

By Stephanie Hernandez and her 5th-Grade Students

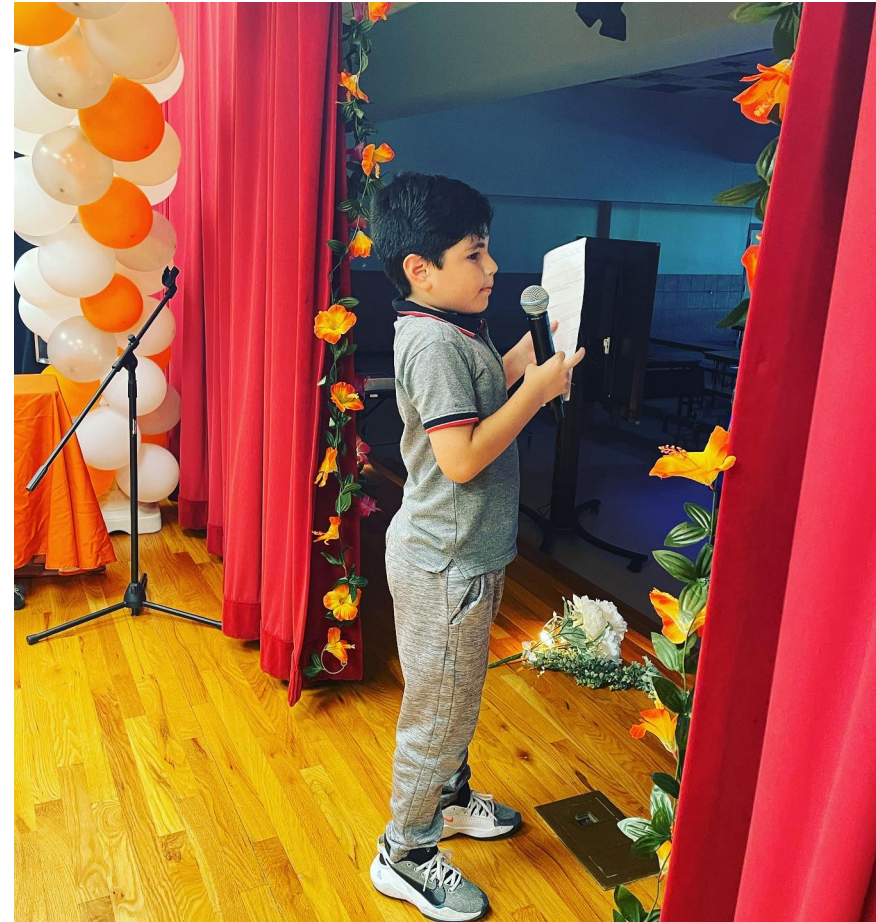
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**NCTE**



## Using Stories and Poems to Inspire Student-Led Events and Conversations



What started as a typical poetry unit quickly became so much more. My students became enamored with the poetry mentor texts we read, most of which are included in this issue's booklist, and wanted to continue learning more about poetry and how authors use their words to share their stories and emotions. We read many poetry and lyrical books, discussed the author's choice of words and imagery, and shared how reading these books made us feel.



## Using Stories and Poems to Inspire Student-Led Events and Conversations

Students truly enjoyed leading discussions and sharing their insight during and after reading. Celebrating who they are allowed them to freely and confidently engage in discussions. The students' level of investment led to effective analysis of information, reasoned arguments, and inspiration to develop their own perspectives. This inspiration moved beyond classroom activities and tasks and resulted in empowerment and action.







## Using Stories and Poems to Inspire Student-Led Events and Conversations

Students took ownership of their learning and partnered with local musicians and businesses to learn on a deeper level. They also started writing their own original poems to share their own stories, feelings, and ideas. We moved beyond learning objectives and created an author's

tea event and a poetry event as a result of student motivation, investment, and academic achievement. The following slides include examples of their original poems as well as information about some of the events our students were able to enjoy during our poetry unit.





## Using Stories and Poems to Inspire Student-Led Events and Conversations



A wonderful family shared their favorite pupusa recipe from El Salvador. Students enjoyed fresh pupusas and recited their poetry about their connections to the text, culture, and the comfort of their family and homeland.





## Using Stories and Poems to Inspire Student-Led Events and Conversations

### Pupusas

When I look at Pupusas, my mouth waters like the Niagara falls.  
I smile when I hear " Ya vente a comer" my mother calls.  
I see my sister trying to touch my mothers mouth watering pupusas made for me  
And I say don't you dare touch my Pupusas and let them be  
I eat my Pupusas and I float in the air  
Their were so delicious that I ate them without care  
I'm finished but im still hungry  
So I cry to my mom " I want more!"  
And then before I know it  
She gives me a sape out the door



Students were invited to write a poem on what they experience when they enjoy a favorite food. They were asked to use figurative language, such as similes, hyperboles, and personification. The “Pupusas” poem was one result of a student showing a strong understanding of figurative language and the enjoyment that comes from a special family shared dish. The picture was captured during lunch, as students enjoyed homemade pupusas.



## Using Stories and Poems to Inspire Student-Led Events and Conversations

### Hermanita

Cuando me levanto tu eres mi sol  
Eres hermosa y adorable  
Te quiero desde mi corazón  
Espero que nunca seas triste

La vida te está esperando  
Para ser descubierta  
Quiero que cada día estes a mi lado  
Y que siempre los tengamos de la  
mano

Tu eres pequeña  
Pero después serás  
fuerte  
Nunca dejes de crecer  
Porque tu eres única  
Y indescriptible

Yo siempre voy a estar  
A tu lado en las buenas  
Y en las malas y  
Nunca te dejare en la  
oscuridad y en el frío

After reading *A Movie in My Pillow/ Una película en mi almohada*, students led a conversation on what family means and what we cherish and love about family. Students reflected on the impact our family has on our lives and discussed empathy as we analyzed character emotions after leaving their homeland.



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As a child, I can hardly remember reading a book that had a character that looked like me. When it did, it usually fulfilled a stereotype. **Selecting and planning lessons around textual mirrors is powerful and allows students to explore and develop their cultural identities.** The classroom is a safe space where students can foster and encourage the exploration and celebration of identity and how our identities shape our experiences both inside and outside of our schools.

The poem “El Salvador” was inspired by an author who wrote about the challenges she faced experiencing culture shock and homesickness. The text happened to be about her same native country, and it validated her identity, funds of knowledge, and life experiences.

### El Salvador

I am El Salvador. Brave  
But also kind  
I wish one day I can bring you here

Each night I cried in silence  
Hoping we would return  
I didn't enjoy my new home

Now I learned people have to go  
forward not back  
But even if I learned  
I still miss El Salvador

I hope one day when I grow  
I can visit my home  
Ready to hug my beautiful  
And incredible El Salvador



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Poetry is a tool for healing, reflection, and exploring parts of ourselves. One student connected the pain and loss in one story to the pain and loss in her own life as her parents went through major changes.

### Two Birds on a Wire

Two birds on a wire, a love that used to soar,  
But now the trust is broken, and the bond is torn.  
The husband bird has flown, to be with another mate,  
Leaving behind a broken heart, and love that's turned to hate.  
The wife bird looks on, with tears in her eyes,  
Wondering how it all went wrong, and why he had to lie.  
Their love was once so pure, and filled with hope and light,  
But now it's shattered, like a bird in mid-flight.  
The wire they once shared, now feels empty and bare,



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MS.Hernandez

Una maestra muy maravillosa

An angel brought down to educate the souls who

shall bring world peace upon the globe

A proud independent woman who will never be  
afraid

A woman, A teacher, an angel,

MY FAVORITE



Students became comfortable expressing themselves through poetry and used it to communicate to share kindness, compliments, and shout outs to classmates. The poem above was written by a student on Valentine's Day for each other and for me! The picture shows the boxes they hand-painted and designed to store their letters, cards, and poems.





## Using Stories and Poems to Inspire Student-Led Events and Conversations

This student was inspired by authors writing about **their culture**, so she chose to write her own poem after engaging in conversations on identity, biliteracy, and calling two places home.

### MI CULTURA, MY CULTURE

*A SWISH OF GREEN FEATHERS.*

*A SACHEL OF NEW LEATHERS.*

*¿YO SOY DOMINICANA, Y TÚ?*

*I'M DOMINICAN, AND YOU?*

*A MI ME GUSTA REGGAETON Y MERENGUE.*

*A MI ME GUSTA CELEBRAR CON MI GENTE.*

*THE FLAG, THE PARROT.*

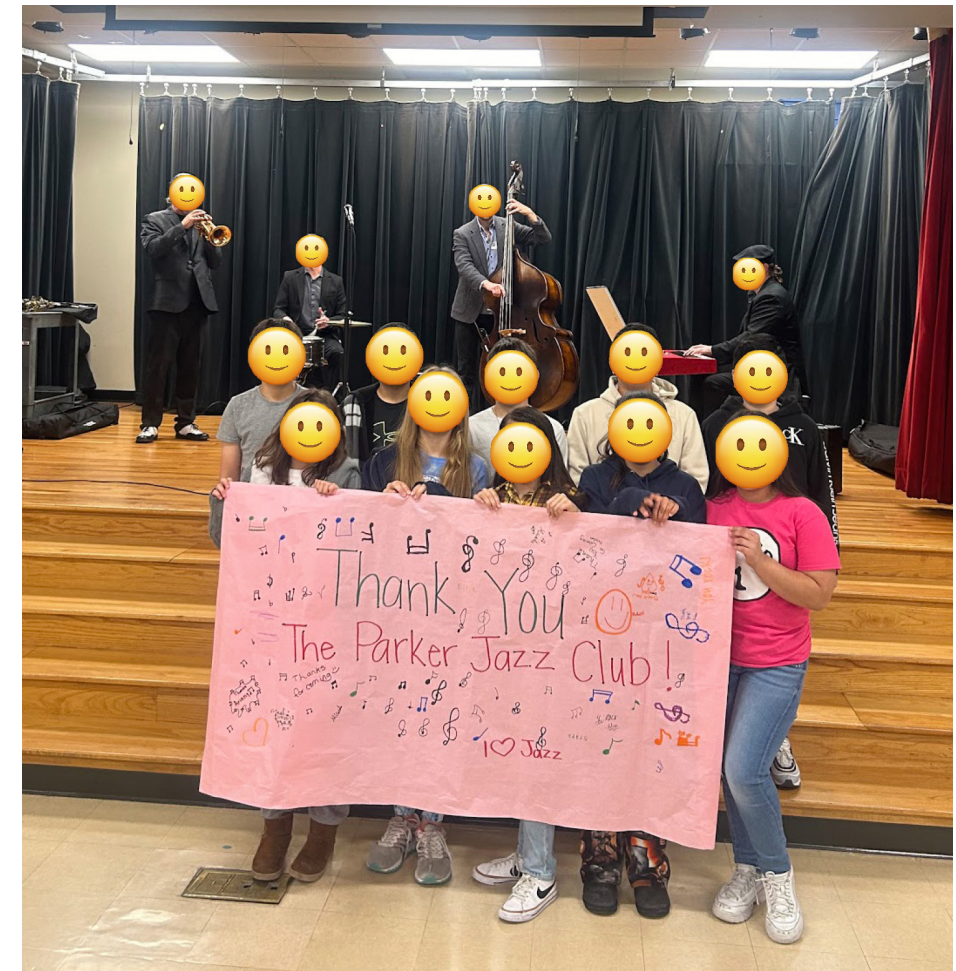
*THE ANIMALS, THE FERRET*

*DOMINICAN CULTURE IS SOMETHING LOUD,*

*DOMINICAN CULTURE MAKES ME PROUD.*

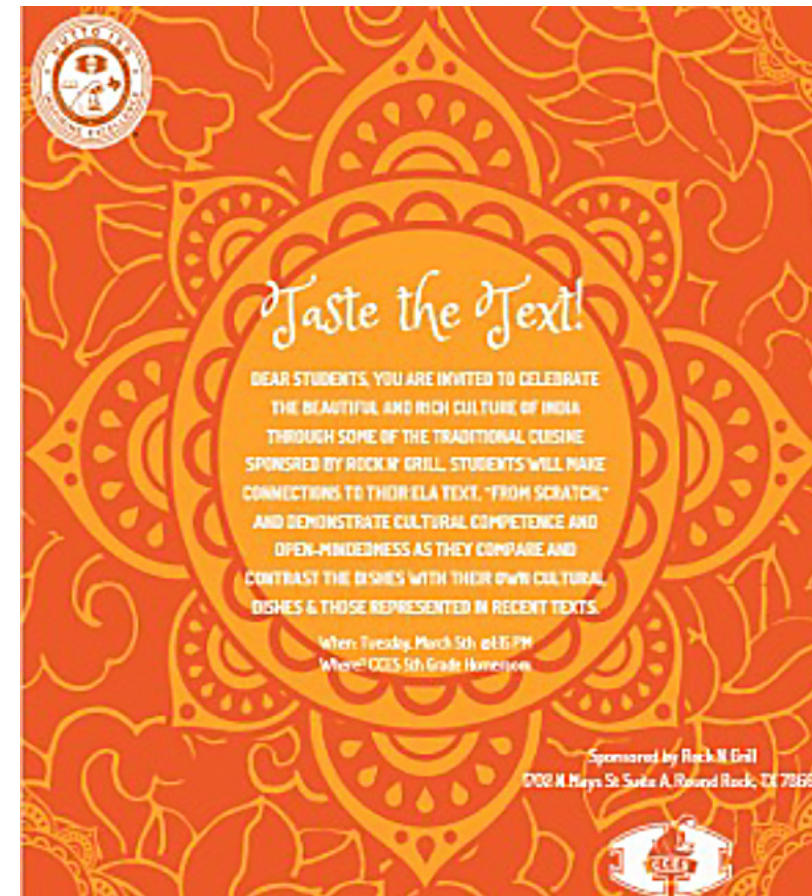
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Students were inspired by *Play, Louis, Play!* and began to show great interest in his jazz music, challenges, and life during racial segregation. They played a vital role in subsequent lessons and later helped plan for a special event celebrating Black History Month.





## Using Stories and Poems to Inspire Student-Led Events and Conversations



Students showed great curiosity about dishes beautifully described in the text *From Scratch*. After analyzing poetic techniques, students brainstormed ways to learn more about the Indian culture. We celebrated their open mindedness and cultural competence at the end of our unit with a special menu prepared by a local Indian restaurant.



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**Stephanie Hernandez** is a bilingual educator and currently serving as the Bilingual and ESL Specialist for Hutto ISD in Hutto, Texas. She enjoys building strong relationships to facilitate student success and encourages students to explore the world with an open mind and a sense of adventure. She uses stories and poems to inspire student-led events and conversations.