



Classroom Guide for
ESTELA'S SWAP
by **Alexis O'Neill**
illustrated by **Enrique O. Sanchez**

Reading Level

*Reading Level: Grade 2

Interest Level: Grades 1–4

Guided Reading Level: O

(Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula)

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points: 3.1/.5

Themes

Culture and Tradition, Generosity, Compassion, Helping Others, Trading/Bargaining, Swap Meets/Flea Markets, Latino/Hispanic American Interest

Synopsis

It is Estela's first swap meet, and she hopes to sell her music box to earn money for folk dancing lessons. Eager to succeed, Estela watches and listens as her father bargains for something he wants. Estela plays her music box for a flower seller in a nearby booth who is hemming a beautiful skirt. The woman knows the song and seems pleased. When a sudden wind scatters the woman's paper flowers, Estela runs to help her. Realizing how much time and income the flower seller has lost, Estela gives the woman the music box so she can listen to music while making more flowers for the next swap meet. Later the woman appears at Estela's booth with the skirt. She explains that "it is only fair that we swap." Estela is delighted as she pictures herself dancing with the Ballet Folklórico in the beautiful skirt. Her father assures her she can return next week to earn the money she still needs. The story can be summed up in the author's words: "Even when things don't work out as you have planned, you must never give up your dream."

Background

Swap meets, which are similar to flea markets, are popular events all over the country, including many large cities. Spanish speakers also know these events as *remarte*. Swap meets are often held in parking lots, fields, or on county fairgrounds. Some specialize in one kind of item, such as jewelry, automotive parts, or antiques. Others offer everything you can think of. People rent space and display their items on blankets, tables, or

elaborate booths. Most swap meets also include food concessions, and some even have entertainment. In some rural areas, swap meets take the form of garage sales, yard sales, and tag sales.

Ballet Folklórico is a group of dancers dedicated to performing the traditional folk dances of Mexico. Ballet Folklórico of México was originally founded by Amalia Hernandez, a teacher and choreographer of modern dance at the Fine Arts National Institute. In 1952 she decided to leave the Institute and form her own company, to present programs of Mexican folkloric dances. Today there are Ballet Folklórico companies in several countries, and in many towns and cities in the United States.

Teacher Tip

You might use this book during Hispanic Heritage Month which is celebrated from September 15 to October 15. A Spanish version of the book, *Estela en el mercado de pulgas*, is available. The themes of generosity and caring also make the book an appropriate beginning-of-school selection.

BEFORE READING**Prereading Focus Questions**

Before introducing the book, share the background information with students. Then you may wish to explore one or more of the following questions.

1. What kinds of things do you save money for? Why are these things important to you?
2. Have you ever traded things with a brother, sister, or friend? What did you trade? How did you bargain?
3. What are some sports, arts, dances, or other things you enjoy learning?
4. What kinds of outdoor markets have you been to? What kinds of things were sold or traded there?
5. What are some ways you have helped other people?

Exploring the Book

Display the book and read aloud the title. Ask students what it means to swap something.

Ask students who they think the girl in the front cover illustration is. What is she holding her hand?

Point to the names of the author and illustrator. Ask students if they have ever read any books written by Alexis O'Neill or illustrated by Enrique O. Sanchez. What books were they?

Setting a Purpose for Reading

Have students read to find out why Estela goes to Swap Meet.

The story offers an opportunity to teach a lesson in foreshadowing. Have students read the first two paragraphs. Ask what kind of problems the Santa Ana winds might cause at a swap meet. Have students also read to find out what happens. When students come to the part where the wind causes trouble, point out that the author foreshadowed, or gave clues to, this event at the beginning of the book.

VOCABULARY

Write the following words from the story on the chalkboard and point out that they are all used when people buy and sell things. After discussing each word and its meaning, have students take turns using the words in sentences. Then suggest that students use at least five of the words in a short story about a visit to a mall or other place they or their family go to shop.

sell	earn	saving	bargain	buy
price	free	customer	swap	offer
seller	money	buyer		

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, review comprehension, and deepen students' understanding. Encourage students to refer back to the text and illustrations to support their responses.

1. Why does Estela go to Swap Meet?
2. What is the purpose of a swap meet? If any students have been to a swap meet, encourage them to tell about their experiences.
3. Why is Estela attracted to the flower seller's tent?
4. How does Estela try to sell her music box?
5. Why do you think Estela goes to help the flower seller when the wind comes?
6. Why doesn't Estela look too closely at her music box after it is smothered by the broken flower pots?
7. How would you describe the way the flower seller reacts to her loss?
8. Why does Estela give the flower seller her music box?
9. How does the flower seller show her appreciation?
10. What does Estela learn at her first Swap Meet?

Teacher Tip

Estela's Swap is also available in Spanish under the title *Estela En El Mercado De Pulgas*.

Literature Circles

If you use literature circles during reading time, students might find the following suggestions helpful in focusing on the different roles of the group members.

- The **Questioner** might use questions similar to those in the Discussion Questions section of this guide.
- The **Passage Locator** might look for passages that suggest Estela's feelings at different points in the story.
- The **Illustrator** might draw a picture of Estela's room at home and the other possessions which she might sell at Swap Meet.
- The **Connector** might find other books about markets.
- The **Summarizer** might provide a brief summary of the group's reading and discussion points for each meeting.
- The **Investigator** might research to learn about other swap meets or similar-type markets in different parts of the country.

*There are many resource books available with more information about organizing and implementing literature circles. Three such books you may wish to refer to are: *Getting Started With Literature Circles* by Katherine L. Schlick Noe and Nancy J. Johnson (Christopher-Gordon, 1999), *Literature Circles: Voice And Choice In Book Clubs And Reading Groups* by Harvey Daniels (Stenhouse, 2002), and *Literature Circles Resource Guide* by Bonnie Campbell Hill, Katherine L. Schlick Noe, and Nancy J. Johnson (Christopher-Gordon, 2000).

Reader's Response

Use the following questions or similar ones to help students practice active reading and personalize what they have read. Suggest that students respond in reader's journals, oral discussion, or drawings.

1. What is your opinion of Estela? How would you describe her character? Would you have acted as she did? Why or why not?
2. Explain why you think Estela will or won't fulfill her goals.
3. What skills do you think someone who sells things needs to have?
4. What advice would you give to Estela about selling at her next trip to Swap Meet?

Other Writing Activities

You may wish to have students participate in one or more of the following writing activities. Set aside time for students to share and discuss their work.

1. Write a sensory description of the sights, sounds, smells, feelings, and tastes of a swap meet. Suggest that students study the illustrations for clues to the different sensory experience people might encounter there.
2. Write a dialogue between Estela and a prospective customer.

3. Write a radio ad for a swap meet. Students might include the time, date, and place as well as highlights of the event.
4. Retell the story from the point of view of the flower seller. Students may do this in writing or as a performance.

ELL (ESL) Teaching Strategies

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English language learners or who are learning to speak English as a second language.

1. Make key words as concrete as possible by pointing to objects in the illustrations or the classroom.
2. Use a hand mirror so students can see their mouths as they attempt new words. Offer frequent praise and support.
3. Build esteem by asking Spanish speakers to begin a glossary based on the Spanish words in the story. Suggest that students add other words related to the story as well. Encourage students to teach words from the glossary to the rest of the class.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

To help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas, you might try some of the following activities.

Social Studies

1. Remind students that dance is a part of a group's culture. Estela wants to take lessons in folk dancing at the Ballet Folklórico. Talk about folk dances or traditional dances that students know. If possible, arrange for a parent, physical education teacher, or dance teacher to lead the class in learning a folk dance.
2. Have students research more about Ballet Folklórico, its origins, mission, types of dances performed, and so on. If a Ballet Folklórico company visits your community or a nearby city, try to arrange for students to see a performance.

Science

The story is set in Southern California, an area known for the Santa Ana winds. These winds, which are warm and dry, blow from the east or northeast below the passes and canyons of the coastal ranges of southern California and in the Los Angeles basin.

Remind students that the Santa Ana winds play an important role in *Estela's Swap*. Have students use encyclopedias or the Internet to find the answers to questions such as:

- Why are the winds dry?
- When do the winds usually occur?
- How fast do the winds blow?
- What problems do the winds cause?

Math

Students might enjoy holding a class swap meet, or even organize a school-wide event. They might either bring inexpensive items from home (with parental permission) to sell,

or they might make simple things as part of an art activity. Students may use real or play money for their transactions. Help students price the items they will sell and post the prices. Students might use their desks as booths or arrange the sale items on one long table. Remind students to bargain for the prices they pay. You might also assign two or more students to act as cashiers.

Music

Students may enjoy learning the words to “Cielito Lindo,” the song that Estela’s music box plays. If possible, have students learn the words in both Spanish and English. For lyrics and music, go to songsforteaching.com/spanish/cielitolindo.htm on the Internet. Also encourage Spanish speakers to help non-Spanish speakers with the pronunciation of the song in Spanish.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alexis O’Neill is a children’s author and educator. In addition to *Estela’s Swap*, her works include *Loud Emily*, *The Recess Queen*, and materials for children published in magazines such as *Cricket*, *Spider*, *Calliope*, *Cobblestone*, and *Writer’s Digest*. She teaches writing for the UCLA Extension Writer’s Program and is a founding member of the Children’s Authors Network (CAN!). O’Neill has also served as an education consultant for museums across the country. She chairs the annual Children’s Book Week for the Simi Valley Friends of the Library and is on the board of the Ventura County Reading Association. O’Neill lives in Simi Valley, California, with her husband, David.

The idea for *Estela’s Swap* came from the many visits O’Neill and her husband made to swap meets when they first moved to Simi Valley. Going to swap meets was a new experience. O’Neill especially loved seeing kids selling items to earn money for the things they wanted, rather than just expecting their parents to pay for everything. When asked what she likes best about a swap meet, O’Neill’s answer: “Bargaining!”

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Enrique O. Sanchez grew up in Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic. He studied architecture at the Santo Domingo University. Sanchez moved to New York in the 1960s and now lives in East Burke, Vermont, with his wife. He worked first in television and film and designed sets for *Sesame Street*. Other books Sanchez has illustrated for Lee & Low Books include *Abuela’s Weave*, *Amelia’s Road*, *When This World Was New*, and *Confetti: Poems for Children*, all of which are available in both English and Spanish editions. Sanchez is also the illustrator of numerous other children’s books, including *The Golden Flower*, for which he was awarded a Pura Belpré Award Illustration Honor.

Awards and honors for *Estela’s Swap* include the Best of Beyond the Difference list from the Vermont Center for the Book, and selection for the California Readers’ California Collections. The book has also been praised by *Kirkus Reviews* as “a well-crafted tale featuring a Mexican-American father and children . . . [is] wonderful for reading aloud to individuals or to groups.” And *School Library Journal* said, “The text is skillfully incorporated into the illustrations and the focus on each spread remains firmly on the plucky heroine. All in all, a wonderful bargain.”

RESOURCES ON THE WEB

Learn more about *Estela’s Swap*:

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/47/hc/estela_s_swap

Estela's Swap in Spanish:

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/150/hc/estela_en_el_mercado_de_pulgas

Alexis O'Neill articles in Editor's Desk:

The Truth about School Visits: Book Sales

http://www.leeandlow.com/p/truth_book_sales.mhtml

The Truth about School Visits:

Increasing invitations for Middle Grade and YA Writers:

<http://www.leeandlow.com/p/invitations-for-YA.mhtml>

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Order Information

On the Web:

http://www.leeandlow.com/books/47/hc/estela_s_swap (secure on-line ordering)

<http://www.leeandlow.com/p/ordering.mhtml> (general order information)

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