



Introduction: *Burro's Tortillas* (Grade 1)



This introduction provides background information for a unit based on *Burro's Tortillas*, a children's book written by Terri Fields. The unit was created for use with first-grade English language learners. The unit has been aligned to the Common Core State Standards and features scaffolded activities designed to support students' language development.

The unit is geared towards Spanish-speaking ELLs, but teachers of students speaking other languages may wish to adapt the lessons by connecting to other languages, cultural elements, or related stories.

The introduction includes the following sections:

- Project Overview
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Related materials, classroom videos, and teacher videos are available on Colorín Colorado:

www.colorincolorado.org/common-core/classroom/lessons/grade1/





Project Overview

The *Burro's Tortillas* unit was created by a group of teachers from Albuquerque, New Mexico, working in collaboration with the [Albuquerque Teachers Federation](#) and [Dr. Diane August](#). Additional support for the project was provided by two consultants to the project. Erin Haynes helped develop the lessons and David Pook assisted with the preparation of the text-dependent questions and writing prompts. This project was funded by the American Federation of Teachers [Innovation Fund](#) to create grade-appropriate lesson plan exemplars in grades 1, 4, and 8 aligned to the Common Core State Standards and targeting English language learners' (ELLs) literacy and language needs. Colorín Colorado then filmed teachers delivering the lessons in their classrooms.

(**Note:** The students featured in the accompanying video segments are second graders who moved up with teacher Ali Nava, a member of the first-grade cadre. This lesson plan can be adapted for early second-grade students as needed.)

Opportunities and Challenges

ELLs face a unique set of opportunities and challenges in meeting the Common Core State Standards, which have been adopted by 45 states and the District of Columbia and require all students to develop literacy in the content areas (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). For example, the Common Core State Standards offer ELLs the opportunity to access grade-level content alongside their peers. ELLs also bring other types of assets to their learning that constitute important resources for their success in the classroom, such as first-language knowledge and skills (Fránquiz & Reyes, 1998). These assets can play a part in the success of their peers as well, who, to be college- and career-ready, need to learn to understand other perspective and cultures.

Yet the Common Core State Standards also present ELLs and their educators with unique challenges; ELLs often lag behind their English-speaking peers in vocabulary development, a key component of literacy (August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005; Mancilla-Martinez & Lesaux, 2011).



In addition, if they have had limited or interrupted formal education, ELLs may lack important academic skills and learning strategies, which are important to high achievement (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2005). Given these challenges, this unit focuses on the literacy and language development of ELLs with targeted activities and strategies.

Objectives

This particular approach of building upon ELLs' existing background knowledge and first language was central to the creation of this lesson. It is based upon the picture book *Burro's Tortillas*, a Southwestern adaptation of "The Little Red Hen" chosen by the Albuquerque teachers for its relevance to their students' cultural experiences.

Given the above-mentioned challenges facing ELLs, the *Burro's Tortillas* lesson plan:

- Capitalizes on Spanish-speaking students' first language knowledge and skills
- Provides essential scaffolding that can be adjusted for ELLs with different levels of English proficiency to help them overcome the challenges of meeting grade-level content and literacy standards in their second language
- Builds students' oral language proficiency, including phonological awareness, vocabulary, listening comprehension and oral production
- Develops students' reading and writing abilities through targeted activities.

Key Standards

The following Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts are included in this lesson. Standards are listed by domain: Reading, Speaking and Listening, Language, and Writing. They are numbered as they are in the official [Common Core Language Arts](#) document, with the grade level preceding the standard number (e.g., 1.1 is Grade 1, Standard #1).

Reading Standards for Literature

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| RL 1.1 | Ask and answer questions about key details in a text. |
| RL 1.2 | Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson. |



- RL 1.3** Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.
- RL 1.4** Identify words and phrases in stories or poems that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses.
- RL 1.7** Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events.
- RL 1.9** Compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in stories.
- RL 1.10** With prompting and support, read prose and poetry of appropriate complexity for grade 1.

Speaking & Listening Standards

- SL 1.1** Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 1 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.
- SL 1.2** Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.
- SL 1.4** Describe people, places, things, and events with relevant details, expressing ideas and feelings clearly.
- SL 1.5** Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings.

Language Standards

- L 1.2** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
- L 1.4** Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 1 reading and content, choosing flexibly from an array of strategies.

Writing Standards

- W 1.1** Write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic or name the book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply a reason for the opinion, and provide some sense of closure.



- W 1.3** Write narratives in which they recount two or more appropriately sequenced events, include some details regarding what happened, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide some sense of closure.
- W 1.7** Participate in shared research and writing projects.

Lesson Components

The unit is organized into eight lessons of approximately thirty minutes each, along with optional extension activities. It includes the following components:

1. **Common Core State Standards** – The Common Core State Standards in Language Arts are listed at the beginning of each lesson in the Teacher Guide.
2. **Background Knowledge** – ELLs, as is the case for all students, will have an easier time understanding the text if they have had some exposure to the vocabulary referenced in it. The central activity to the *Burro's Tortillas* story is making tortillas. Students become familiar with this activity by participating in a “realia” walk featuring objects (or photos) from the text, in which they walk around the room and tell each other what each object is used for and their experience with the object. In the case of ELLs from backgrounds in which tortillas are an important part of the culinary culture, students will have an opportunity to become “experts” as they explain the objects to their peers.
3. **Elbow-to-Elbow, Knee-to-Knee Retelling** – Students work in pairs to retell the story using the illustrations. Students who are strong readers can read the story out loud to their partner.
4. **Spanish Mini-lesson** – This particular text includes several key words in Spanish that are important for understanding the text. Therefore, the lesson includes a mini-lesson to introduce students to the Spanish words. As each word is introduced, students are asked if anyone knows what it means, giving ELLs from Spanish-speaking backgrounds another opportunity to be “experts” among their peers. This activity also gives Spanish-speaking ELLs a chance to make connections between their first language and English vocabulary.



5. ***Interactive Shared Readings*** – This lesson is built around two interactive shared readings of the text between the teacher and students. In an interactive shared reading, the teacher engages students in ongoing dialogue around the text to develop students’ language proficiency and comprehension. In the first interactive shared reading, spread over four days, the focus is on helping students understand the text. Literal questions help students understand the text. Key words are directly instructed using word slides (see *Vocabulary Instruction*, below).

In the second interactive shared reading, the focus is on analysis of the text, with questions that English proficient students would be expected to answer. The second reading also focuses on helping students meet the grade-level skills embodied in the standards.

Reading notes are provided for both interactive shared readings. **Teachers are not expected to read the notes directly**; rather, the notes serve as a model for teachers on how to scaffold grade-level reading instruction for ELLs. The interactive shared readings can be conducted using the book and reading notes, or a PowerPoint presentation of the book and PowerPoint notes (which are the same as the reading notes). An example of the PowerPoint option is provided; however, due to copyright restrictions, only the first portion of the book can be modeled this way.

6. ***Vocabulary Instruction*** – Two types of vocabulary words are included in this lesson. These target vocabulary words have been chosen for instruction because they are frequent in grade-level text and are important to understanding the story.
- a) **Level 1:** These are words that are less abstract but that may be unfamiliar to ELLs. The teacher provides quick assistance to help students understand the meaning of these words before or during the Interactive Reading, using embedded vocabulary instruction techniques such as providing synonyms, using gestures, pointing to the pictures, or asking students to draw on background knowledge.
 - b) **Level 2:** These words tend to be more abstract. As part of extended instruction, students are shown word slides, which provide the word’s



definition in English, its translation in Spanish, and one to two child-friendly visuals representing the words. Partner Talk activities require students to discuss questions in pairs that draw on their own background knowledge and experiences. Students also spell the word out loud, making important letter-to-sound connections.

An average of two vocabulary words is instructed each day using these extended techniques.

Vocabulary Activities: In addition to the Spanish Mini-lesson, after Part 2 of the interactive reading, students play a vocabulary memory game to practice the target words. We encourage teachers to use other games to give students an opportunity to review the vocabulary instructed during this lesson and other lessons.

7. **Chant** – A chant is used each day to help students remember what occurred in the story. The chant is cumulative, with new verses added each day of the interactive reading.
8. **Written Summaries** – As part of meeting grade-level standards, students write a short summary of the interactive reading each day and then illustrate their text.
9. **Cooperative Paragraph** – Students work as a class to orally summarize the story, sentence by sentence. The teacher then writes what they have contributed, incorporating grammar and English convention errors that have appeared recently in student writing. Students must then correct these errors, allowing them to practice the conventions of Standard English.
10. **Murals** – Students have an opportunity to illustrate sections of the text. They then explain their illustration orally, thereby allowing them to enhance their oral language skills.
11. **Writing Activity** – Students state an opinion and provide evidence from the text to justify their opinion in a writing assignment that meets the Writing Standard 1.1. A student chart provides scaffolding that allows all students to meet the content standard regardless of current English proficiency level and helps them increase their English proficiency by engaging in a writing activity.



Note that the scaffolding is provided for ELLs with lower levels of proficiency and can be reduced or eliminated for more proficient students.

12. **Optional Lessons** – Depending on students’ levels and needs, two optional lessons can be presented on homonyms and time words (e.g., *before, first, last*). In addition, since this story is an adaptation of the classic story “The Little Red Hen,” a good supplemental lesson would introduce students to that story as well, using interactive reading, and then guide students in comparing and contrasting the two stories. An optional student chart for this activity is included.

Note on English Language Proficiency Standards

English-as-a-second-language educators are encouraged to embed their state English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards into the lesson. New Mexico, where these lessons were created and filmed, is a member of the [World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment \(WIDA\) Consortia](#).

Differentiation

Directions provided for this lesson are written for use with a class composed of a mix of ELLs who are at Emergent, Intermediate, and Advanced proficiency levels and English proficient students, with sufficient numbers of ELLs at higher levels of proficiency or English proficient students to provide guidance to those at lower levels during partner work (e.g., during the elbow-to-elbow, knee-to-knee retelling and discussion). To ensure the interactive reading supports ELLs with lower levels of proficiency, provide just as much of an answer frame as is necessary and reduce framing as students become more proficient.

The level of framing will also be contingent on the complexity of the text students are reading, with more framing needed for more complex text. For the written summaries, the student charts are designed for Intermediate and Advanced ELLs, with very little scaffolding in the form of sentence frames. For Emergent ELLs, we suggest providing sentence frames and word banks as necessary. As with interactive reading, reduce the framing as students become more proficient.



Teacher Planning

Overview: Daily Activities

The following table summarizes the activities by lesson. Detailed instructions for each lesson are available in the [Teacher’s Guide](#).

Week 1				
Intro Lesson	Lesson #1	Lesson #2	Lesson #3	Lesson #4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realia Walk • Book Introduction • Spanish Mini-lesson 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive Reading • Chant • Written Summary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review • Interactive Reading • Chant • Written Summary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review • Interactive Reading • Chant • Written Summary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review • Interactive Reading • Chant • Written Summary
Week 2				
Lesson #5	Lesson #6	Lesson #7	Optional	Optional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review • Interactive Reading • Chant • Cooperative Paragraph 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review • Student murals • Retelling the Story 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opinion Writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time Words Mini-lesson 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homonyms Mini-lesson

In preparation for each lesson, teachers are advised to take the following steps:

- Read through the Common Core State Standards. Think about the students in your class and the support they will need to meet these standards.
- In the Teacher’s Guide, read the Preparation section and ensure that all materials have been secured and prepared.
- In the Teacher’s Guide, read through each portion of the lesson and familiarize yourself with the corresponding PowerPoint Slides, Reading Notes, and [Student Charts](#). Again, think about your students and plan how you will group them for collaborative work.



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