, using one of these three options:

- **Character Analysis:** Write an essay that focuses on one character from the book. The person can be one of the main characters including Tía Lola, Miguel, Juanita, Mami, Papi, Rudy or Dean (Miguel's friend). In essay, respond to the following questions: (a) What do you most appreciate about the person and find most frustrating about the character? (b) Was there an important scene in which the character has a realization about something or changed in some way? (c) Why did you pick the character and what about her or him do you relate to? (d) Describe at least three character traits of the person and include evidence and quotes from the book that illustrate these characteristics.
- **Book Review:** Write a book review of *How Tía Lola Came To Visit Stay*. The elements of a book review should include: (1) title, author, genre and theme; (2) personal reflections about the book (how it made you feel and what your thoughts were about it); (3) plot summary—what happened—without giving away spoilers; (4) characters you loved or hated and (5) why it is worth reading or not. Consider sharing the reviews on a class blog.
- **Create a Scene:** In the last scene of *How Tía Lola Came To Visit Stay*, they are in the Dominican Republic visiting family during the holidays. Have students think about what the next scene

might be in the book if it continued. It can include what other experiences the family has in the Dominican Republic or when they return home to Vermont. What happens next? Does Tía Lola learn more English and do Miguel and Juanita learn more Spanish? What happens in school for Miguel and Juanita? Do the children continue to visit their Papi in New York City? Write the next chapter based on what you think will happen next in the story.

3. Draw a Scene from the Book

With students, brainstorm different scenes from the book that they especially liked. Possible scenes include: Miguel and Juanita meeting Tía Lola for the first time at the airport, the family's trip to NYC, Tía Lola painting the house purple, baseball practice in the pasture behind their house, Miguel's surprise birthday party, the family's visit to the Dominican Republic or any others the students suggest. Using construction paper and markers, have students draw out their favorite scene and include dialogue if they want. They may choose to make one picture of the whole scene or working with other students, draw a series of pictures that show different parts of the scene, like a storyboard. When the students have completed their drawings, hang them up around the classroom and facilitate a "gallery walk" for all students to look at the pictures.

ADL Resources

The following are curriculum and resources on culture, the Latino experience and anti-bias education.

- [Anti-Bias Education Programs and Resources](#)
- [Recommended Multicultural and Anti-Bias Books for Children: Hispanic/Hispanic-American](#)
- [Recommended Multicultural and Anti-Bias Books for Children: Immigrants](#)
- [Recommended Multicultural and Anti-Bias Books for Children: Anti-Immigrant](#)
- *Curriculum Connections* "[Words That Heal: Using Children's Literature to Address Bullying](#)"