

Celebrate the holidays with stories from immigrant and Latino families

Every year, families celebrate the holidays with a variety of cultural traditions, many passed down through generations and across borders. While the songs, food and decorations may change, the meaning stays the same—surround yourself with those you love. Take a peek inside some celebrations with these kid-friendly stories, appropriate for all ages. To continue receiving resources designed to encourage conversation among diverse groups, sign up for occasional emails at cliniclegal.org/email.

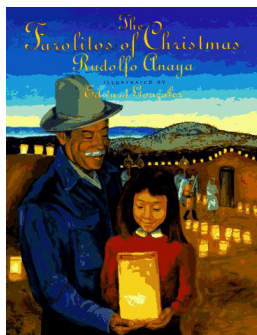


The Miracle of the First Poinsettia: A Mexican Christmas Story

Written by Joanne Oppenheim, Illustrated by Fabian Negrin

A classic retelling of a traditional Mexican tale, this is the story of Juanita and her surprise gift for the baby Jesus. Her family was low on money because her father did not have a job. However, her faith and desire to give lead her to give the most special gift of the night.

"Don't be afraid, Juanita," the angel spoke again. "And don't worry about how the weeds look to you. He will know they are a gift from your heart!"



The Farolitos of Christmas

Written by Rudolfo Anaya, Illustrated by Edward Gonzales

With her father away and her grandfather too sick to create the traditional luminaria, Luz helps create farolitos, little lanterns, for their Christmas celebration.

"Your grandfather always lights the luminarias," Rena's mother smiles. "It's the most beautiful part of Christmas." "But because my abuelo is sick the doctor won't let him do any hard work," Luz said sadly.

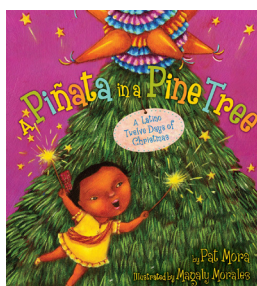


The Miracle on 133rd Street

Written by Sonia Manzano, Illustrated by Marjorie Priceman

It's Christmas Eve and Mami has bought a delicious roast for a Christmas feast, but it's too big to fit in the oven. On their search for an oven big enough to cook it, Jose and Papa find that none of their neighbors are in the Christmas spirit. Luckily, only when they find someone kind enough to help, the magical smell of dinner begins to spread, and holiday cheer manifests in ways most unexpected.

"José, wake up! The roast is done!" And that's when it hit him. A most glorious scent. A smell that made you feel something wonderful could happen, but you didn't know what.

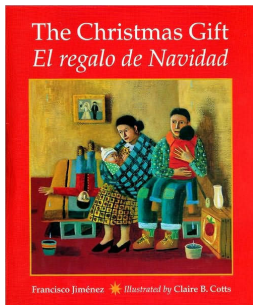


A Piñata in a Pine Tree

Written by Pat Mora, Illustrated by Magaly Morales

A Latino twist on the holiday classic 12 Days of Christmas, this bilingual story stars a little girl who receives 12 gifts from a secret *amiga*, whose identity is a sweet surprise at the book's conclusion.

On the first day of Christmas, my amiga gave to me, a piñata in a pine tree.



The Christmas Gift

Written by Francisco Jiménez, Illustrated by Claire B. Cotts

Award-winning author Francisco Jiménez highlights the true meaning of Christmas as he shares his most poignant Christmas memory in this remarkable, bilingual book.

The closer Christmas drew, the more anxious and excited Panchito became. Once in a while, Papá's words, "but we're broke," entered his mind, but he pushed them out by daydreaming of playing with his very own ball.

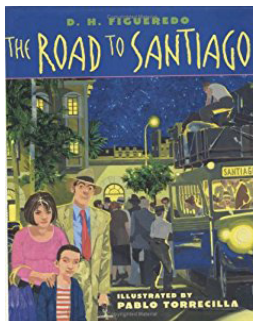


When Christmas Feels Like Home

Written by Gretchen Griffith, Illustrated by Carolina Farias

After moving from a small village in Mexico to a town in the United States, Eduardo is sure it will never feel quite like home. The other children don't speak his language and they do not play fútbol. Using riddles, his family promises that he will feel right at home by the time Christmas comes. As he answers the riddles, Eduardo realizes that his new town isn't so different and home is wherever family is!

Eduardo didn't want to go to this house. "I want to go home," he said. Mami put her arm around him. "It will feel like home soon enough," she said. "When?" Eduardo asked. "When we open the Christmas box," she said.

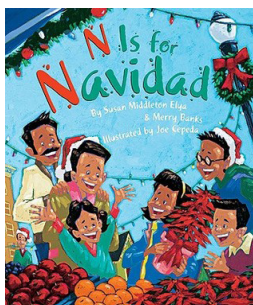


The Road to Santiago

Written by D. H. Figueredo, Illustrated by Pablo Torrecilla

It's Noche Buena, the night before Christmas, and Alfredito and his parents head for the train station for their annual trip to see relatives in Santiago, Cuba. War between the government and rebels forces the family to find an alternate way to celebrate the holidays together.

When we found out the train could not go to Santiago, I was very upset. I was looking forward to playing with my cousins and eating all the tasty dishes Abuela prepared.

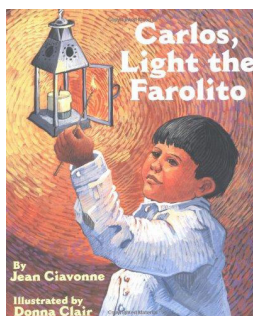


N is for Navidad

Written by Susan Middleton Elya and Marry Banks, Illustrated by Joe Cepeda

From the ángel hung above the door to the zapatos (shoes) filled with grass for the wise men's camels, each letter in this festive alphabet book introduces children to a Spanish word associated with traditional Mexican holiday celebrations, typically spanning 22 days.

At midnight we all head to church for la misa. At last! ¡Navidad! Each mouth, a sonrisa.

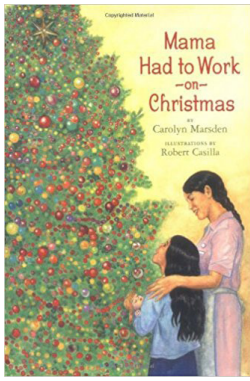


Carlos, Light the Farolito

Written by Jean Ciavonne, Illustrated by Don Clair

It's Christmas Eve, the final night of Las Posadas, when neighbors act out the story of Mary and Joseph's search for shelter. When Carlos' grandfather is not home in time for the procession, Carlos must play a new role to keep his household's tradition alive.

The peregrinos stood outside waiting for the innkeeper's answer. The great icy lump in Carlos' chest felt like a stone. He looked at Aunt Romelina. "What'll we do now?" he whispered. "You must sing the words of the innkeeper, Carlos," his aunt said softly.

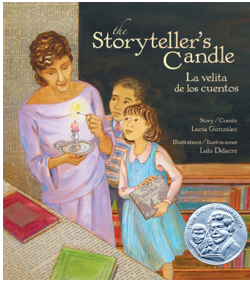


Mama Had to Work on Christmas

Written by Carolyn Marsden, Illustrated by Robert Casilla

Gloria's Christmas begins with frustration when she is forced to go to work with her mother, who is a maid at a hotel, while her father was out working as a migrant farm laborer. However, by the end of the day, she learns that the most important gifts don't come wrapped in pretty paper and ribbons.

Gloria pressed her face against Nana's woolly scarf that smelled of herbs. She wouldn't let herself cry. "Gloria has had a long day at work with me," Mama said. "And on Christmas, too. Pobrecita."

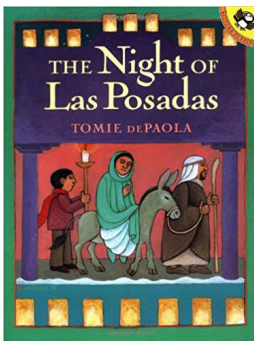


The Storyteller's Candle (bilingual)

Written by Lucia González, Illustrated by Lulu Delacre

It is the winter of 1929, and cousins Hildamar and Santiago have just moved to enormous, chilly New York from their native Puerto Rico. As Three Kings' Day approaches, Hildamar and Santiago mourn the loss of their sunny home and wonder about their future in their adopted city. After a storyteller and librarian named Pura Belpré arrives in their classroom, the children begin to understand just what a library can mean to a community.

That afternoon, a special guest came to Hildamar and Santiago's class. "Buenos días, good morning," she said. "My name is Pura Belpré. I come from the public library, and I bring stories and puppets to share with you today. The library is for everyone, la biblioteca es para todas."



The Night of Las Posadas

Written and Illustrated by Tomie DePaola

Christmas Eve in Santa Fe is celebrated by the traditional procession Las Posadas. This year was going to be extra special with Sister Angie's niece, Lupe, and her new husband, Roberto, playing Mary and Joseph. After practicing for weeks, two unexpected events attempt to derail their celebration; but as the season will have it, a miracle saves the night.

Finally it was the night of Las Posadas. And Sister Angie came down with the flu. "There is no way you can go tonight" the doctor told her. "Don't worry, Tía," Lupe told her. "We will make you proud this evening."

Did you know that your library can obtain a special credential from the Department of Justice that allows trained staff to provide immigration services, outreach, screenings and referrals in the library?

The Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. advocates for humane and just immigration policy. Our network of nonprofit immigration programs—300 organizations in 47 states and the District of Columbia—is the largest in the nation. We are here to help programs like yours get the training, resources and technical assistance you need for your legal services program to flourish.

Are you a librarian or educator who needs help getting information and services to immigrants in your community? Sign up at clinicalegal.org/email to receive occasional emails from us with resources and ideas you can use to engage your students and neighbors on various immigration issues. It's completely free!