

The Cot in the Living Room

written by Hilda Eunice Burgos; illustrated by Gaby D'Alessandro



Rising Voices Theme Someone Like Me/ Memorable Characters

Note to the Teacher

- **Read-Aloud Tip** Several times the narrator says, "It's not fair." When reading aloud page 28, read the line differently to indicate the girl's change in attitude.
- **Language Support** Use the illustration on pages 2–3 to support the meaning of *cot* for children who are unfamiliar with the word. Discuss fairness to help children understand the different ways the narrator thinks about what's "fair."
- **Background** This story is inspired by the author's childhood. When she was young, her mother would babysit children in their neighborhood while their parents worked, sometimes keeping children overnight. These experiences helped the author appreciate her own family's situation.

Vocabulary

- wrinkle** (p. 6) a messy fold in fabric
shift (p. 8) a time when someone needs to work for his or her job
peels (p. 18) takes off a layer or covering
mushy (p. 24) too soft

AT A GLANCE

The girl narrating this story wants to sleep on the cot in the living room, but her mami explains that it's meant for guests. As each child comes over and spends a night on the cot and away from their own families, the girl becomes more and more jealous. It's not fair! But after spending one scary night on the cot in the living room, she starts to understand that maybe it's not as fun as she initially thought. Filled with newfound empathy, the girl comes up with a clever solution to make these special nights fun for everyone.

Genre/Text Type:
Realistic Fiction/
Picture Book

Strategy Focus:
Compare and Contrast

Social-Emotional Focus:
Relationship Skills

INTRODUCE THE BOOK

Display the front cover to the children. Explain that this book is about a family that keeps a cot, or a portable bed that can fold up, in their living room. Say: *The little girl in this story wants to sleep on a cot that her family keeps in the living room, but her family won't let her sleep there!* Ask: *Why do you think the girl's family might have a cot in their living room? Do you think the girl will ever get to sleep on that cot? Let's read to find out!*

DURING READING

As you read the book, pause to discuss the questions below. Encourage children to turn and talk with partners or share their thinking with the whole group.

- pp. 2–7** The girl who is telling the story (the narrator) says that she wants to sleep on the cot in the living room, but her mami tells her it's for guests. Think about why the girl wants to sleep on the cot. Why might she feel this way? Who is coming over that night? (**make inferences, key ideas and details**)
- pp. 8–11** Papi asks whether Raquel would like to play with dominoes. How does the girl who is telling the story feel about this? How is this different from her own experience with dominoes? What does the girl wish she had in her room that she does not have? (**make inferences, compare and contrast**)
- pp. 12–19** Edgardo and Lisa come over the next two nights. Let's look closely at the illustration on page 13. What does the narrator think that Edgardo gets to do when her papi offers the boy a snack? How do you think Lisa feels about staying over for the night? (**picture clues, make inferences**)
- pp. 20–23** Finally! The narrator will get to sleep on the cot in the living room. Do you think she will like it? Why or why not? (**make predictions**)
- pp. 24–29** Sleeping in the living room is not as great as she imagined! She now has a new understanding about the guests staying over. How is the way the narrator feels about Raquel staying over now different from when Raquel came over earlier in the story? (**compare and contrast**)
- pp. 30–33** The narrator has an idea to make Raquel feel more comfortable at their home. How does her idea help Raquel? Think of a time you wanted to help someone feel more comfortable in a situation. What did you do to make that happen? (**problem and solution, make connections**)



AFTER READING

Strategy Focus: Compare and Contrast

Say: *To compare and contrast two people, places, or things, think about*

- how they are alike and
- how they are different.

You know more about people, places, or things when you understand how they are alike and how they are different.

Revisit and read aloud page 4 and pages 22–26.

Say: *At the beginning of the story, the girl has a lot of ideas about why it would be fun to spend a night on the cot in the living room. But when she finally gets the chance, it's not exactly how she imagined it would be.*

Ask: When the girl does get to spend the night on the cot in the living room, how is it similar to what she expected? How is it different? How do you think this experience helped her understand how the kids who stayed over felt when they slept on the cot in the living room?

Invite children to turn and talk with a partner. Then as a class, discuss why it is important to consider other people's perspectives and how that can change how we understand a situation.

Extend Learning

Write About Being Welcoming Invite children to imagine that a child from their community or neighborhood will be staying over at their house with their family for the night. Have them write a few sentences about what they would do or say to make that person feel welcome in their home for the night. **(informative/explanatory)**

Book Club Discussion Have children meet in small groups to think about the text and discuss the questions below. You may wish to provide the questions on cards or print them out from the website for children to use.

- **Someone Like Me/Memorable Characters** *Once the girl in this story spends a night on the cot in the living room, she starts to see why it might be hard or even scary for the kids who stay over. How do you think the kids who stay over feel having the cot in the sisters' bedroom instead of in the living room? Why do you think they would feel that way?*

Build Social-Emotional Awareness Say: *Though at first the girl is jealous of the children that come over each night and sleep on the cot, once she realizes how hard it must be for them to be away from their families, she wants to help. Why do you think she decides to move the cot into her bedroom? How do you feel when you see that someone in your classroom or community is alone or might need help? What kinds of things can you do to help someone who might feel lonely?* Have children turn and talk with a partner. Then select a few children to share their thoughts with the class. **(CASEL Competency relationship skills)**

Plan a Sleepover At the end of the story, the girl helps the children staying over at her house feel more comfortable by making the time like a fun sleepover. Invite your class to plan a sleepover party. Have children work in groups to come up with a fun activity to enjoy during the sleepover. Then have groups take turns explaining the activity that their group came up with. Some ideas might be reading a book aloud, putting on a hand puppet show, singing a song, or playing a game.

Connect to the Internet

An Interview With the Author Visit the following website to share details from an interview with the author, Hilda Eunice Burgos, about writing *The Cot in the Living Room*, including how the author was inspired by her own childhood to write the story: www.lasmusasbooks.com/blog/an-interview-with-hilda-eunice-burgos-on-the-cot-in-the-living-room.