“Every time I paint it serves a purpose—to bring about pride in our Mexican American culture.”

Carmen Lomas Garza

In My Family/En mi familia
Carmen Lomas Garza
Children’s Book Press 1996

Grade Levels
K-3

Curriculum Areas
Language Arts • Art

National Language Arts Standards
NL-ENG.K-12.7 EVALUATING DATA
Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems.

They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources [e.g., print and non-print texts, and artifacts].

NL-ENG.K-12.8 DEVELOPING RESEARCH SKILLS
Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

National Art Education Standards
NA-VA.4 UNDERSTAND THE VISUAL ARTS IN RELATION TO HISTORY AND CULTURES Grades K–4
Students know that the visual arts have both a history and specific relationship to various cultures.

Students identify specific works of art as belonging to particular cultures, times, and places.

Students demonstrate how history, culture, and the visual arts can influence each other in making and studying works of art.

Objectives
Students may draw upon the ethnic, popular and folk symbols and myths of their cultural heritage for their work.

To introduce to students that celebrations draw upon the influences of other cultures.

Author’s Background
Carmen Lomas Garza was born in Kingsville, Texas in 1948. Her family emigrated to the U.S. in order to escape the tribulations of the Mexican Revolution early in this century. She is the second child of five children. At a very early age she wanted to pursue her dream of becoming an artist. Her family supported her endeavors. Her mother, who inspired Lomas Garza, was also an artist. Lomas Garza received her M.A. from San Francisco State University. Much of her work focuses on the traditions and daily activities in Mexican-American culture.

"I was thirteen years old when I decided to become an artist. I taught myself to draw by practicing every day. I drew whatever was in front of me—books, cats, my left hand, my sisters and brothers, chairs, chilies, paper bags, flowers—anything or anybody that would stay still for a few minutes . . .. I have three
college degrees. When I was in high school I could hardly wait to graduate so I could go to college and study art.” [Carmen Lomas Garza. 1996]

**Summary**

In this bilingual picture book celebrating Mexican American culture, Lomas Garza shares memories of growing up in her hometown of Kingsville, Texas, near the Mexican border. Her paintings of children and adults playing and working together as they prepare food, celebrate life events, and mend ills enable readers to understand constancy and change among family and friends. The author's narratives are told as first person reflections that often add dialogue or other layerings to the story being conveyed in her paintings. Truly for all ages, this companion to *Family Pictures* will be an important addition to any study of family, community, personal storytelling, or narrative painting.

**Activity**

The San Jose Museum of Art offers an online *Carmen Lomas Garza Teacher Resource Book*, with wonderful activities about

- Celebrations
- The Piñata
- Papel Picado
- Foods


**History of the Piñata**

*Mexico Connect*  
*Maria Elena*  
*1999*

**Activity**


**Papel Picado**

*Kathleen Trenchard*

*New York: Sterling Publishing. 2000*
LOOKING EXERCISE #1:  
Cleaning Nopalitos  
Carmen Lomas Garza  
Illustration and Text Pages 6-7

This is my grandfather, Antonio Lomas. He’s shaving off the thorns from freshly cut cactus pads, called nopalitos. Nopalitos are called “the food of last resort.”

Research how nopalitos are used today in menus.

Activity
People have argued for 400 years about the truth of the story of La Virgen de Guadalupe. But still there is no doubts millions of Mexicans love her and believe in her. December 12, El Dia de la Virgen de Guadalupe, has become a national holiday in Mexico since 1859. Read more about the Virgin of Guadalupe in Pinatas and Smiling Skeletons: Celebrating Mexican Festivals by Zoe Harris.

LOOKING EXERCISE #2:  
Virgin of Guadalupe  
Carmen Lomas Garza  
Illustration and Text Page 25

The Virgin of Guadalupe appeared to the Indian, Juan Diego, outside of Mexico City in 1531.

What is going on in this picture? Read more about the Virgin of Guadalupe.

Resources


**Internet Websites**

Carmen Lomas Garza Teacher Resource Book

Carmen Lomas Garza's Webpage
http://www.carlenlomasagarza.com/

Chicana and Chicano Space, Hispanic Research Center at Arizona State University

Questions and Answers about Cascarones

Children’s Book Press Online Teaching Resources
http://www.childrensbookpress.org/links.html

Introducing Illustrators-Carmen Lomas Garza
http://www.rif.org/art/illustrators/garza.mspx

Kemper Art Museum:
http://www.kemperart.org/exhibits/PastExhibits/CarmenLomasGarza.asp

North Texas Institute for Educators on the Visual Arts–Papel Picado–The Art of Mexican Cut Paper

Smith College Museum of Art
http://www.smith.edu/artmuseum/exhibitions/spectrum/edgarzafull.htm

Tamalada-Making Tamales image on-line
http://www.esperanto.com/Legacy/CLGarza.html