

Tell Me a Cuento

Joe Hayes

Geronimo Garcia, Illustrator

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Why does the black-spotted yellow butterfly flit among the pretty flowers? How can a little bee save three sisters from the Terrible Tragadabas. What happens to a greedy rich woman when she takes advantage of a poor but kind mother, and when a noisy, bossy rooster wants to sing at his uncle's wedding? Famed Southwest storyteller and author of 18 children's books, Hayes tells four traditional Hispanic stories, or cuentos, in English and Spanish, his twin texts accompanied by modern, boldly colored illustrations.

The traditional themes of the greedy rich versus the virtuous poor, pretty women, poisonous scorpions and tarantulas, stinging bees, and cats that eat mouse bridegrooms will probably fail to interest early readers. Yet in the hands of a gifted storyteller all four tales could surely delight listeners of all ages. It's easy to imagine kids joining the refrain with each of the animals, ghosts, and wedding guests as they bleat, growl and howl "No way, Jose!" to the bossy rooster, and "I'm the Tragadabas, and I'll swallow you alive," in the story of the Terrible Tragadabas.

The commercial comic strip style illustrations and dramatic excitement of the stories should especially appeal to older children in bilingual classes. All four tales were previously published as separate books.

SHIRLEY MURRAY (September / October 1998)

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