

STUDY GUIDE

DAVID GONZALEZ'S CUENTOS: TALES OF THE LATINX WORLD





Table of Contents

2 About David Gonzalez

4 About StoryTelling

5 About Music in the Performance

6-8 General Performance Understanding
& Inquiry Questions

9 Discussion Questions

10 Additional Resources

ABOUT DAVID GONZALEZ

David Gonzalez brings a rich background to the stage. He has been telling stories since the age of seven when he performed with his puppets in a puppet theater made by his uncle and grandmother. Born in the United States, David was reared in Cuba for part of his early life and then moved back to New York City to grow up in the Bronx. His uncle, a woodworker and guitar maker, introduced him to music via the guitar. David attended a singer's retreat in his early 20's where he was introduced to storytelling and a vocation. He is a poet, actor, musician, and a master storyteller. In addition, he is a music therapist, having earned his Ph.D. from New York University where he taught for 10 years.

As an artist, David has created numerous productions that combine live music with compelling drama and often multi-media. His titles range from fairy tales to epic myths and fables to community voices, all of which enchant audiences of all ages with stories of love, hope, courage, and wisdom. He can also offer incredible workshops and residencies.

David has toured extensively across North America, performing for schools and such venues as The Smithsonian, The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, The McCallum Theater, The Smith Center, New Jersey Performing Arts Center, The Brooklyn Academy of Music, and more... David was a featured performer at the 2008 National Storytelling Festival, and he has performed at festivals in Spain, Egypt, Switzerland, France, Costa Rica, Norway, Puerto Rico, and throughout the United States. He also appeared for three seasons at the Royal National Theatre in London.

He was a recipient of the Helen Hayes Performing Artist of the Year award in 1998, and in 2006, was nominated for a Drama Desk Award for his version of The Frog Bride. He had the great honor of being named the Joseph Campbell Foundation Fellow for 2010 and received the IPAY (International Performing Arts for Youth) "Lifetime Achievement Award for Sustained Excellence" in 2011.



6 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THE ARTIST:

David grew up in the Bronx, NY and lived in Cuba for a short time as a child.

David has a Cuban Father and Puerto Rican Mother.

David is bilingual in Spanish.

David is a performer, musician, writer, storyteller, poet, educator, and has a PHD in music therapy.

David's performances blend storytelling with live music.

David has toured extensively in North America and also internationally including UK, Spain, Egypt, Norway, France, and Costa Rica.

ABOUT THE ART OF STORYTELLING

Storytelling is an art form that goes back thousands of years. Before written languages existed, oral storytelling was the only way to pass on information, history, and knowledge. Every culture in the world has a tradition of storytelling.

REASONS FOR STORYTELLING

Traditional stories were used to teach people how to behave properly toward one another, and to describe the consequences of ignoring the social mores of a particular culture. Stories were told of gods, great deeds, adventures of the past, or the sacrifices and labors of heroes and heroines who overcame evil against great odds.

Stories also explained the natural events that people saw every day, such as the sun rising and setting, or the reasons for nature's fury as expressed in storms, earthquakes, and smoldering volcanoes. Tales even described spiritual journeys and visions. In stories, fools could become wise, the poor could become wealthy, and perseverance and goodness could be rewarded. Stories were told for lessons, for laughs, for tears shed, and for fears ignited or calmed.

For some societies, it is still the principal way for people to pass information and knowledge to one another and between generations. Storytelling maintains and sustains the body of shared beliefs of a community and thus serves to keep it alive. The children of traditional societies absorb the wisdom, knowledge, and love of their culture through storytelling and pass it on by continuing the practice.

STORYTELLING TODAY

Today, we have come to recognize storytellers as artists. The storyteller is a master communicator who works to suspend the "real" world so that messages can be transmitted through imagery, sound, and emotion. By using language, voice, and body movement, the storyteller can infuse a story with the rhythms and music of life.



One unique aspect of a storytelling performance is that the performer must use his body with gestures, movements, rhythms, and especially voice to create characters, place, and time. There is usually no scenery, and few props. The scope and type of costuming varies from performer to performer. On a stage, there is often minimal lighting.

THINK ABOUT...

As you watch some of David Gonzalez's stories, think about what the purpose of each story might be. What purpose do you think it served for people when it was first told? And, what does David want you to know or think about when you hear his version today?

DID YOU KNOW?

In many cultures, traditional storytelling takes the form of song, chant, music or poetry. Many stories were often chanted or sung with musical accompaniment by an instrument.

ABOUT MUSIC IN THE PERFORMANCE

Music has a long history of being used in storytelling. From early chants and spirituals to folks songs, music has long been infused with the art of storytelling.

David also uses music to set the tone for his stories, as music can be used to convey a mood or feeling. Music in the major key can be used in happy stories and music in the minor key can be used to show a sad or somber moment in a story.

It can also be used as sound effects. With just a voice, a guitar, and a keyboard/piano, the storyteller can make many different sounds that help tell you what is happening in the story.

Listen for:

- The tip-toeing of the mouse
- The roar of the lion

What else do you hear?

How are those sounds made?



MUSIC INSTRUMENTS

Here are some of the instruments you may see in the stories you watch:

A guitar - a stringed acoustic musical instrument that has 6 or 12 strings. It is played by plucking or strumming with the fingers or a guitar pick.

A piano/keyboard - a stringed instrument that makes a sound when one of its hammers strikes a string by pressing down on a key - or in an electronic keyboard, when a key is pressed, it sends a signal to the right note.



Pianist & Collaborator Daniel Kelly

COMPOSER

David's performances include original compositions written and performed by collaborator and pianist Daniel Kelly.

ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS

Overarching (aka “big”) ideas that are central to the core of the discipline and may be transferred to new learning beyond the performances.

- Storytellers use their body with gestures, movements, rhythms and especially voice to create characters, place, and time.
- Stories serve a purpose. Stories such as folk tales, myths and fairytales are used to explain natural events, to teach lessons, or to help us understand more about ourselves as humans.

COMPELLING QUESTIONS

Compelling Questions deal with curiosities about how things work, invite interpretations and applications of disciplinary concepts, and address unresolved issues that require students to construct arguments in response.

Compelling question preview:

Inquiry 01 (Page 7)

David Gonzalez is a master storyteller. He captivates our imaginations with the stories he tells.

What tools does a storyteller use to draw in the listener?

Inquiry 02 (Page 8)

Stories can convey lessons, explain why something occurs, or help us to learn more about ourselves. Agree or disagree?

What is the impact of stories on the listener?

INQUIRY #1

David Gonzalez is a master storyteller. He captivates our imaginations with the stories he tells.

What tools does a storyteller use to draw in the listener?

GOALS

- Connect to self and lived experience
- Observe and draw inferences using the performance as text

CONNECT

Invite students to think about stories told to them by parents, grandparents, siblings or others in their life. What makes a story exciting or fun to hear? Ask students to do a quick write on a post-it note that contains an initial response and at least one piece of evidence from their own knowledge that supports their claim.

CONSIDER

Watch one or more of David's stories. Have students discuss and record answers on a white board, post-its or digital tool:

- Notice how often the performer's voice changes during the telling of the story. What is the "narrator's voice" and what are the "character" voices?
- How does the performance use silence?
- What did you notice about the performer's facial expressions throughout the story? Did he use different facial expressions for different characters? Explain.
- How does the performer use his body to create the "pictures" of the story?
- How did the performer use pantomime within the performance? How did he make imaginary objects come to life?
- What instruments were used in each of the performances?
- How was the music used to tell the stories?
- What would the stories have been like without the music and instruments?

CREATE

Invite students to be a storyteller and experiment with character voices, gestures, and using their body to create the "pictures" of the story. Challenge them to figure out their narrator voice and body, and then to do the same for two distinct characters. Example scenes for practice that include a narrator and two characters could include:

- Little Red Riding Hood meeting the Wolf, disguised in Granny's clothing
- The Big Bad Wolf trying to blow down the house of the third little pig, who built his house of bricks

INQUIRY #2

Stories can convey lessons, explain why something occurs, or help us to learn more about ourselves. Agree or disagree?

What is the impact of stories on the listener?

GOAL

- Determine stories' central message, lesson or moral

CONNECT

Invite students to do a quick write on paper or a post-it that contains an initial response and at least one piece of evidence from their own knowledge that supports their claim. Encourage them to use a story they know from a book, television show, or movie as an example.

RESEARCH

Jigsaw read the 'About the Art of Storytelling' article (see Resources Page 16) and report out the findings from each section.

Create a class padlet or display that lists out various purposes that storytelling can serve. As your class encounters stories (either through David's performances, read-alouds, free reading books, etc.,) invite students to speculate on the purpose the author or storyteller had for each. Add the title and any notes to your class display to make visible the range of story purposes.

CONSIDER

Watch one or more of David's performances. Engage students in a discussion of some of the thematic questions specific to that title. (See pages 9-14.)

CREATE

Invite students to write, illustrate, or tell an original story that serves a purpose, such as explaining why something happens or that teaches a lesson. Share the stories as a class and invite peers to speculate on the storyteller's intent.

CUENTOS: TALES FROM THE LATINX WORLD DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Cuentos paints a vivid picture of the people and rich cultures of the Spanish-speaking world with colorful tales from the Caribbean, South America, and the Bronx! From the silly antics of the Puerto Rican anti-hero "Juan Bobo" to the mysterious dealings and powers of the Orishas in a suite of Afro-Cuban stories, these tales are filled with memorable characters, fantastic plots and positive messages for children. Spanish language words are sprinkled throughout the stories and songs in such a way that young audiences can repeat and retain their sound and meaning.

This bilingual performance can spark real conversation with the accompanying discussion questions:

Juan Bobo and the Pig

A Puerto Rican tale about a foolish boy who learns how to do the right thing.

The performer speaks Spanish throughout the story. What Spanish words do you remember hearing? What did those words mean?

Ask if there are any Spanish speaking children in the class. Where do their families come from? What words can they teach the other students?

Who was your favorite character in this story? What happened to them?

What did you learn from the characters and situation in Juan Bobo? If you were a character in the story, would you have made the same choices?

Chango and the Drum

A Cuban-Yoruba story about Chango's wish to trade the power to tell the future for the power of music.

Chango is an Orisha (which means deity to the Yoruba people) - specifically the god of thunder and drumming. Many cultures from around the world incorporate natural phenomena like thunder or lightning into their stories. What other stories do you know (or can find through research on world cultures and religions) about the natural world? If you could have a super power, what would it be?

Chango needed to trade for the drum since he is a drummer at his heart. What do you or your community need to be happy in your hearts?

Tio Jose and the Singing Trees

A true story about a magical gift.

How did the trees sing?

Was Tio Jose lying?

How can the lesson "watch, listen, and learn" help you in your everyday life?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Augusta Baker and Ellin Greene, *Storytelling: Art and Technique*.
- Norma Livo and Sandra Rietz, *Storytelling: Process and Practice*.
- Vivian Gussin Paley, *Mollie Is Three*. How children use fantasy and story to construct their reality, and how a teacher entered a child's world through storytelling.
- The National Storytelling Network. Listings of festivals, resources, and local events. Many links to collections of stories and tales: www.storynet.org
- *Tell Me Another: Storytelling and Reading Aloud at Home, At School, and in the Community* By: Bob Barton
Publisher: Heinemann, 1986 ISBN-10: 0435082310
- *Tell Me Another...* helps teachers make storytelling and reading aloud effective in their classes, both for themselves and their pupils.
- *Children Tell Stories: Teaching and Using Storytelling in the Classroom* By: Martha Hamilton Publisher: Richard C. Owen Publishers; 2nd edition, 2005 ISBN-10: 1572746637 Full of practical tips, handouts, and resources.
- *The Storyteller's Sourcebook: A Subject, Title, and Motif Index to Folklore Collections for Children* By: Margaret Read MacDonald and Bryan W. Sturm Publisher: Detroit Gale Research/Neal-Schuman, 1982 ISBN-10: 0810304716
The first edition provides descriptions of folktales and references to more than 700 published sources of folktales. The new edition covers folktales from 1983-1999. Both editions include thorough indexing by subject, motif, title, ethnic group and country of origin and a comprehensive bibliography.
- The Kids' Storytelling Club www.storycraft.com/ The only way to become a storyteller is to tell stories. The way to become a better storyteller is to learn new storytelling skills. And the way to become the best storyteller is to develop your own storytelling techniques. The best way to do all this is to explore many different kinds of storytelling. Find which things are easiest for you.
- Mensa for Kids – The Art of Storytelling www.mensaforkids.org/teach/lesson-plans/the-art-of-storytelling/ Site helps students give the rationale for the telling of stories, evaluate a story for its storytelling potential, outline a story in preparation for storytelling, and present a story before an audience.
- David Gonzalez www.davidgonzalez.com
- Daniel Kelly – Composer and Pianist www.danielkellymusic.com

Special thanks to the education and programming departments of Des Moines Performing Arts, Broward Center for the Performing Arts, Kalamazoo Resa Education for the Arts, The Kennedy Center for the Arts, The McCallum Theater, NJPAC, Ordway Center, The Smith Center, Tennessee Performing Arts Center, and Young Audiences New Jersey and Eastern PA.