



¡Piñatas!

Goals 2000 - Partnerships for
Educating Colorado Students

In Partnership with the **Denver Public Schools**
and the **Metropolitan State College of Denver**

El Alma de la Raza Project



¡Piñatas!

By Kristina Riley

Grade 3

Implementation Time
for Unit of Study: 3 weeks

Goals 2000 - Partnerships for
Educating Colorado Students
El Alma de la Raza Curriculum
and Teacher Training Project

Loyola A. Martinez, Project Director

¡Piñatas!

Unit Concepts

- History of piñatas
- Use of piñatas
- Importance of piñatas in Hispanic culture
- How to create a piñata
- Creating a presentation

Standards Addressed by This Unit

Reading And Writing

Students read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences. (RW2)

Students write and speak using formal grammar usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. (RW3)

Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. (RW4)

Students read to locate, select, evaluate, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources. (RW5)

Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience. (RW6)

Students use appropriate technologies to extend comprehension and communication skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. (RW7)

Visual Arts

Students recognize and use visual arts as a form of communication. (A1)

Students know and apply visual arts materials, tools, techniques, and processes. (A3)

Students relate the visual arts to various historical and cultural traditions. (A4)

Introduction: History of the Piñata

Piñatas are a Mexican tradition at most *fiestas* or celebrations, especially Christmas and birthdays. However, the tradition actually started in Italy over 400 years ago. The game was the same, involving a blindfolded child trying to break the candy-and-toy-filled piñata with a stick. In Italy they used a clay pot and called it a “pignatta.”

The piñata was also used in Spain. They used the piñata on the first Sunday of Lent. They held a ball on this day and danced and broke the piñata. Similar to the Italians, they used a clay pot called an “olla.” The tradition of decorating the piñata was started in order to dress up the ugly clay pot. It is believed that settlers from Spain brought the tradition of the piñata to Mexico. In the Mexican tradition, piñatas are mostly used at Christmas rather than Easter.

About 50 years ago, the piñata came to be as we know it today, appearing in many colors and shapes and being used for different events.

The piñata game:

The piñata is strung up on a pulley or hung over a balcony. All guests stand in a circle at a safe distance from the piñata. One child is chosen and brought to the middle of the circle. They are blindfolded, handed a broomstick, spun three times, and led to the piñata. They swing at the piñata trying to break it. As the child swings at the piñata, another person pulls it up and down. Usually each person gets three tries. If the piñata is not broken, the blindfold and stick are given to the next person. The game continues until the piñata is broken. At this point, all guests gather up as many candies and toys as they can. While in the circle, children can sing and/or dance.

Implementation Guidelines

It is recommended that this unit be taught in the third grade, primarily as an art unit or in Hispanic studies. This unit incorporates art, reading, and writing. Students will be working in cooperative groups to make the piñata and present their information. Some preteaching on cooperative groups and/or practice may be necessary. In the culminating activity, each group presents their information and piñata to another class. Prior arrangements with other classrooms will need to be made.

Instructional Materials and Resources

The following books and resources are required for implementing this unit as written:

- Lesson 1 *Christmas Stories Round the World* by Lois Johnson
Lesson 2 *Piñatas* by Virginia Brock
Lesson 3 *Hooray, a Piñata!* by Elisa Kleven
 Family Pictures by Carmen Lomas Garza
 Fiesta! by Ginger Foglesong Guy
 Piñatas by Virginia Brock
Lesson 5 *The Piñata Maker* by George Ancona
 Look What I Made: Paper Playthings and Gifts (video)
 Piñatas by Virginia Brock

Lesson Summary

- Lesson 1 All About Piñatas
 Assesses prior knowledge and what students want to learn about piñatas.
 Listen to story about piñatas.
- Lesson 2 History of Piñatas, part 1
 Taking notes on a specific passage about piñatas.
- Lesson 3 History of Piñatas, part 2
 Taking notes on independent reading on the history of piñatas.
- Lesson 4 Writing the Report
 The compilation of note-taking records into a report format.
- Lesson 5 Creating the Piñata
 The creation of a piñata in small groups.
- Lesson 6 Presentations
 Presentations of reports and piñatas to other classes.

Lesson 1: All About Piñatas

What will students be learning?

STANDARD(S)

Students read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

BENCHMARK(S)

Students will make connections between prior knowledge and what they need to know about the topic before reading about it.

OBJECTIVE(S)

Students will recognize what they know and what they want to know about piñatas.

What will be done to help students learn this?

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

KWL

Group discussion/charting

Read aloud

ACTIVITIES

Fill out the first page of the KWL worksheet (the “K” and the “W”). Read your answers to the class. Then listen to your teacher read the story, “A Piñata for Pepita” from *Christmas Stories Round the World*. Organize all your papers on piñatas under your Piñata Journal cover sheet.

VOCABULARY

piñata	Festively decorated papier-mâché object filled with candy and toys
Mexico	Country in North America that is south of the United States and north of Central America

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

Christmas Stories Round the World by Lois Johnson

reproduced copies of Lesson 1 Worksheet

reproduced copies of My Piñata Journal cover sheet

ASSESSMENT

Read each KWL worksheet to assess how much your students already know about piñatas and what they want to learn.

Lesson 1 Worksheet

Name _____ Date _____

KLW Activity

(K) This is what I **know** about piñatas:

(W) This is what I **want** to know about piñatas:

My Piñata Journal

By _____

A large, empty rounded rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the student to write their name and other information.

Lesson 2: History of Piñatas, part 1

What will students be learning?

STANDARD(S)

Students read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

Students read to locate, select, evaluate, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources. (RW5)

BENCHMARK(S)

Students use comprehension strategies.

Students paraphrase, summarize, organize, evaluate, and synthesize information.

OBJECTIVE(S)

Students will be able to synthesize information by taking notes.

What will be done to help students learn this?

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Main idea organizer

Paired reading

PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Discuss what a paragraph is and the techniques of summarizing, main idea, and paraphrasing. Preliminary teaching on location of Italy and Spain.

ACTIVITIES

With a partner, read page 9 in *Piñatas* by Virginia Brock. Fill out the Note Taking Organizer, writing down the main idea from paragraph one in the left column. Write three sentences that support this main idea in the second column.

VOCABULARY

Italy	Country in Europe east of France
Spain	Country in Europe south of France
fiesta	Party
celebration	Party or ceremony to commemorate an event or occasion
Spanish settlers	People who came from Spain to begin a life in Mexico

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

reproduced copies of Note Taking Organizer

Piñatas by Virginia Brock

Teacher Key for *Piñatas*

ASSESSMENT

Use teacher-made key to evaluate Note Taking Organizer in the Piñata Journal.

Lesson 3: History of Piñatas, part 2

What will students be learning?

STANDARD(S)

Students read and understand a variety of materials. (RW1)

Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. (RW4)

Students read to locate, select, evaluate, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources. (RW5)

Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience. (RW6)

BENCHMARK(S)

Students will use comprehension strategies.

Student will use reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing to gather data.

Students will paraphrase and summarize information.

Students will read literature representing various cultural and ethnic traditions.

Students will read literature that reflects the uniqueness, diversity, and integrity of the American experience.

OBJECTIVE(S)

Students will gather information from a variety of sources.

Students will understand that the piñata came originally from Italy.

Students will understand that piñatas are used in Spanish-speaking countries to celebrate birthdays and at Christmas and Easter.

What will be done to help students learn this?

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Read alouds

Book response

Independent reading

Note taking

PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

A prelesson on note taking may be necessary. See Lesson 2.

ACTIVITIES

1. Listen to your teacher read the passage about Carmen's birthday party in *Family Pictures* and then *Hooray, a Piñata!* Fill out the Lesson 3 Worksheet.
2. Get out your Piñata Journal. Read pages 9–17 in the book *Piñatas* by Virginia Brock and take notes on the Note Taking Organizer. Do this with as many sources as possible. Use as many sheets as needed.

Lesson 3 cont.

VOCABULARY

blindfold	Piece of material used to cover the eyes
Pascual	Easter holiday in Spanish-speaking countries
olla	Clay pot
explorer	Person who travels to new places

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

Piñata Journals

reproduced copies of Lesson 3 Worksheet

Note Taking Organizer (see Lesson 1)

Family Pictures by Carmen Lomas Garza

Piñatas by Virginia Brock

Hooray, a Piñata! by Elisa Kleven

Fiesta! by Ginger Foglesong Guy to increase Spanish language vocabulary

ASSESSMENT

Evaluate notes for key components listed in objectives.

Lesson 3 Worksheet

Piñata Celebrations

1. Describe the scene at Carmen's birthday. What is needed at a piñata party? How do you play the piñata game?

2. What did the girl need for her birthday party in *Hooray, a Piñata!?*

3. What is one celebration/holiday in which a piñata is used?

Lesson 4: Writing the Report

What will students be learning?

STANDARD(S)

Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences. (RW2)

Students write and speak using formal grammar usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. (RW3)

BENCHMARK(S)

Students will write and speak to peers.

Students will plan, draft, revise, proofread, edit, and publish written communications.

Students will recognize, understand, and use formal grammar in speaking and writing.

Students will apply formal usage in speaking and writing.

Students will use correct sentence structure in writing.

Students will demonstrate correct punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

Students will use the most appropriate method, handwriting or word processing, to produce a product that is legible.

OBJECTIVE(S)

Students will write a written report on piñatas.

Students will have notes from at least three sources.

Students will have a pre-writing plan and first draft.

Students will meet grade-level standards for punctuation.

Students will meet grade-level grammar standards.

Students will revise their reports.

Students will publish their work using the computer.

What will be done to help students learn this?

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Shared writing

Guided writing

Independent writing

PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION

Demonstrate how to organize notes and put them into paragraph format. Utilize shared writing to demonstrate.

ACTIVITIES

Reread all your notes in your Piñata Journal and begin to organize them into sections for your report. Take your main ideas and supporting details and begin to write them into sentences and in paragraph format. When you are done you should have a report about piñatas.

Lesson 4 (cont.)

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

Piñata Journals

Teacher Checklist #1

ASSESSMENT

Formal checklist assessment of final written report. See Teacher Checklist #1.

Teacher Checklist #1

Checklist for Written Report

Student Name _____ Total Score _____

1. _____ Student has notes from at least three sources.
2. _____ Student has a pre-writing plan and first draft.
3. _____ Student meets grade level standards for punctuation.
4. _____ Student report meets grade level grammar standards.
5. _____ Student revised and had teacher conference.
6. _____ Student published the work using the computer.

Lesson 5: Creating the Piñata

What will students be learning?

STANDARD(S)

Students recognize and use the visual arts as a form of communication. (A1)

Students know and apply visual arts materials, tools, techniques, and processes. (A3)

Students relate the visual arts to various historical and cultural traditions. (A4)

Students use appropriate technologies to extend comprehension and communication skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. (RW7)

BENCHMARK(S)

Students will identify ideas for works of art.

Students know and are able to use materials, tools, techniques, and processes to make works of art.

Students will use appropriate technologies to increase literacy through a variety of formats.

OBJECTIVE(S)

Students will chose a design and create a piñata in a cooperative group.

Students will create piñatas.

What will be done to help students learn this?

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES:

Read aloud

Brainstorm

Guided discussion

Cooperative groups

PRELIMINARY LESSON PREPARATION:

Have a prelesson on how cooperative groups work and practice if necessary. Divide students into groups and assign two tasks: paper cutting and paper gluing. Prepare paste solution for each group. Solution: Mix 2 cups flour with water until it is the consistency of pancake batter. See pages 56–69 in *Piñatas* by Virginia Brock on how to make a piñata.

ACTIVITIES

Watch the video *Look What I Made* to get ideas for a design and learn how to make a piñata.

Brainstorm out loud with your class some ideas for your piñata. You can also get ideas from pages 49–55 in the book *Piñatas*. Decide with your group on your design. Now, discuss with the class how you are going to make the piñata. Listen to your teacher read the book *The Piñata Maker*. Then, follow the directions on the worksheet with your group and create your piñata!

Lesson 5 (cont.)

VOCABULARY

papier-mâché	Technique for creating art forms out of newspaper
tissue paper	Light, colorful paper from China
pinatero	Piñata maker

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

The Piñata Maker by George Ancona

Look What I Made: Paper Playthings and Gifts (video)

Piñatas by Virginia Brock

reproduced copies of Lesson 5 Worksheet

materials for the piñata:

- paste mixture
- colored tissue paper
- balloons
- newspaper
- tag board

ASSESSMENT

Assessment of the process of creating piñatas.

Lesson 5 Worksheet

Making a Piñata

Name:

b:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

What is your design?

Materials Checklist:

- ___ paste mixture ___ 1 balloon
- ___ colored tissue paper ___ newspaper
- ___ tag board

Directions, part 1:

1. Tear many newspaper strips and put aside.
2. Cut any shapes out of tag board you need to create your design (star points, clown hat, nose, ears, etc.).
3. Cut long strips of colored tissue paper. Keep your design in mind.

Lesson 5 Worksheet (cont.)

Directions, part 2:

1. One person blows up the balloon.
2. Everyone dips newspaper strips into the paste liquid.
3. Everyone places them onto the balloon creating a nice layer. Paste at least four layers.
4. Let dry.
5. Repeat steps 2–4 at least three times or until the balloon has a thick, stiff covering.

Directions, part 3:

When dry:

1. Paste on your shapes made out of tag board.
2. The paper cutters need to fold their strips in half and cut from the folded side toward the open side all along the strip. (Look at page 65 in *Piñatas*.)
3. Paper gluers need to glue the two halves of the strips together. Then glue the strip in a pattern on the balloon.
4. Let it dry.
5. Have an adult cut an opening in the top and place a coat hanger through to hang.

Lesson 6: Presentations

What will students be learning?

STANDARD(S)

Students recognize and use the visual arts as a form of communication. (A1)

Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences. (RW2)

Students write and speak using formal grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. (RW3)

Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. (RW4)

BENCHMARK(S)

Students will select and use visual images to communicate meaning.

Students will write and speak to peers, teacher, and the community.

Students will prepare written and oral presentations.

Students will use formal grammar in speaking.

Students will express point of view orally.

OBJECTIVE(S)

Students will give an oral presentation of their written report.

What will be done to help students learn this?

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Group presentations

Cooperative groups

ACTIVITIES

Prepare to present your reports and piñatas to other classes. With your group, organize and practice the presentation of your piñata reports. Designate specific students to read specific parts of their reports. Be creative with visuals. After your presentation, grade your group using the Group Grade Worksheet.

RESOURCES/MATERIALS

student journals, visual aids, and piñatas

reproduced copies of Lesson 6 Worksheet

Teacher Checklist #2

ASSESSMENT

Formal assessment of presentation. See Teacher Checklist #2. Student assessment of self and group.

Teacher Checklist #2

Checklist for Presentation

Name of Student _____ Final Score _____

1. ____ The student participated in the presentation.
2. ____ The group had visual aids.
3. ____ The group had a piñata.
4. ____ The presentation was effective.
5. ____ The student worked cooperatively with group members.

Lesson 6 Worksheet

Group Effort Grade (Cooperative Group Evaluation)

Name _____ Date _____

My job was to _____

The students in my group were _____

Answer **yes** or **no**.

1. _____ We finished our piñata on time.

2. _____ We did our best work.

3. _____ We all helped each other and cooperated.

4. We did best at _____

5. Next time we could work on _____

6. Circle your grade for your group:

Excellent!! Very good OK Could have done better

Unit Assessment

How will students demonstrate proficiency?

PERFORMANCE TASK

Students will write answers to the following questions on page 2 of Lesson 1 Worksheet, “This is what I learned about Piñatas.”

1. Describe when and why piñatas are used.
2. Describe why piñatas are important to Mexican culture.
3. Briefly explain the history of the piñata.
4. Explain how to make a piñata.
5. Name three possible piñata designs.

SCORING RUBRIC

Use the rubric below to score answers 1–5 and compile a total score. Combine all three formal assessment scores to compile overall score.

4. Exceeds correct answer in some way.
3. All questions answered completely and correctly.
2. Partially correct answers/or correct answers to most of the questions.
1. Lacks understanding of task/little, if any, correct information.

Bibliography

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Spanish.
- Ancona, George. *Fiesta U.S.A.*
Spanish or English. Briefly mentions piñatas in relation to las posadas.
- Ancona, George. *The Piñata Maker*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1994.
English. The piñata maker describes how Don Ricardo, a craftsman from Ejutla de Crespo in Southern Mexico, makes piñatas for all the village birthday parties and other fiestas. Spanish version entitled *El Pinatero*.
- Brock, Virginia. *Piñatas*. New York: Abingdon Press, 1966.
A brief history, stories about piñatas, how to use them, and how to make various kinds of piñatas. English.
- Garza, Carmen Lomas. *Family Pictures*. California: Children's Book Press, 1990.
English and Spanish. A book of vignettes describing the author's life. "The Birthday Party" involves a piñata and is told in a young girl's words. Great illustrations.
- Guy, Ginger Foglesong. *Fiesta!* New York: Greenwillow Books, 1996.
A counting book involving a young Mexican girl gathering things for her birthday party. Spanish and English. For very young audiences or Spanish as a second language.
- Johnson, Lois S. *Christmas Stories Round the World*.
English. A collection of Christmas stories. "A Piñata for Pepita" is about a Mexican girl who misses her Christmas piñata tradition.
- Kleven, Elisa. *Hooray, a Piñata!* New York: Dutton Children's Books, 1996.
English or Spanish. Spanish title: *¡Viva! Una Piñata*. A young girl picks out a piñata for her birthday party and grows so fond of it, she doesn't want to break it. A friend makes a different piñata for her to use at her party. For young audiences.
- Mendez, Leticia. *La Piñata*. Mexico, D.F: Editorial Patris/Fundacion E. Gutman, 1987, juvenile.
Spanish.
- Perl, Lila. *Piñatas and Paper Flowers*. New York: Clarion Books, 1983.
Brief description of several Hispanic holidays as they are celebrated in North, Central, and South America. English and Spanish.

Videos:

- Look What I Made: Paper Playthings and Gifts*. Intervideo Inc., 1993.
- Piñatas, Posadas, Pastorelas*. New York: Gessler Publishing, 1991. 25 min.
Spanish. Viewer travels to three Mexican cities to see how Christmas is celebrated.

Web Sites:

- <http://www.pinatadesign.com/page2.html>
<http://www.ibs~net.com/phoenix/rest/pinata.htm>
<http://mexico.udg.mx/Tradiciones/posadas/pinatas.html>
http://family.disney.com/Categories/Activities/Features/family_1997_04/famf/pinata1/pinata1.htm

About the Author

Kristina Riley received her Masters in Education from the University of Colorado at Denver, specializing in bilingual education. Her Bachelor of Arts degree is in Spanish from the University of Oregon. She has traveled through Europe and Mexico and has lived for a time in Seville, Spain. Her work with Hispanic children in two Denver area schools has given her an appreciation of the impact that noble and heroic Hispanic role models can have on children's lives. She currently works as a third grade bilingual teacher in Denver, Colorado.