

CARMEN LEARNS ENGLISH

BY JUDY COX, ILLUSTRATED BY
ANGELA DOMINGUEZ

GRADES
PRE–3

About the Book

The first day of school can be scary, especially when no one else speaks your language. Luckily Carmen has help from her new teacher and friends.

Carmen, who speaks only Spanish, knows she must be brave. Her teacher's Spanish is *muy* terrible; but with a little encouragement from la Señora, Carmen teaches the class Spanish words and numbers, and she in turn learns English from her new friends. Carmen even helps her little sister learn English too!

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Language Arts

Discussion—In the story, Carmen is excited about teaching her little sister about what to expect when she begins kindergarten. Students can describe things that they have taught their younger siblings and how that made them feel.

Feelings—Carmen felt bad when other children said she “talked funny.” Then she got angry, which made her feel brave enough to respond to them. Children can discuss or write about times when someone hurt their feelings, and how they reacted and why. They can also discuss whether anger is sometimes a good thing if it “makes you brave” and leads to a positive action.

Nonverbal Communication—Students can discuss various options for communicating when you don't know another language: drawing pictures, hand signals, facial expressions, body language, pantomime, etc. Common phrases can be printed onto large index cards, and students can perform them nonverbally while other students try to decipher the meanings.

Interviews—Many students may have parents or other family members who originally came from other countries and didn't speak English when they arrived in the U.S. Students can formulate a group of questions to ask their older family members.

Some examples might include: How old were you when you arrived here? What language did you speak? Did other kids in your class speak the same language? What helped you to learn English? What gave you the confidence to finally speak up in your class? They can share the answers with all!

Mother Goose—Carmen's teacher helped her learn English by teaching her several well-known Mother Goose rhymes. Students may know rhymes from their own cultures that they can teach to the class. These rhymes can also be written or typed out, illustrated by students, and combined into a classroom book.

Future Careers—Carmen decides that she wants to be a teacher when she grows up because she has become so empowered by teaching her little sister. Students can write about what they want to be when they grow up and can include the experiences in their lives (so far!) that have led to their decisions.

Glossary—The book contains a glossary of the Spanish words and phrases used in the story. Students may expand on this by creating a classroom glossary of the Spanish words for colors, family members, and familiar classroom objects. If there are students who speak other languages besides English or Spanish, they may add the words from their home language to the glossary as well.

Mathematics

Number Line—Carmen learned her numbers in English when the teacher presented a number line. Children can create their own number lines in English and Spanish as well as any other languages that are reflected in the class.

Physical Education

Game—In the story, Carmen learns hop-scotch and jump rope rhymes in English. Students can share games from their own cultures, along with the rhymes that go along with them. See Online Resources below for further details.

Online Resources

www.wordreference.com/

Presents the opportunity to enter any English word and have it immediately translated into Spanish or one of many other languages. The site can also translate from a language into English, and it includes various language dictionaries.

www.estcomp.ro/~cfg/american9.html

Presents the rhymes in Spanish that are used for hand-clapping games.

www.estcomp.ro/~cfg/spanraf.html

Presents rhymes and jump rope songs in Spanish.

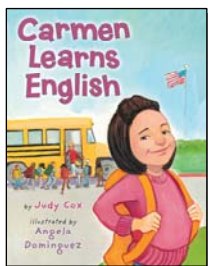
www.sgfl.org.uk/pmfl/spanish/spsongs

Presents a variety of songs and rhymes in Spanish dealing with numbers, colors, the calendar, and parts of the body along with playground and traditional games.

About the Author and Illustrator

Judy Cox grew up near San Francisco, where she enjoyed telling stories to entertain her five younger siblings. This celebrated author of children's books puts her elementary school teacher experience to use when she writes for children. Her picture books for Holiday House include *Go to Sleep, Groundhog!*, *One Is a Feast for Mouse: A Thanksgiving Tale*, and *Cinco de Mouse-O!*, and *Nora and the Texas Terror* for older readers. Judy lives in Oregon. Visit her online at www.judycox.net.

Angela Dominguez was born in Mexico City and grew up in Texas. Spanish was her family's first language, and her older brother had to learn English in the first grade. Like Lupita, Angela learned English with the help of her sibling, and she was fluent by the time she entered elementary school. A graduate of the Academy of Art in San Francisco, she lives in California. Visit Angela's website at www.andillustrations.com.



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HC: 978-0-8234-2174-9

PB: 978-0-8234-2382-8

Classroom activities prepared by Sandy Schuckett, school library consultant.

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