

**THE BIG IDEA:**

The power of  
storytelling

Written by **José Cruz González**  
Adapted from  
the book by **Pat Mora**  
Directed by **Ricky Araiza**

# THE TEAM

## Cast

Tomás - Hamblet Lemus

The Library Lady - Amanda Lopez-Castillo

## Creative Team

Director - Ricky Araiza

Playwright - José Cruz González

Music Director - Tommy Strawser

Music and Lyrics - José Cruz González

Musical Arrangments - Adam Jacobson

## Design and Crew

Stage Manager - Joshua Vern

Scenic Designer - Holly Windingstad

Costume Designer - Holly Windingstad

Media Designer - Chris Ignaci

Lighting Designer - Bret Reese

Scenic Artist- Julia Rogge

Puppet Designer - XYZ

Props Master- Joel Segraves

Deck Crew - Dan Cocca





## WHAT THE PLAY IS ABOUT

Tomás Rivera travels with his Amá, his Apá, his Grandfather, Papá Grande, and his little brother Enrique from Crystal City, Texas, all the way to Hampton, 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, and that his Papá Grande thinks he will become a writer or a painter some day.

When the Riveras arrive in Iowa, they discover that their new home is little more than a chicken coop. But the family carries on, getting occasional treats like pan dulce, (sweet bread) and listening to Apá Grande's stories. 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 about anything and everything he can possibly imagine. 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, while he becomes more confident in English and realizes that he doesn't need to be afraid of the Nightmare Teacher any longer. Then comes the day when Tomás comes to visit the library with his Papá Grande 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.

Based on the true story of Tomás Rivera and the book by Pat Mora, this play is a celebration of reading, imagination and creativity



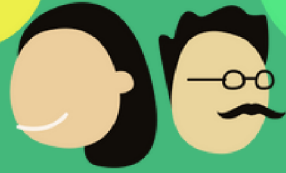


# DISCOVER IT

## Vocabulary Words Palabras de Vocabulario

HOLA

HELLO



Tomás and his family are bilingual!

This means that they speak two languages - English and Spanish. Did you recognize any of the words in Spanish? Were there any places or names you were unfamiliar with? Here are some words to help you!

**Campesinos**- farm workers

**Un Escritor**- a writer

**Un pinto**- a writer

**Artistas** - artists



**Cansado**- tired

**Confundido**- confused

**Mal Sueño**- nightmare

**Andele**- hurry

**La Luna**- the moon

**Libros**- books

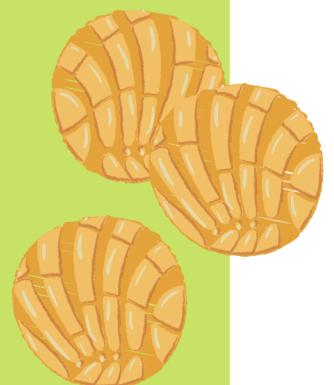
**Hogar**- a dough made from ground corn

**Pan dulce** - sweet bread

**Betebeles**- beets

**Elotes**- corn

**Espinaca**- spinach





## THEMES OF THE SHOW

- The power of books
- Moving to a new place
- Family
- Friendship



## TALK ABOUT IT

### Start a conversation before 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?

### Start a conversation after the show:

- ★ What did the Library Lady learn from Tomás? What are some of examples of ways adults can learn from young people?
- ★ Papa Grande thinks Tomás is going to be a writer or painter someday. What do your parents or grandparents want you to be? What do you want to be?
- ★ The actors play more than one character. How do they make the characters different from one another?



## CREATE IT!



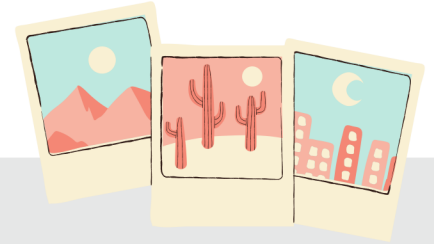
### What Do They See?

Illustrator Raul Colón created the pictures in the book *Tomás and the Library Lady*. They show the reader the world in which Tomás lives and the fantasy that the Library Lady's books help him to create.

Use [this map](#) to create a route from Texas to Iowa. You choose how they get from one place to another - what states will they go through? What will they see on the way? ★

Choose three places for the Riveras to stop along the way, and label them on your map with a star. Then draw a picture of what Tomás and his family might have seen at each stop. Think about the climate, habitat, animals, and landmarks in each area. Label the pictures and share them with the class, or hang them around the classroom!

## IMAGINE IT!



### Family Photos

Turn your illustrations into tableaux! A tableau is a frozen picture you make with your body. Here are the steps to create a Family Photo tableau:

- ★ Select an illustration from the “What Do They See?” activity (or a favorite moment from the book or play)
- ★ Talk about the things we see in the picture, both living and non-living. Which members of Tomás's family might be in a family photo from this place? Are they posing, or is this a candid photo? How would they feel during this part of their journey?
- ★ Choose a volunteer to come up to the front of the room and create a frozen picture with their body of a person, animal, or object from this stop on the journey. They can be ANYTHING that might be in this portrait, even a part of the Riveras' car, a pebble on the road, or the sun! Think big!
- ★ Add on to the picture by inviting additional volunteers to come up and create a shape with their body. They can add something new to the picture or add on to something somebody else is doing, like catching a ball someone else is throwing.
- ★ As you build the tableau, ask the audience questions about what they notice: “What do you see? How do you know?”
- ★ “Freeze” the tableau with about 5-7 participants. Invite the audience to take a picture using their imaginary camera!

## EXPLORE IT

### Build a story of your own and bring it to life!



Tomás not only loved learning stories, he also created ones of his own. And author Pat Mora and playwright José Cruz Gonzales made Tomás Rivera's life into a book and play. What stories do you have to tell?

Use one of these prompts to begin (or use one from your imagination). Think about the question and imagine what could happen next.

- Imagine dinosaurs roaming the Earth again. What is it like?
- You travel into space. What do you see?
- What does a naughty puppy (or other pet) get up to while its owners are asleep?
- You are stuck inside your school overnight. What do you do?



All stories have a beginning, middle, and end. Really interesting stories include people (the characters), a place (the setting), and a problem for the characters to solve by the end of the story.



Take a piece of paper and fold it into three sections. Label the sections 'Beginning,' 'Middle,' and 'End.'



Draw a picture in the first box illustrating the first thing that happens in your story, the beginning. Then, in the second box draw what happens in the middle, when the characters encounter a problem. Finally, draw the end, showing how the characters solve the problem



Students working on their writing skills can add a few words, a few sentences, or even a full paragraph to each picture, describing what happens in each part of their story.

### Extension!

Share your original story with your classmates by acting it out! In small groups, choose one story to dramatize. Decide who will play which character and who will be the storyteller. If the story is about space travel, maybe one group member will be an astronaut, while the others play aliens! Then work out what each character will do during each part of the story to show what is happening.

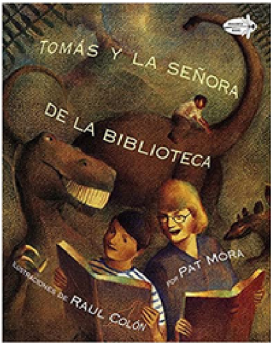
Practice reading the story out loud while the characters act it out. You can even add dialogue, where the storyteller pauses and the characters get to talk to each other! When the groups are done rehearsing, they can take turns sharing their stories.



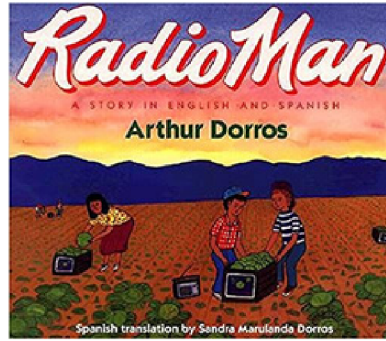


## READ ABOUT IT

Dive deeper into the themes of the play - and experience the power of books - with these stories chosen just for you by our volunteer librarian, Ms. Sarah!



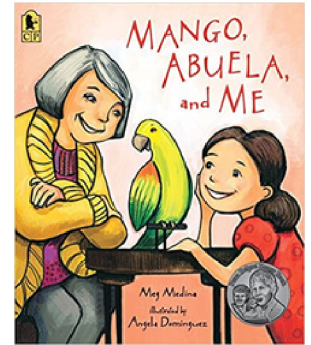
Tomás y la Señora  
de la Biblioteca/  
Tomás and the Library Lady  
By Pat Mora  
Ages 3-7



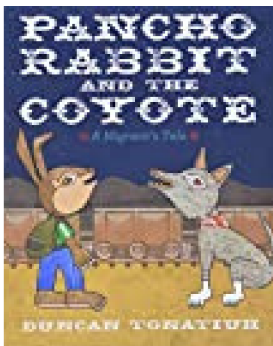
Radio Man  
By Arthur Dorros  
Ages 4-8



Mañanaland  
By Pam Muñoz Ryan  
Ages 8-12



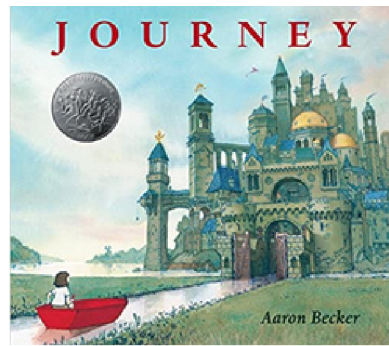
Mango, Abuela, and Me  
By Meg Medina  
Ages 5-8



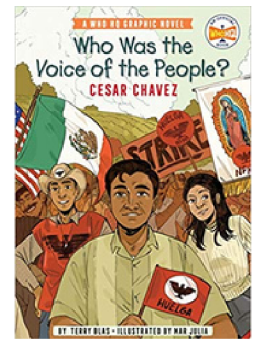
Rancho Rabbit and the  
Coyote: A Migrant's Tale  
By Duncan Tonatiuh  
Ages 6-9



Paletero Man  
By Lucky Diaz  
Ages 2-7



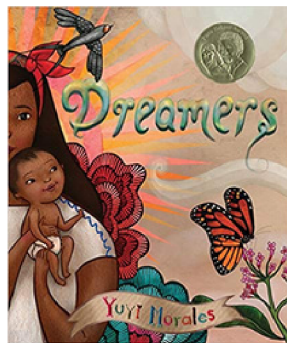
Journey  
By Aaron Becker  
Ages 3-6



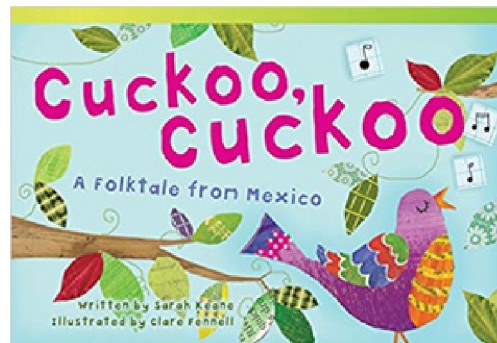
Who Was the Voice  
of the People?  
By Terry Blas  
Ages 8-12



Planting Stories/  
Sembrando historias  
By Anika Aldamuy Denise  
Ages 4-8



Dreamers  
By Yuyi Morales  
Ages 3-9



Cuckoo, Cuckoo: A Folktale  
from Mexico  
By Sarah Keane  
Ages 6-10



Digging for Words  
By Angela Burke Kunkel  
Ages 4-8

# About Tomás



**Tomás and the Library Lady** is based on the real life of Tomás Rivera, who was born in 1935 in Crystal City, Texas, to a migrant Chicano family. Despite facing the oppressive conditions of migrant life, Rivera graduated from high school and went on to receive a bachelor's and master's degree in education from Southwest Texas State University.

In 1960, he received a Ph.D. in Romance Languages from the University of Oklahoma. In 1979, he became the highest-ranking Chicano in public and private education when he accepted the position of chancellor at the University of California, Riverside. During those years he published extensively, including his landmark novel ...y no se lo tragó la tierra (1971), short stories and poetry posthumously gathered in The Harvest and The Searchers: Collected Poetry. All of his works, including his essays, are now found in Tomás Rivera: The Complete Works, edited by Julián Olivares (1992). All of his writings deal with the harsh life faced by Chicano migrant workers and their remarkable resiliency.

Tomás Rivera was particularly concerned with the liberation of the children of Chicano migrant workers. For Rivera, this liberation was to be achieved through education. Today, Rivera is considered to be one of the most important Chicano writers and educators.



## ENGAGE WITH IT

Different things engage different people. Explore what is exciting to you!

- ★ **Spanish Dictionary:** Familiarize yourself with the Spanish in the play and continue learning!  
<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/Spanish>
- ★ **Bilingual Story Time:** Identify your local library and find information on their bilingual story time programs to hear books and do activities in English and Spanish!  
<https://www.raisingarizonakids.com/free-family-fun/>
- ★ **Make Yummy Paletas :** When Tomás is moving with his family it's hot and sticky. Tomás daydreams about eating or drinking something cold. Cool off by making these tasty paletas!  
<https://multiculturalkidblogs.com/2021/07/05/3-easy-mexican-paleta-recipes-for-kids/>
- ★ **Spanish Games for Kids of All Ages:** <https://rockalingua.com/games>

## Supported by:

### EXTEND THE EXPERIENCE!

Bring a professional Teaching Artist to your classroom to lead an arts-based, standards-driven lesson connected to the play. Email us at:

[CPEducation@childsplayaz.org](mailto:CPEducation@childsplayaz.org)

## #SHAREWITHUS

Follow us on social media and share your comments and photos!

**#ChildsplayAZ**

**#TomasAndTheLibraryLady**

## 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.

For more information:  
[www.childsplayaz.org](http://www.childsplayaz.org)

