

A Comprehensive Educator's  
Guide to the Works of

# Tomie dePaola



The materials in this guide are aligned to Common Core State Standards for Grades PreK–3

# An Educator's Guide to Tomie dePaola



## Dear Educator,

Welcome to Penguin's Tomie dePaola read-aloud guide. Tomie dePaola is one of the most beloved authors and illustrators of children's books. He has written and/or illustrated more than 200 books for children and has received numerous awards for his books, including the 1976 Caldecott Honor Award for *Strega Nona*, the 2000 Newbery Honor Award for *26 Fairmount Avenue*, and the 2011 Laura Ingalls Wilder Award for making a substantial and lasting contribution to literature for children.

Many of dePaola's books are autobiographical or based on his childhood experiences. His love of folktales has led to many retellings or adaptations of traditional tales. He has also written and/or illustrated many religious and holiday books, including many about his favorite holiday, Christmas. Children from pre-school through the primary grades are drawn into dePaola's books through the engaging illustrations and themes that resonate in their own lives.

This guide is intended to help you incorporate Tomie dePaola's books into a standards-based curriculum. **The lesson plans that are provided show how Tomie dePaola's books can be used to support each of the four strands in the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy: Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language.**

Each lesson plan provides a context for the teacher, the genre, suggested grade levels, applicable standards, discussion questions, culminating activities, and connections to other books.

This comprehensive guide to Tomie dePaola's books can be adapted for the needs of your classroom or library. Whether you want to incorporate some of these books into a specific unit or add to an existing curriculum, we hope you'll find the guide useful for your student community.

Thank you for your continued support of our books.

—Penguin School & Library Marketing

## Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

Tomie dePaola's books can be used to support each of the four strands in the CCSS English Language Arts and Literacy: Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language. These strands do not stand alone, but support one another. For example, student discussion supports reading comprehension and also leads to effective writing. Language development underlies each of the strands. Each lesson plan contains the grade-level standards that are addressed.





## Reading Strand

Tomie dePaola's books lend themselves to multiple readings, which will lead to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the text. Model comprehension strategies as needed and students will learn to apply these strategies in texts they read on their own. Call students' attention to the illustrations as they will help them understand and appreciate the story.

The thoughtful use of text-based questions during and following read-alouds will help students develop close reading skills, a goal of the CCSS. Questions can be both literal and inferential and should focus on the message inherent in the text as well as the author's craft and use of language to convey that message. Consider students' needs as well as the demands of a text when formulating these questions. Students should always use evidence from the text when responding. This can be elicited through follow-up questions such as, "How do you know?" "Where does the author say that?" or "What are some details from the story that support your answer?"

## Writing Strand

Students should be provided with many opportunities to respond to dePaola's books in writing. They could write an opinion piece about a character or event in a story, or answer a question that requires them to demonstrate understanding of the text. Students may be inspired to write their own stories, based on their own experiences, like dePaola does. They can also make connections among his books.

As in reading, you need to model writing strategies, thinking aloud while composing a response on large chart paper. This will then lead to shared writing and independent writing projects. Younger students can draw their responses or dictate them to the teacher.

## Speaking and Listening Strand

Read-alouds provide the perfect opportunity for rich conversations about books. When students learn how to take part in classroom discussions about a text, they deepen their comprehension, build language and critical thinking skills, and come to respect others' viewpoints. Prior to the read-aloud, preview the suggested questions that are meant to build toward an overall understanding of the text. During the reading, encourage all students to participate and adjust questions based on their responses. After the read-aloud, pose a question that will require students to demonstrate orally or in writing their understanding of the text. Students should be required to use evidence from the text in their responses.

Classroom discussion rules help facilitate respectful and productive conversations. These are most effective when they are co-constructed with students. You can provide sentence stems for students to use. These might be, "I agree with \_\_\_\_ because . . ." or "I'd like to piggyback on what \_\_\_\_ said." Assigning rotating partners for "turn and talk" opportunities allows all students to participate in discussions. This guide provides many opportunities for speaking and listening through text-based questions and culminating activities.

## Language Strand

In order to expand your students' academic language, identify a few important words in each Tomie dePaola book that you will focus on for extended instruction during or after the read-aloud. These words, often called tier II words, are words that occur often in books and are more sophisticated ways to convey concepts students already know, for example, words like recognize, wise, and generous. Students should be encouraged to use these words in conversations and in their writing. *This guide includes many text-based questions and culminating activities that ask students to focus on vocabulary words and phrases.*

# Jack



Genre: **fiction** Suggested grade levels: **Pre-K and K**

Common Core State Standards addressed: **RL.K.1, RL.K.9, W.K.3, L.K.6**



## For the Teacher

Tomie dePaola based this original story on the traditional “Jack tales” in which a hero sets out to seek his fortune. In this cumulative tale, Jack is joined by animal friends on his way to the city to ask the king for a house. Stop during the reading to ask questions and share the illustrations with students. The text includes many examples of onomatopoeia with Jack’s creaking shoes and the sounds of the animals. Encourage students to make these sounds with you as the story progresses. They should also chime in on the repetitive question and answer: “Can I/we come too?” “Yes, please do.” The illustrations contain glimpses of familiar characters from nursery rhymes and fairy tales like Jack and Jill and Little Red Riding Hood and Charlie from dePaola’s *Charlie Needs a Cloak*. You can point these characters out to students on subsequent readings.

## Before Reading

Tell students you are going to read a book about a boy named Jack who goes on a journey to see the king. Ask them to listen carefully and look at the illustrations to find out what Jack wants and who joins him on his journey.

## Text-based Discussion Questions

Read through the whole text once for enjoyment. Then read it again, asking these questions.

- What does Jack want?
- What does his Grandpa tell him to do?
- Who joins Jack on his journey to the city? Why do you think they want to come with Jack?
- At the beginning of the story, Grandpa tells Jack the king is wise and generous. (Explain the meaning of each word.) Is Grandpa right? How do you know?
- What does Jack think of the house the king gives him? How do you know?
- How do the old man and old woman feel about their new neighbors?

## Culminating Activities

- Students draw a picture of their favorite animal from the story and write its name and the sound it makes under it.
- Students act out the story, playing the part of their animals. They alternate the roles of Jack, Grandpa, and the King.
- On another day, read the story again, explaining to students that Tomie dePaola included familiar characters from nursery rhymes and fairy tales in the illustrations. Encourage them to find these characters as you reread the story. Read these nursery rhymes and fairy tales to students over time.
- Read other versions of cumulative tales such as *The House That Jack Built* and *Henny Penny* to students on subsequent days. Encourage students to make connections among the tales.

Connected Texts: Cumulative tales such as *The House That Jack Built* and *Henny Penny*, *Charlie Needs a Cloak*, *Hey Diddle Diddle* and *Other Mother Goose Rhymes*

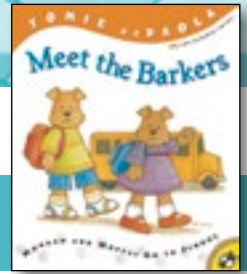
# The Barker Twins Series



## Meet the Barkers: Morgan and Moffat Go to School

Genre: fiction Suggested grade levels: K and 1

Common Core State Standards addressed: RL.K.1, RL.1.1, RL.K.2, RL.1.2, RL.K.3, RL.1.3, SL.K.2, SL.1.2, L.K.5, L.1.5



## For the Teacher

The main characters in the Barker Twins series are Welsh terriers, Morgan (Morgie) and his twin sister Moffat (Moffie). Moffat is the older twin by ten minutes and takes full advantage of her age with her brother. She is bossy and competitive. Morgan is more laid back and content to read his favorite books about dinosaurs. These stories focus on school and sibling issues and appeal to young readers who experience the same issues every day. *Meet the Barkers: Morgan and Moffat Go to School* is the first book in the series and will introduce students to the characters. Other books in the series can be shared using the format of this lesson plan. Some students will be ready to read these books independently. Display copies of all the Barker Twins books in the classroom for students to read.

Share the illustrations often during the reading and ask students how they show what the characters are feeling.

## Before Reading

Introduce the title and author of the book. Tell students that they will be listening to a story about twins Moffat (girl) and Morgan (boy) who were born on the same day but are very different from one another. Point out Moffat and Morgan on the front and back covers. Tell them to pay attention to what it is like for the twins to be in school for the first time.

## Text-based Discussion Questions

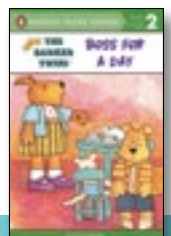
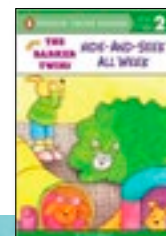
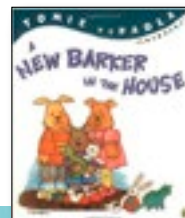
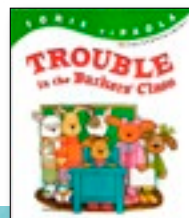
Read through the whole text once for enjoyment. Then read it again, asking these questions.

- How do Moffat and Morgan feel about starting school? How do you know?
- How are Moffie and Morgie different from one another?
- Why is Moffie happy about her first day of school? How about Morgie?
- While Moffie is getting gold stars, what is Morgie getting?
- How does Morgie teach Moffie and Sally to be friends?
- How does Morgie finally earn a gold star?
- Why are Morgie and Moffie happy at the end?

## Culminating Activities

- Ask students to describe how Moffie and Morgie are different. Encourage them to use examples from the book to support their answers. Chart their responses.
- Read aloud *Trouble in the Barkers' Class*. Ask students to make connections with *Meet the Barkers*.

Connected Texts: *Trouble in the Barkers' Class*, *A New Barker in the House*, *Hide-and-Seek All Week*, *Boss For a Day*



# Stories about Family and Growing Up



Now One Foot, Now the Other | Genre: fiction Suggested grade levels: K and 1

Common Core State Standards addressed: RL.K.1, RL.1.1, RL.K.3, RL.1.3, W.K.8, W.1.8, SL.K.2, SL.1.2



## For the Teacher

Tomie dePaola has written many books that are autobiographical or based on childhood memories. They explore themes of love of family, growing up, and self-acceptance. They are written in simple, direct prose and contain engaging illustrations that appeal to children in pre-school and the primary grades. This section contains lesson plans for *Now One Foot, Now the Other*, *Nana Upstairs & Nana Downstairs*, *The Art Lesson*, and *Stagestruck*.

*Now One Foot, Now the Other* is a testament to the love shared by a small boy and his grandfather, much like the boy and his grandmothers in *Nana Upstairs & Nana Downstairs*. The grandfather helps the boy learn to walk and then the boy in turn helps his grandfather do the same after he suffers a stroke. Students come to understand how family members help each other in times of need.

## Before Reading

Introduce the title and author of the book and explain to students that it is about a grandfather (Bob) and his grandson (Bobby) who have a special relationship. Tell them to pay attention to how Bob and Bobby's relationship changes in the story and how they show their love for one another.

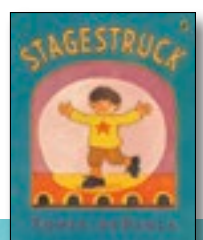
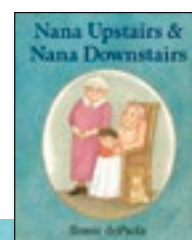
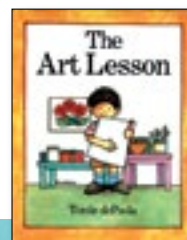
## Text-based Discussion Questions

- How do we know Bob and Bobby are best friends?
- How does Bob teach Bobby how to walk?
- What happens to Bob after Bobby's fifth birthday? How does Bobby feel about this?
- What does it mean that Bob doesn't recognize his family?
- What does Bobby do to help Bob get better?
- How does Bobby know how to help Bob learn to walk again?
- Why do you think Bob and Bobby like to repeat the stories about how they both learned to walk?

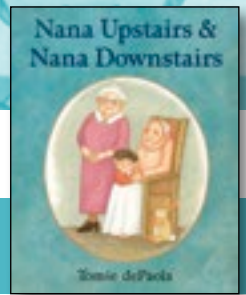
## Culminating Activities

- Ask students what they think is the most important lesson the author wants the reader to take away from this story. Students turn and talk to a partner and then share their responses with the whole class.
- Tell students to think about a special person in their family and how that person is important to them. They draw a picture of themselves and this person doing something special together and write a caption describing it.

Connected Texts: *Tom*, *Nana Upstairs & Nana Downstairs*,  
*The Baby Sister*



# Nana Upstairs & Nana Downstairs



Genre: **fiction** Suggested grade levels: **K and 1**

Common Core State Standards addressed: **RL.K.1, RL.1.1, RL.K.9, RL.1.9, W.K.1, W.1.1, SL.K.2, SL.1.2**

## For the Teacher

This true story from Tomie dePaola's life recounts the special relationship he had with his Irish grandmother and great-grandmother. Many of the details from this book can be found in his memoir, *26 Fairmount Avenue*. Tommy is deeply saddened by the loss of Nana Upstairs at the end of the book. Some students may have experienced the loss of a loved one in their own lives and may want to talk about that experience.

## Before Reading

Tell students you are going to read aloud *Nana Upstairs & Nana Downstairs*. Remind students of other Tomie dePaola books they have read. Explain to them that this story is based on his grandmother and great-grandmother.

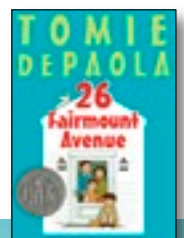
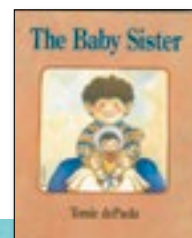
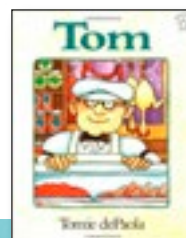
## Text-based Discussion Questions

- Why does Tommy call his grandmother and great-grandmother Nana Downstairs and Nana Upstairs?
- What special things does he do with Nana Upstairs every week?
- What happens to make Tommy sad?
- What does Tommy's mother mean when she tells him his great-grandmother will come back in his memory?
- What does Tommy's mother tell him about the falling star?

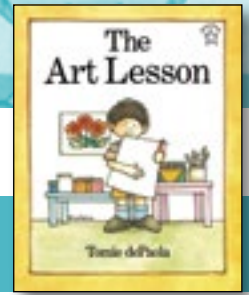
## Culminating Activities

- Students compare and contrast *Nana Upstairs & Nana Downstairs* with other Tomie dePaola books. Encourage students to think about the importance of family in each book. Chart their responses.
- Students choose their favorite Tomie dePaola book and write a short piece telling why they chose this book. Students can dictate their responses to an adult if necessary.
- Read aloud Chapter Two in *26 Fairmount Avenue*. Have students make connections with *Nana Upstairs & Nana Downstairs*.

Connected Texts: *Now One Foot, Now the Other*, *Tom*, *The Baby Sister*, *26 Fairmount Avenue*



# The Art Lesson



Genre: **fiction** Suggested grade levels: **K and 1**

Common Core State Standards addressed: **RL.K.1, RL.1.1, RL.K.3, RL.1.3, SL.K.2, SL.1.2, L.K.5, L.1.5**

## For the Teacher

*The Art Lesson* is based on Tomie dePaola's experiences as a child. It explores themes of the nature of creativity, growing up, and maintaining one's individuality. His memoir, *26 Fairmount Avenue*, includes some of the incidents that appear in this book.

## Before Reading

Tell students you are going to read aloud *The Art Lesson*. Remind students of other Tomie dePaola books they have read. Explain to them that this story is based on real events in his life. Say, "Tommy wants to be an artist when he grows up but experiences some problems when he gets to school." Ask them to think about the challenges Tommy faces in school.

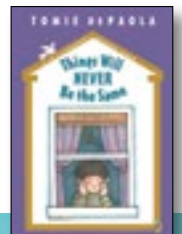
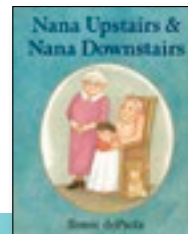
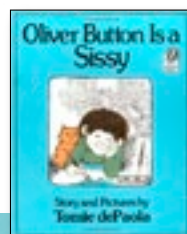
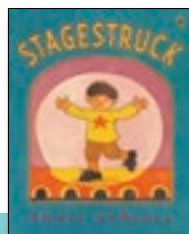
## Text-based Discussion Questions

- How do we know Tommy wants to be an artist?
- What advice do his twin cousins give him about being an artist?
- How does Tommy's family feel about him being an artist? How do you know?
- Why is Tommy disappointed in kindergarten at art time?
- Do things improve when he is in first grade? Why or why not?
- Why is Tommy upset during Mrs. Bowers's first art lesson?
- How does Mrs. Bowers make Tommy feel better?
- Why do you think Tommy drew a picture of Mrs. Bowers with his extra piece of paper?

## Culminating Activities

- Tell students that Tommy is creative, which means he wants to make art his own way, the way he pictures it in his mind. Explain that there are many ways to be creative. Writers create original stories. Singers sing songs in special ways. Generate a list of ways people can be creative. Record students' responses on chart paper.
- Encourage students to create their own original pictures. Provide them with varied art supplies. They sign their names at the bottom. Display them in the classroom and allow students to comment on each other's pictures.
- Read aloud Chapter Eight from dePaola's memoir, *Things Will Never Be the Same*. Ask students to make connections with *The Art Lesson*.

Connected Texts: *Stagestruck*, *Oliver Button Is a Sissy*, *Nana Upstairs & Nana Downstairs*, *Now One Foot, Now the Other*, *Things Will Never Be the Same*





# Little Grunt and the Big Egg



Genre: **fiction** Suggested grade level: **1**

Common Core State Standards addressed: RL.1.1, RL.1.3, RF.1.4, SL.1.2, L.1.4

## For the Teacher

*Little Grunt and the Big Egg* is an original story written by Tomie dePaola who calls it a prehistoric fairy tale. During the read-aloud, stop often to share the illustrations with students. The text contains many examples of onomatopoeia and text features such as italics and bold print that provide clues as to how the book should be read aloud.

## Before Reading

Tell students that you are going to read aloud *Little Grunt and the Big Egg* about a group of cavemen and a dinosaur. Explain that it is not really a fairy tale like it says on the cover because it was written by Tomie dePaola and didn't come from long ago. Remind students that people and dinosaurs never actually lived at the same time.

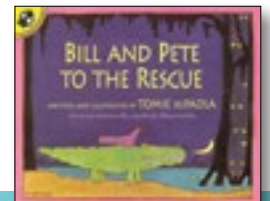
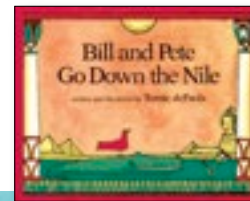
## Text-based Discussion Questions

- Read the first three pages. Explain that the word grunt means to make deep, harsh sounds. Why do you think Tomie dePaola chose Grunt as the name for the cavemen?
- How does Little Grunt prove he's smart?
- What surprising thing happens to the egg Little Grunt brings home?
- Little Grunt gets to keep George as a pet. How does that work out?
- How do Little Grunt and George feel when George has to leave?
- How does George prove he's a good friend to Little Grunt and his family?
- Why does Little Grunt change George's name to Georgina?

## Culminating Activities

- Tell students that the author's purpose explains why the author writes a book and that Tomie dePaola wrote this book to make us laugh. Have them turn and talk to a partner about things that happened in the book that were funny and made them laugh. Chart their responses during sharing time.
- Using a document camera, display the page where the egg cracks open. Read it again, pointing to the words and reading the uppercase words in a loud voice. Point out these words and ask how they look different. Explain that authors often use the print in books to show how the words should be read and that the uppercase letters mean to read those words in a loud voice. Find other examples in the book of boldface words, uppercase print, and italicized words to share with students. Encourage students to look for these clues in their own reading.

Connected Texts: *The Knight and the Dragon*, *Bill and Pete*, *Bill and Pete Go Down the Nile*, *Bill and Pete to the Rescue*



# Stagestruck



**Genre:** fiction **Suggested grade level:** 1

Common Core State Standards addressed: RL.1.1, RL.1.3, RL.1.4, W.1.1, SL.1.1, L.1.4

## For the Teacher

In *Stagestruck*, when the main character Tommy doesn't get the lead role in the class production of Peter Rabbit, he steals the show as Mopsy and undermines the boy who plays Peter. His mother teaches him to think about the feelings of others. This book contains many idioms, multiple-meaning words, and stage terminology (parts, rehearsals, stage presence, steal the show, a ham, stagestruck) and students may need help to understand their meanings. You may also need to point out that the illustrations in the cloud bubbles show what Tommy is imagining. On a day prior to reading *Stagestruck*, read *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* to the students to provide background knowledge.

## Before Reading

Tell students that they will be listening to a book called *Stagestruck* about a kindergarten class and a student named Tommy. Explain that Tommy's class will be putting on a play and ask students what a play is. Support their understanding if necessary. Based on their responses and your input, create a chart with words connected to a play, e.g., acting, parts, costumes, rehearsals, stage, and audience. Before reading, tell students to think about Tommy's actions during the story and what it means to be stagestruck.

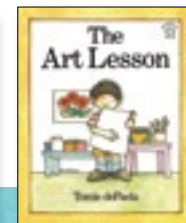
## Text-based Discussion Questions

- Why is Tommy excited when he learns his class is going to put on a play?
- Why does he think he would be perfect to play Peter Rabbit?
- Why doesn't he get the part?
- What does he remember that Miss Leah told his dancing class to do on stage?
- What happens during the play when Mopsy (Tommy) reacts to everything Peter does?
- What does it mean that Mopsy stole the show?
- Why do you think Miss Bird doesn't say anything special to Tommy after the play?
- Why does Tommy's mother tell him to apologize to his teacher and Johnny?
- Read the last three pages again, showing students the pictures. Ask them what they think it means to be stagestruck?

## Culminating Activities

- Students write a letter to Tommy explaining why what he did at the play was wrong. They read their letters to the whole class during sharing time.
- Tell students there are many words in this story that have more than one meaning. Write these words on the board: stole, part, lines, ham, star. Give students drawing paper folded in half. Assign one of the words to each student. On the left side, they draw a picture that shows one meaning of the word. On the right side, they draw a picture that shows another meaning. Display these for other students to see.

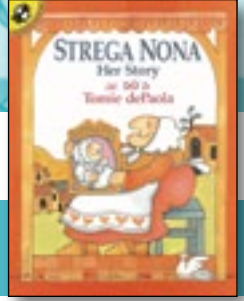
Connected Texts: *The Art Lesson*, *Oliver Button Is a Sissy*, *Things Will Never Be the Same*



# Strega Nona Series

**Strega Nona** | Genre: **fiction** Suggested grade levels: **1 and 2**

**Common Core State Standards addressed: RL.1.1, RL.2.1, RL.1.3, RL.2.3, W.1.1, W.2.1, SL.1.2, SL.2.2, RL.K.1, RL.K.3, W.K.8, W.1.8, SL.K.2**



## For the Teacher

Strega Nona, Grandma Witch, uses her potions and cures to help the people in her Calabrian town. Big Anthony, her assistant, has good intentions but doesn't pay attention and this often leads to disaster. These original tales contain many folkloric elements and Italian traditions. The illustrations expand the meaning of the text and draw readers in with their gentle humor. This lesson plan for *Strega Nona* can be used as a model for sharing other books in the series.

*Strega Nona* is the first book in the Strega Nona series. It was the recipient of a Caldecott Honor Award in 1976. During the read-aloud, stop often to discuss the events in the story and share the illustrations with students.

## Before Reading

Explain to students that Strega Nona is Italian for “Grandma Witch” and that, in this story, a witch is someone who does good instead of evil.

## Text-based Discussion Questions:

After reading the first two pages aloud, ask students:

- What do we know about Strega Nona so far?
- Why does Strega Nona need someone to help her?
- What does Strega Nona tell Big Anthony he should never do?
- The author says that Big Anthony doesn't pay attention to things. How does that lead to a problem for him and the town?
- Why do you think Big Anthony doesn't obey Strega Nona's instructions?
- How do you think Strega Nona knows what has happened when she returns from her visit to Strega Amelia?
- What does Strega Nona mean when she says, “The punishment must fit the crime?”
- What lesson do you think Big Anthony learns?

## Culminating Activities

- Write the following expression on the board, “Be careful what you wish for.” Explain to students that sometimes what we wish for doesn't always work out the way we expect. Have students turn and talk to a partner about how things didn't work out for Big Anthony the way he expected. Invite a few students to share their ideas with the whole group.
- On successive days, read aloud *Strega Nona: Her Story* and *Big Anthony: His Story*. Explain that these books tell the story of Strega Nona and Big Anthony from the time they were born up to the beginning of *Strega Nona*. Stop during the reading so students can make connections with Strega Nona.

Connected Texts: *Big Anthony and the Magic Ring*, *Strega Nona's Magic Lessons*, *Merry Christmas*, *Strega Nona*, *Strega Nona Meets Her Match*, *Strega Nona: Her Story*, *Big Anthony: His Story*, *Strega Nona Takes a Vacation*, *Brava, Strega Nona!*, *Strega Nona's Harvest*, *Strega Nona's Gift*, *Strega Nona Does It Again*

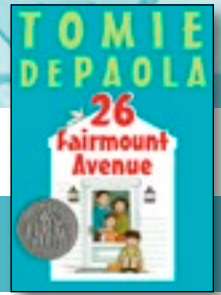


# The Memoir Series

## 26 Fairmount Avenue

Genre: memoir Suggested grade levels: 2 and 3

Common Core State Standards addressed: RI.2.1, RI.3.1, W.2.3, W.3.3, SL.2.2, SL.3.2



## For the Teacher

Tomie dePaola has written eight books of personal memoirs that begin when he was four years old and continue through World War II. The first book, *26 Fairmount Avenue*, was a Newbery Honor winner. In each sequential book in the series, he recounts memorable and often humorous experiences from his life. Students will recognize some of the characters dePaola has immortalized in his autobiographical picture books. The text is direct and accessible to young readers. Each book contains black and white illustrations that add to the narrative and support children as they transition from picture books to chapter books. Other books in the series can be shared as read-alouds following the format of this lesson plan or students can read them independently or with a partner. These and dePaola's *Christmas Remembered* can be used in an author study on Tomie dePaola or in a unit of study on memoirs.

Read aloud *26 Fairmount Avenue* to students, a chapter at a time, stopping often to discuss the events and share the illustrations.

## Before Reading

Remind students of other books they have read by Tomie dePaola. Explain that the book you are going to read is a memoir in which the author tells about important experiences in his life. Encourage students to think about why Tomie dePaola chose to write about each particular event and how these experiences influenced his later life. They should also make connections to his books when applicable.

## Text-based Discussion Questions

### Chapter One

- Why do you think Tomie dePaola starts his memoir in 1938?
- How do Tomie's parents show that they care for their neighbors?

### Chapter Two

- How does four-year-old Tomie make sense of all his Nanas?
- What mistake does Tomie make at Nana Upstairs' house that causes them both to get sick?
- Why do you think Nana Downstairs never forgets the mints or Life Savers again?

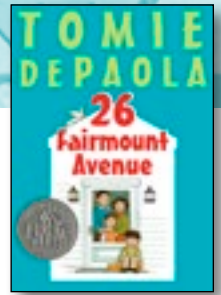
### Chapter Three

- Why does Tomie look up to Walt Disney?
- What is Tomie's reaction when he sees the movie *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*? Why?

### Chapter Four

- What are some problems Tomie's family face as they build their new home?
- How does Tomie's family encourage his interest in art?

# 26 Fairmount Avenue



## Chapter Five

- Why is kindergarten a disappointment for Tomie?
- How does his mother convince him to return to school?

## Chapter Six

- How is Tomie's house threatened when his family and friends try to clear the backyard so they can grow grass?

## Chapter Seven

- What happens to further delay Tomie's new house?
- What does he do to make things come out right?

## Chapter Eight

- How do Tomie and his family celebrate Christmas and New Year's Eve?
- What does he mean when he says, "In just a few more days?"

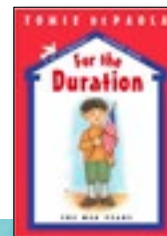
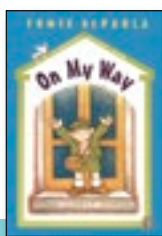
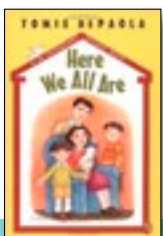
## Chapter Nine

- How do you know Tomie has a hard time waiting to see his new house?
- How is Tomie's family's new house a real home?

## Culminating Activities

- Explain to students that childhood interests and experiences often influence what a person does for a career as an adult. Have students work with a partner to jot down some of Tomie's childhood interests and experiences that may have contributed to his becoming an author and illustrator. Students share with others during whole-class sharing time.
- Explain to students that Tomie dePaola chose just a few stories from his childhood to write about in this book. Discuss why he might have chosen them. (Perhaps they were funny, or dramatic, or showed how important his family and home were to him.) Ask students to think about an important event in their lives and to write a short memoir about this event. Students read their memoirs to the class during sharing time and explain why they chose to write about that particular event.
- As part of an author study on Tomie dePaola, students immerse themselves in his books and read his memoirs independently, in pairs, or in small groups. Encourage students to make connections among his books in their reading journals. They also make connections between events in his memoirs and characters and events in his books. For example, when reading *Things Will Never Be the Same*, they might note that the part of the movie *Fantasia* that Tomie liked the best was when Mickey Mouse, as the Sorcerer's Apprentice, used a spell to make a broom carry buckets of water up stairs and then couldn't stop it, causing a flood. A similar thing happened in *Strega Nona* when Big Anthony caused the pasta pot to overflow.

Connected Texts: *Here We All Are*, *On My Way*, *What a Year*, *Things Will Never Be the Same*, *I'm Still Scared*, *Why? For the Duration*, *Christmas Remembered*



# Legends, Folktales, and Traditional Stories



**The Legend of the Bluebonnet** | Genre: **legend** Suggested grade level: **3**

**Common Core State Standards addressed: RL.3.2, RL.3.3, RL.3.9, W.3.1, SL.3.1, L.3.4**



## For the Teacher

Tomie dePaola has retold, adapted, and illustrated many legends, folktales, and traditional stories for children. These tales originate in many countries around the world and he includes authentic details from each country in the texts and illustrations. This section includes lesson plans for *The Legend of the Bluebonnet*, *Jamie O'Rourke and the Big Potato*, *Adelita: A Mexican Cinderella Story*, *Jack*, and *Little Grunt and the Big Egg*. Each lesson plan references other texts that are similar in theme. These books would be valuable additions to a unit of study on folktales and traditional tales.

This story is based on a Comanche tale that seeks to explain the origins of the bluebonnet, a wildflower that grows in Texas. Although the text and illustrations are deceptively simple, the themes of loss, courage, sacrifice, and rebirth are deeply felt. Expand on these themes during the reading. This book would fit nicely in a unit of study on Native Americans or origin tales.

## Before Reading

Tell students you are going to read aloud a legend that comes from Texas and that a legend is a traditional story that has a historical background. This story is based on the traditions of the Comanches, a Native American tribe. Tell them to pay close attention to the beliefs and customs of the Comanche people during the read-aloud.

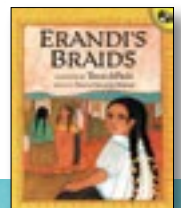
## Text-based Discussion Questions

- After reading aloud the first two pages, ask: What do the Comanche people want the Great Spirits to do?
- Read the page about drought and famine. Briefly explain these words and ask: What is causing the drought and famine?
- Read the next three pages. Ask: What do we know about the girl She-Who-Is-Alone? Why do you think the People gave her that name?
- What do the Great Spirits tell the Shaman that the People must do to end the drought and famine? Why do they ask for this?
- How does She-Who-Is-Alone show great courage?
- How is She-Who-Is-Alone rewarded for her sacrifice?
- Why do the People change the girl's name?

## Culminating Activities

- Students respond to the following prompt: How did the girl show she loved her people dearly? Students write brief responses and share them with the class.
- Students work with a partner and list what they have learned about the beliefs and customs of the Comanche People. They share these with the whole class during sharing time. Chart their responses. Encourage students to extend their knowledge of the Comanche People through further research.
- On another day, read aloud *Erandi's Braids*. Discuss with students how the theme of sacrifice is represented in both books.

Connected Texts: *The Legend of the Indian Paintbrush*, *The Legend of the Poinsettia*, *Erandi's Braids*



# Jamie O'Rourke and the Big Potato



**Genre:** folktale **Suggested grade level:** 2

**Common Core State Standards addressed:** RL.2.2, RL.2.3, W.2.3, SL.2.2, L.2.4



## For the Teacher

Tomie dePaola's ancestors were from Ireland and Italy and his heritage has influenced many of his books. *Jamie O'Rourke and the Big Potato* is his retelling of an Irish folktale. The text contains colloquialisms and dialect and you may need to explain the meaning of some of these words or phrases for students.

## Before Reading

Tell students you are going to read aloud *Jamie O'Rourke and the Big Potato*, an Irish folktale. Remind students of folktales they have read or heard and ask them to think about what makes a story a folktale. Chart their responses.

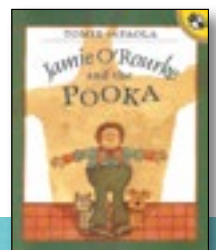
## Text-based Discussion Questions

- Read the first three pages to students showing them the illustrations. Ask students what it means to be lazy. How do we know Jamie is lazy?
- Jamie thought he was going to die of starvation because Eileen couldn't dig up the praties. What could he have done to prevent that from happening?
- Why does Jamie want the leprechaun's pot of gold?
- How does the leprechaun prove he's clever?
- Do you think Jamie makes a good decision to take the pratie seed instead of the leprechaun's pot of gold? Why or why not?
- Jamie's potato is so big he can't get it out of the ground. How is his problem solved?
- Usually in folktales, good is rewarded and evil or foolish characters are punished. Is that how it works in this story?

## Culminating Activities

- Have students write a different ending to the story in which Jamie gets what he deserves. Students read their stories to the class during sharing time.
- Remind students that Jamie O'Rourke was lazy and the leprechaun was clever. Give each student an index card with one of these words on it. On one side they write an example of someone who is lazy (or clever) and on the other side they write an example of someone who is not lazy (or clever). Students share their responses with a partner.
- On another day, read aloud *Jamie O'Rourke and the Pooka*. After reading, have students discuss how these two stories are similar and different.

Connected Texts: *Jamie O'Rourke and the Pooka*

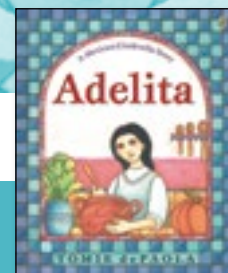


# Adelita: A Mexican Cinderella Story



Genre: **folktale** Suggested grade level: **2**

Common Core State Standards addressed: **RL.2.2, RL.2.3, RL.2.9, W.2.7, SL.2.2, L.2.4**



## For the Teacher

*Adelita*, dePaola's adaptation of the Cinderella tale, incorporates Mexican customs and folk art and contains Spanish words and phrases throughout the text. The glossary of Spanish phrases at the end of the book provides a resource for meanings and pronunciations. This book can be used as part of a unit on Cinderella stories.

## Before Reading

Tell students you are going to read a Mexican Cinderella story to them. Remind students of the story of Cinderella and explain to them that almost every culture has a version of this tale. Ask them what are the main elements of the Cinderella story they know and chart their responses.

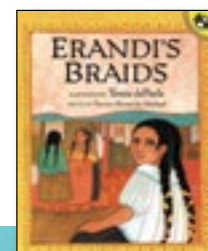
## Text-based Questions

- After his wife dies, how does Francisco become happy again?
- When Francisco tells Adelita he's going to marry Senora Micaela, he says she is charming. Esperanza thinks she's cold. Look at the illustrations. Who do you think is right?
- How does Adelita's life change after her father dies?
- *Esperanza* is the Spanish word for hope. How does Adelita lose hope when Dona Micaela makes Esperanza leave?
- How does Esperanza's return give Adelita hope again?
- Why do you think Adelita tells Senor Gordillo her name is Cinderella?
- Why does Adelita run away when Javier says he loves her?
- On the day after the fiesta, Dona Micaela is glad there is no glass slipper like in the fairy tale. Why is she glad?
- Instead of a glass slipper, what helps Javier find Cinderella?
- In the end, how does Adelita prove she is good as well as beautiful?

## Culminating Activities

- Return to the chart with the elements of the Cinderella story. Ask students how *Adelita* is similar to the Cinderella story and how it is different. Chart their responses.
- Students share what they learned about the Mexican culture.
- Provide students with copies of Cinderella stories from around the world. Student partners choose a book to read and then do brief research reports about the country from which their tale came. They present their tale and reports to the class.

Connected Texts: Cinderella tales from around the world, *Erandi's Braids*



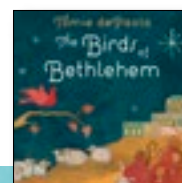
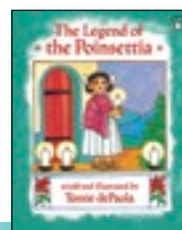
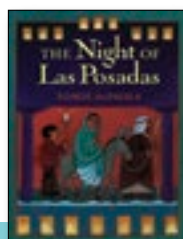


# Also by Tomie dePaola



Tomie dePaola's favorite holiday is Christmas. He has written and illustrated many books that reflect his love of this season.

- ***The Night of Las Posadas***: This story is based on an old Spanish custom which celebrates Mary and Joseph seeking shelter in Bethlehem on Christmas Eve. It is set in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Sister Angie is in charge of the yearly celebration. Lupe and her husband Roberto are chosen to portray Maria and Jose (Mary and Joseph) in the Las Posadas pageant. On Christmas Eve, Lupe and Roberto put on their costumes and set off in their truck to the village for the pageant but get stuck in snow. A young woman on a burro and her husband mysteriously arrive in the village to take Lupe and Roberto's place. No one knows who they are but Sister Angie discovers the truth when she sees fresh snow covering the carvings of Mary and Joseph in the church. This book celebrates the mystery and beauty of the Christmas story.
- ***The Clown of God***: This story is a retelling of an old French legend. Giovanni is an orphaned street urchin who begs from door to door, juggling for his food. He joins a traveling group of actors as a juggling clown and spreads laughter and joy wherever he goes. When he becomes old, he finds himself once again a poor beggar, homeless and alone. On a bitterly cold night, he seeks shelter in a church and falls asleep. When he awakens he is surrounded by the sight of the townspeople offering gifts to a statue of Mary and the Baby Jesus. When everyone has left, Giovanni goes closer and sees that the Baby Jesus has a very sad face. He puts on his clown make-up and juggles for the child, the only gift he has to offer. He dies during his performance and when the monks find him on Christmas morning, they see that the face of the Baby Jesus on the statue is smiling, pleased by the clown's offering. This book captures the true spirit of the Christmas message.
- ***The Legend of the Poinsettia***: This story is based on a Mexican legend that explains the origin of the poinsettia. Lucida and her mother are weaving a blanket to cover the Baby Jesus in the Christmas procession. When her mother becomes ill, Lucida is unable to complete the blanket and she feels she has ruined Christmas. Lucida is reluctant to go to the procession until a mysterious old woman tells her that the Baby Jesus will love whatever she gives because it comes from her. Lucida grabs an armful of weeds and brings them into the church. As she prays, the weeds open into dazzling red flowers that decorate the altar. This book echoes the themes in *The Clown of God* and *The Legend of the Bluebonnet*.
- ***The Birds of Bethlehem***: This is the story of the Nativity told by the birds of Bethlehem. The simple prose and beautiful illustrations illuminate the miracle of the first Christmas. This book would pair nicely with *The Night of Las Posadas*.
- ***Christmas Remembered***: In this Christmas memoir, Tomie dePaola shares fifteen special memories of Christmas starting when he was three years old and spanning six decades. This book appeals to all ages. It is a nice complement to his 26 Fairmount Avenue memoir series.

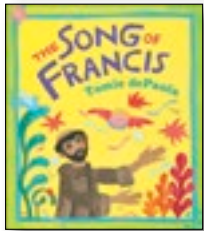


# Books With a Religious Theme

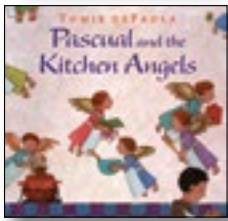
Tomie dePaola has also written many stories that reflect his love of God and religious faith and traditions.



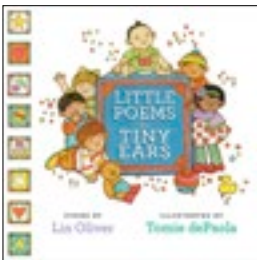
- ***Let the Whole Earth Sing Praise***: This book praises the beauty of creation. It was inspired by Old Testament Scripture and the artwork of the Otomi people of Puebla, Mexico.



- ***The Song of Francis***: This story is based on the life of St. Francis of Assisi who is so full of love for God that he sings His praises. The birds and angels join in his song until the end of the day and Francis knows they will return the next day to sing with him again. This book is a nice companion piece to *Pascual and the Kitchen Angels* and *Let the Whole Earth Sing Praise*.



- ***Pascual and the Kitchen Angels***: When Pascual is born it is apparent he is very special. The angels sing in the trees. As he grows, he sings to the sheep and they sing back to him. He becomes a shepherd and his goodness is apparent to everyone. As a young man, he goes to the monastery of St. Francis to become a friar and feed hungry people. The friars give him the job of cook even though Pascual can't cook. The angels who have protected him throughout his life come and prepare the meals for him while he prays. The friars finally discover who is cooking their meals and allow Pascual to come with them to feed the hungry. This book can also be paired with *The Holy Twins: Benedict and Scholastica*.



- ***Little Poems for Tiny Ears***: Tomie dePaola illustrated this collection of poems by Lin Oliver for babies and toddlers.

- ***My First Thanksgiving, My First Chanukah, My First Christmas, My First Easter, My First Halloween, and My First Passover***: These board books introduce toddlers and young children to these holidays.





# Tomie dePaola

With over 15 million books in print, Tomie dePaola is one of the most beloved creators of children's literature today. His many accolades include winning the Caldecott Honor Award for *Strega Nona*, the Newbery Honor Award for *26 Fairmount Avenue*, the 2011 Laura Ingalls Wilder Award for his substantial and lasting contribution to children's literature and, most recently, the 2012 Society of Illustrators Lifetime Achievement Award.

dePaola was born on September 15, 1934 in Meriden, Connecticut. At the age of four, Tomie told anyone who would listen that he wanted to write stories and draw pictures for books and to sing and tap dance on the stage when he grew up. (At age 80, Tomie can say he's done all of those things!) Tomie attended Pratt Institute in Brooklyn for art school, which he credits for making him into the artist he is. Pratt still has an art studio named in Tomie's honor and has granted him an honorary doctoral degree.

dePaola has written and illustrated over 200 books in his 40 years in book publishing. Foreign editions of his books are available in Taiwan, China, Australia, Korea, Japan, the UK, Germany, France, South Africa, Spain, Poland, Italy, Portugal, Denmark and Sweden. He lives in New London, NH.

## AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

- ★ Recipient of the Laura Ingalls Wilder Award
  - ★ Recipient of the Smithsonian Medal
- ★ Recipient of the Caldecott Honor Award
- ★ Recipient of the Newbery Honor Award
  - ★ Recipient of the Regina Medal
- ★ Recipient of the Sarah Josepha Hale Award
- ★ Recipient of the New England Book Award for Children
- ★ US nominee for the 1990 Hans Christian Andersen Award in Illustration
  - ★ Designated a "living treasure" by the New Hampshire Governor's Arts Awards



## PRAISE

- "One of the most famous and gifted in the field." –The Today Show, NBC-TV
- "Oh Tomie, I just love you!" –First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton at a reading event at The White House
- "Perhaps the friendliest and most popular picture book maker of our time." –The Detroit News
- "Tomie dePaola is my Leonardo Di Caprio." –The Philadelphia Inquirer (comments by a teacher)
- "One of the best read authors in America." –The Minneapolis Tribune
- "An international star." –*Publishers Weekly*
- "A veritable industry." –*Booklist*
- "Creative visionary" –The Boston Globe