



# Too Many Tamales

by Gary Soto

## Close Reading and Culturally Responsive Teaching Ideas

**Close Reading Script:** (Teachers should adapt these suggestions to meet the needs of their class)

Questions/Activities/Vocabulary/Tasks	Expected Outcome or Response (for each)
<p><b>FIRST READING:</b></p> <p>Read aloud the entire book (or chapter) with minimal interruptions. Stop to provide word meanings or clarify only when you know the majority of your students will be confused.</p>	<p>The goal here is for students to enjoy the book, both writing and pictures, and to experience it as a whole. This will give them some context and sense of completion before they dive into examining the parts of the book more carefully.</p>
<p><b>SECOND READING:</b></p> <p><b>As you reread page 2-3, ask</b> How is Maria acting grown-up?</p> <p>What are Maria and her mother making?</p> <p>What are <i>tamales</i>? Tamales are a Mexican dish made with meat tucked in dough wrapped in corn husks.</p> <p><b>Reread page 3.</b> What does “kneaded” mean? What is she kneading? How do you think the masa feels?</p> <p><b>Look at the illustration on page 5.</b> What is Maria thinking? Can we tell by the expression on her face?</p> <p><b>Reread pages 6-7.</b> What did Maria say to herself?</p> <p><b>As you reread page 9, ask</b> What does “spread the masa” mean? What other things can be spread? Students think-pair-share things that can be “spread” as the teacher charts their answers.</p> <p>Teacher will show the video demonstrating how to spread masa on a corn husk. <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MhhLg-aEUSc">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MhhLg-aEUSc</a></p>	<p>“She was acting grown-up now, helping her mother make tamales.” “She felt grown-up wearing her mother’s apron. Her mom had even let her wear lipstick and perfume.”</p> <p>Maria and her mother are making tamales.</p> <p>Teacher uses pictures or <i>realia</i> to show what a tamale is? (<i>realia</i> - props or activities used to relate education to real life.)</p> <p>Students should infer from the pictures that “kneaded” means to work dough with your hands by pressing and stretching. (Teacher models with play dough while students mimic teacher’s actions.)</p> <p>Students should make the inference that Maria is thinking about the ring. The text states “She loved how it sparkled ...” We can tell by her raised eyebrows and lips like she is saying, “Ooohh.”</p> <p>“I’ll wear the ring for just a minute”</p> <p>“Spread the masa” means to stretch out the masa over the husk. “Spread” means to stretch out over a surface or to apply. For example, we spread butter on toast or peanut butter on a sandwich.</p> <p>Pretend you are spreading masa to make tamales. Teacher and students pantomime spreading masa.</p>

**After reading page 12-13**, look carefully at the illustration. What do you think “a shock spread through her body” means? Think about a time when you felt shocked. Turn to your partner and tell them about a time when you felt shocked.

Why is Maria shocked?

How is the term “spread” used here differently to when the author stated “spread the masa”?

What made Maria remember the ring?

Where does Maria think the ring is?

**After reading pages 14-15**, ask

What is Maria’s problem?

How did Maria choose to solve the problem?

Why didn’t Maria tell her mother about the ring?

**After reading page 16**, ask

Did Maria’s cousins agree to help her? How?

What does the author mean when he says “they were tired of the taste?”

**Activity**

Have the students think of a time that they ate so much of something that it no longer tasted good. Choose three or four students to dramatize this part of the story, showing facial expressions and body language.

What did the author mean when he said, “Their stomachs were stretched till they hurt”?

**Activity**

Students pantomime having very full stomachs.

**After reading page 18**, ask

Why were they only able to take 1 bite of the last tamale?

**After reading page 20**, ask

Did the cousins find the ring?

Where did they think the ring is?

Maria realized something important.

Shocked means to make someone feel surprised and upset. Show me your “shocked” face.

She realized that she lost the ring.

“Spread” in this sentence means “to become known.” The feeling of “shock” is being felt throughout her body.

She remembers the ring when she sees the picture of the pearl necklace. The text states, “As Maria was snipping out a picture of a pearl necklace, ...”

She thinks the ring is in one of the tamales

Maria lost her mother’s ring.

At first, Maria had her cousins eat the tamales

“What do you want us do?”

“Eat them,” she said. “If you bite something hard, tell me.”

Students infer: She was afraid she would get in trouble.

Yes, the text states, “The four of them started eating.”

“The first one was good. The second one pretty good, but by the third tamale, they were tired of the taste.”

The author means that they were too full. They had a lot to eat.

They were so full that they couldn’t eat anymore.

No, they did not find the ring in the tamales.

The text states “Nothing.”

Danny frowned, “I think I swallowed something hard,” he said. “Swallowed it!” Maria cried, her eyes big with worry. She looked inside his mouth. They think Danny swallowed the ring.

<p><b>After reading page 22-23</b> Look at Maria’s face and body language. How do you know what Maria is thinking?</p> <p><b>After reading page 25</b> Why did Maria finally tell her mother about the ring?</p> <p>What does “confess” mean?</p> <p>Read the sentence, <i>“I did something wrong,” Maria sobbed.</i> What do you think “sobbed” means? Look at the picture.</p> <p><b>After reading page 26-27, ask</b> How do the adults react to Maria’s situation? How do you know they are not angry?</p> <p>Listen to the sentence, “Well, it looks like we all need to cook up another batch of tamales.” What does “batch” mean?</p> <p><b>After reading page 28-29, have students look at the illustration.</b> What is Maria doing?</p> <p>Why did she feel like crying?</p> <p><b>After reading page 30, ask</b> How is Maria feeling now? Why?</p> <p>How would you describe Maria’s family?</p>	<p>We know she feels sad because the text states, “She could feel tears pressing to get out as she walked into the living room where the grownups sat talking.” She is looking down and her fists are clinched.</p> <p>Maria felt bad that she couldn’t find the ring. “Maria thought about the beautiful ring now sitting inside Danny’s belly, and got ready to confess.”</p> <p>Confess means to tell someone the truth.</p> <p>Sobbed means to cry. Have students pantomime “sobbing.”</p> <p>The adults did not get angry at Maria. The adults are smiling at Maria and helping her make more tamales.</p> <p>A batch is a lot of something or a bunch of something.</p> <p>She is kneading the masa. She is helping her family make more tamales.</p> <p>“At first she still felt like crying as she kneaded a great bowl of masa, next to Aunt Rosa.” She was embarrassed and felt guilty for not telling the truth earlier.</p> <p>Maria is feeling better because her problem was solved and everything was okay. The text states, “Then Maria couldn’t help herself: She laughed.”</p> <p>Maria’s family members take care of each other. On pages 16-18 her cousins agree to help her look for the ring even when they are tired of eating tamales. On pages 26-29 Aunt Rosa and the other adults help Maria make up for her mistake.</p> <p>Maria learned that it is better to tell the truth.</p>
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### Culturally Responsive Extension Activities

1. Have children list foods that are served at holidays in their families. If possible, arrange for children to taste tamales and other ethnic holiday foods.
2. Connect the story to math by having students make "tamales" from twists of paper. Have students take turns counting the paper tamales and using them in story problems. To illustrate the idea of probability, place a picture of a ring inside one of the twists of paper. Ask students to identify their chances of drawing the tamale with the ring out of a bowl of all the tamales.
3. Connect the story to communications arts by having children present the story as a class play.
4. Encourage children from non-Hispanic cultures to rewrite the story, using foods from their own families instead of tamales.