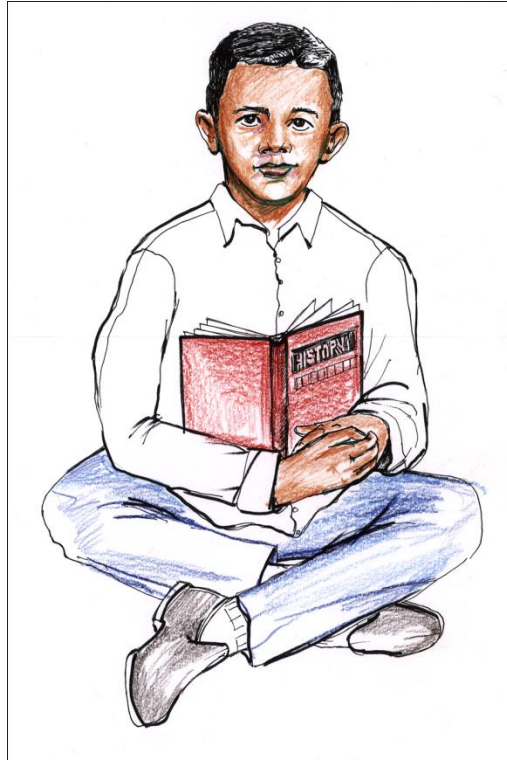


Francisco Zermeño



An Immigrant from Mexico
(historical)
1965

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Teacher Introduction

Francisco Zermeño is a current resident of Hayward who came to California from Mexico with his family in 1964. Like many Mexican immigrants in the post WWII era, Francisco's uncles came to the United States through the *Bracero* Program in hopes of making better lives for their families. They moved to the farming community of Salinas. Francisco's mother was one of the first legal Mexican immigrants who came to the US through her family ties with the *Bracero* Program.

Beginning in the 1940s, as World War II drained the labor force in the United States, immigration from Mexico increased rapidly. The United States needed more workers so Congress created the *Bracero* Program in cooperation with the Mexican Government. Through this program, Mexicans could come to the U.S. temporarily and work in agriculture. The program lasted from 1942 to 1964, and over 4.5 million Mexicans worked as *braceros*.

This guest worker program allowed Mexicans to live and work in the U.S., but not become citizens. *Braceros* would take the money they earned back to Mexico to their families. Many would return year after year and many stayed here permanently, sending for their families as soon as they could afford it. But the program ultimately stimulated illegal immigration as well. During the years of the *Bracero* program, approximately 5 million illegal Mexican workers were apprehended and returned to Mexico.

The influx of illegal immigrants stirred feelings of racism. In his story, Francisco talks about racism that was common in Mexico between dark-skinned and light-skinned Mexicans. But in the U.S. the discrimination was more severe and for many, their dream of having a better life for themselves and their families was tainted by the degradation and cruelties they endured. Still, the pattern of immigration from Mexico continues to this day for people in search of work.

What happened to Francisco Zermeño?

After completing his schooling, Francisco went to college at UC Santa Barbara, where he received a BA and an MA in Spanish and Portuguese. He married Elisabeth Chaubard, from Paris, France in 1978 and they have 3 children. Francisco has been teaching at Chabot since 1978 and is a faculty advisor for MECHA, a Mexican American community service group. He is also a Hayward mentor for the Puente Project at Chabot College, which helps Mexican American students. Francisco attends St. Bede's church in Hayward and is a member of the Hayward City Council.

This story was prepared by Stephanie Daugherty during her final year of studies at CSU Hayward where she received a BA in History. Stephanie interviewed Francisco and researched Mexican immigration to the United States. We gratefully thank Francisco for sharing his life story with us and for his continuous support of the HAHS education program.

Sources

- Mexicanos- A History of Mexicans in the United States* by Manuel Gonzales
- The American West- A New Interpretive History* by Robert V. Hine and John M. Farager
- The Legacy of Conquest* by Patricia Nelson Limerick

Francisco Zermeño

Introduction



Hello, my name is Francisco, or Frank, Zermeño. My family came from Jalisco, Mexico in 1964. I came in a truck with my Uncle Jesse and his wife, and my mother, brothers, and sister. My mother had already lived in California for three years before we came, and she had finally saved enough money to bring us here, too.

There were many things that shocked me about my new surroundings, but the first thing that shocked me was the freeways. Everywhere there were buildings, structures, and things made of cement! It was so strange to me.

Let me tell you a little about my life.

A New Name

When we moved to California, the first change really stunned me. My full name is José Francisco Zermeño Cardenas. But I had to shorten my name.

In Mexico, people have two first names. One is for a saint and one is a special name to your family. I was named José after St. Joseph. I was named Francisco because I was born on October 4, which is St. Francis Day in Mexico. I also have two last names. The first one is my father's name, and the second is my mother's last name before she was married.



When we came to the United States, the government told me to only use one first name, Francisco. They also told me that my mother's last name was not important in America. They made me shorten my name to Francisco Zermeño.

It also shocked me that they said that "my mother's last name was not important in America," because I had been taught that America was the whole continent, not just the United States. I knew that Mexico was part of the continent of North America. My mother's name was certainly important in Mexico.

But, I was in for more culture shocks.

A New Language

The next shock after having my name changed was the language. My family only knew how to speak Spanish, and once we arrived in the U.S., I had to learn English very quickly.

I was put into an English-speaking school. I was eleven, and should have entered the sixth grade. Instead, I was placed in fifth grade, because I did not know how to speak English.

There was no one to help me learn English, and my family could not help me either. The only person who could help me at all was one Mexican American classmate my age. But he would not speak any Spanish to me, and so it was very hard to talk to him.

Even though I had to learn to speak English at school, my mother still spoke Spanish to us at home. But the Spanish we spoke was not what some people would consider “educated Spanish,” because my mother only finished the third grade in school. That meant that many people didn’t consider Spanish to be my first language either, even though it was the only language I knew.

Whenever my sister and I went out to the movies or anywhere in public, we would speak Spanish to each other. People would yell to us and say, “don’t speak that!” We were so astonished, and felt so awkward that we could not even speak our native language to each other. It was practically forbidden.

Prejudices

In those days, there were not very many Mexicans living in our community. My sister and brothers and I were looked down on in school because we were Mexican.

Our father had been a dark-skinned Mexican, which meant that he had more Indian blood in him than Spanish blood. Our mother, on the other hand, is light-skinned, which means that she is more European-looking. She looks more like a white person than my dad did. Even in Mexico, there had been racism against my father, because he was a dark Mexican.

I am a dark Mexican like my father had been. You can tell from far away that I am dark. My sister, on the other hand, is light-skinned like my mother. She can get away with people thinking she is white, until she speaks Spanish. My one brother is in-between skinned, so people sometimes guess that he is Mexican.

Francisco Zermeño

Because we were Mexican, many people did not treat us well. Other people just ignored us, because we were different.

Mi Familia



This is a picture of me, 8 yrs. (right), with Tony, 3 yrs. (center), and Rosie, 5 yrs., in Mexico in 1960. It was taken by my mother at Conception de Buenos Aires. We were having fun by the fountain.

I have two brothers and one sister. I am the oldest child, then Rosie, then Tony, then Joe. We came to California with my mother and two uncles.

My father died in Mexico when I was six. He was a businessman who owned a small grocery store.

After my father died, my mother could not support our family. She left when I was eight to go to California and try to make more money. She worked as a cook in a restaurant. When she had enough money to send for us, my two uncles brought my brothers and sister and I to Salinas, California, with my mother.

Back in Mexico, I was very close to my grandfather. After my father died, my grandfather became my father figure. I spent my last year living in Mexico on his ranch with him. I worked alongside him, and I enjoyed it very much. I did not want to leave my grandfather and come to California, but as the oldest child in my family I felt a responsibility to help my mother.



My sister Rosie and me.

Life in California

In California, we were still very poor. When we first came here we lived in a small apartment above a Mexican restaurant and bar where my mother worked. We ate dinner at the restaurant. I had to work in exchange for food. After we ate, I had to wash dishes or mop the floor in the restaurant kitchen. The food, however, was well worth it!

Sometimes we would visit other Mexican families who lived in migrant worker camps. These places were very poor. But as kids, we had fun!

Francisco Zermeño

As soon as school was out for the summer, I went to work with my uncles in the fields. I spent all my summers in the fields until after my sophomore year of high school. We harvested fruits and vegetables. The work was hard.

What's Cooking?

In Mexico, the food we ate was mostly corn tortillas, beans, rice, vegetables, meat once a week. Our food also had lots of spicy, hot peppers. We ate the same thing almost every day. We were too poor to be able to buy other food.

But here in California, there was every kind of food!

There were buffets where you could eat any kind of food you wanted! You could try a little bit of every kind, and this we really enjoyed. There were so many kinds of cheese, which my siblings and I had never tasted! There were different kinds of bread; there was salad, chicken, and flour (not corn) tortillas.

There were also many kinds of snacks and sweets. Oh, the sweets! There was candy, cookies, pies, cakes. In Mexico, we were used to eating corn all the time because my grandfather grew it. We always had corn in Mexico. But here in the United States, you could never get sick of any food! There was always something new to taste!

Holidays

For holidays in California, special food was part of the tradition. For Thanksgiving and Christmas, everyone in California cooked a huge turkey with all the trimmings. I learned that trimmings were mashed potatoes, gravy, and stuffing. These foods were all new to my family, and it took us many years to become accustomed to this new tradition.

For birthdays, however, there was a round cake with icing and candles! I was twelve when I had my first birthday cake! This was a joyous celebration with family and friends.



My 12th Birthday Celebration, the first in California!

Francisco Zermeño

In Mexico, our town held small festivals to our patron saint. We also had town fairs with many different kinds of food and dancing. One thing that compared to this was the rodeo that they had in California! I loved to go to the rodeo! It made me feel like I fit in and I finally felt like I belonged there. We had square dancing, which I loved! Not many Mexicans did that at the time, but it was so much fun that I didn't care!

Going to Church

Our family is Catholic. In Mexico, we went to church every Sunday and it was very important. In California, we went to church too. But here there was only one church around us that had mass in Spanish, so we didn't have a choice. We had to go to that church.

In Mexico, we had large celebrations on Catholic holidays to honor saints. I had spent an entire school year (4th grade) at a boarding school run by Catholic nuns. This picture of me is at my first communion celebration in Guadalajara, Mexico. I did not know the man in the picture with me. He was my appointed godfather, given to me by the church. He was rich and paid for my communion celebration. It was strange taking this picture with a man I had never met before, but it was a Catholic tradition!



Francisco Zermeño



Lesson Plans

Classroom Kit: People: Francisco Zermeño
Immigration Discovery Kit

Activity Goals

1 – Chicano Murals

- To understand the roots of the Chicano Movement.
- To understand the importance of murals as political statements, expressions of cultured pride and depictions of a shared history.

Setting the Context:

The term “**Chicano**” is a politically loaded, self-identified term referring to someone of Mexican heritage living in the United States. It arose as a derogatory term used by US landowners to refer to their unskilled Mexican workers but took on a self-empowered meaning during the Chicano movement of the 1960s. “Chicano” is used as a symbol of pride and solidarity with **la raza** (the people).

The Chicano Civil Rights Movement was influenced by the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's. Similar to the Black Panther Party, an African American organization created to further the movement of black liberation, the Chicano Movement stood to end oppression of Mexican Americans.

Throughout the country, Chicanos fought for better social, economic, educational and political conditions. Student activists demanded better representation in school curriculum and adequate education. Landowners fought to retain land in New Mexico and gain political representation. Farm workers were struggling to organize and unionize in Central Valley California and Texas. This **campesino** (farm worker) labor movement occurred during the time when Francisco picked grapes in Salinas.

Artwork, through posters and murals, disseminated information and communicated demands to the literate and non-literate. Murals were products of the community around them. Community members painted and discussed murals that were located in their **barrio** (neighborhood). Anyone walking down the street was able to understand the story and messages of the mural, thus learning about his/her community's struggles.

Murals were a visual representation of the history and struggles for better opportunities in the future. They cultivated an awareness of cultural identity, and empowered the community. They told this story visually, without using many words.

Francisco Zermeño



Lesson Plans

Classroom Kit:

People: Francisco Zermeño
Immigration Discovery Kit

1 – Chicano Murals

The history of murals can be traced back to Paleolithic cave paintings. Even the early murals were a product of the community, depicted daily life and were meant to evoke a reaction in the viewer. An Ohlone mural was recently uncovered under a wall at the Mission Dolores in San Francisco. The Ohlone people did not have a written language and therefore used images and murals to record histories.

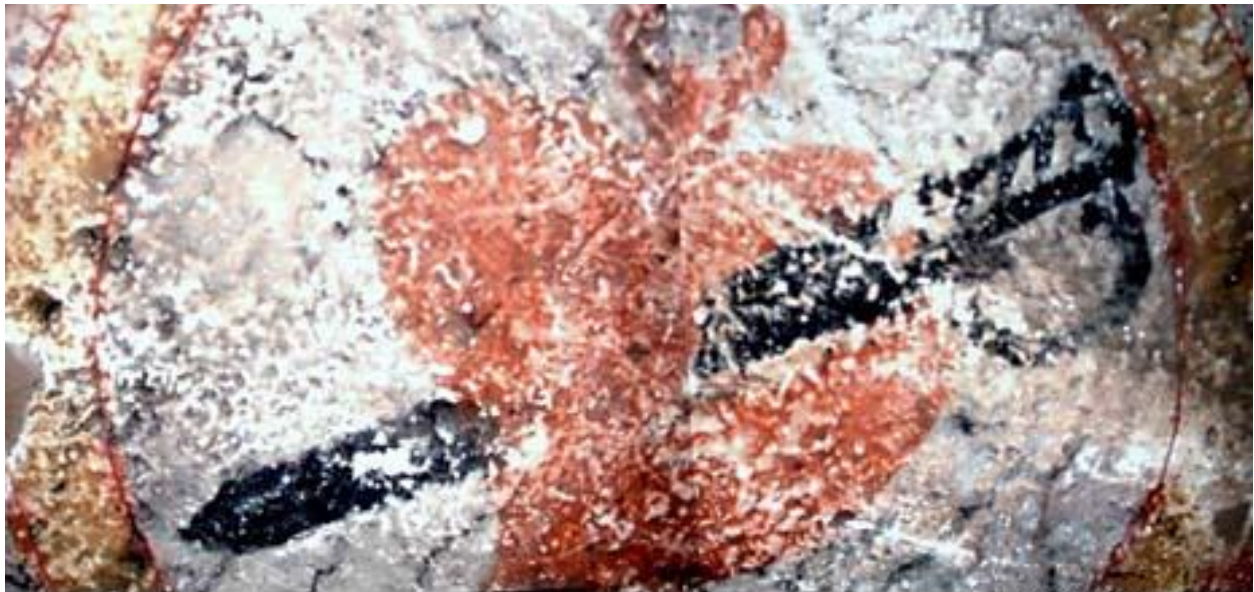


Photo: Ben Wood

Segment of Ohlone Mural uncovered at Mission Dolores

Mexico has a long tradition of mural paintings. During the 1920s and '30s, Mexican muralists Diego Rivera, Jose Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros were inspired by traditional Italian Renaissance fresco style. Diego Rivera influenced many local artists at the California College of Arts and Crafts (known now as CCA), the San Francisco Community College and the Art Institute of San Francisco and in essence, revitalized Mexican muralism. Rivera was commissioned to paint several murals in San Francisco and the Bay Area, including one for a building at UC Berkeley.

Francisco Zermeño



Lesson Plans

Classroom Kit:

People: Francisco Zermeño
Immigration Discovery Kit

1 – Chicano Murals

Activity Instructions:

Visual Symbolism

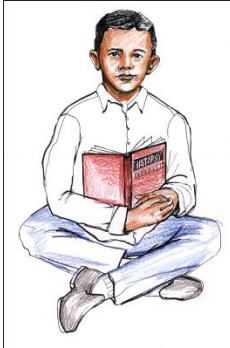
What are symbols? Why do people use symbols? Can you come up with examples? How would you design a personal symbol to represent you, your family, or your community? How and why do artists use symbols?

Choose your own examples to analyze as a class. Use *Si Se Puede* (see below), a mural of Cesar Chavez on a Mission district school, as an example of visual symbolism. The mural includes images of Cesar Chavez, grapes, clasped hands, sign language and sun shining from behind his head.



Si Se Puede (©1996) mural by Susan Cervantes
Located in the César Chávez Elementary School in San Francisco, CA

Francisco Zermeño



Lesson Plans

Classroom Kit:

People: Francisco Zermeño
Immigration Discovery Kit

1 – Chicano Murals

Create it!

Create a mural in the classroom: think of a topic, spread out a large piece of butcher paper and use crayons or markers. Can outline in pencil first. Have each child make a mini-mural to hang on his or her desk.

Experience it!

After analyzing and interpreting symbols, take a field trip to view and study local murals. Ask students work in pairs to explore and research a particular mural or section of a mural, and to share their interpretation of its symbols with the class. If you can't take a field trip, take a "virtual tour" of murals of San Francisco or Los Angeles. Many websites, as listed below, offer such tours. Have students choose, sketch, and then interpret three different symbols in writing. Also, have them look around their neighborhoods, there could be a mural on the wall of a corner market. Or, take a guided walk of murals in Hayward, through the City of Hayward.

Local Murals

"Internal Melody" by John Pugh
Hayward City Hall

On the pillars of Hayward City Hall is a mural depicting Hayward's history from being an Ohlone village to the rancho era and up to modern day. It also discusses the Blues legacy of Russell City. This mural and sculpture is a tribute to Hayward's cultural diversity.



Francisco Zermeno



Lesson Plans

Classroom Kit:

People: Francisco Zermeno
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1 – Chicano Murals

More Information

The Virtual Diego Rivera Web Museum

<http://www.diegorivera.com/biography-2/>

Collection of murals and timeline of Diego Rivera's life.

Precita Eyes Mural Arts and Visitors Center

<http://www.precitaeyes.org/>

Examples of San Francisco's murals

<http://www.precitaeyes.org/missionhist.html>

History of murals in the Mission District

Ongoing Tours: Mission Murals Walking Tour: Saturdays, 1:30 pm

Social and Public Art Resource Center

<http://www.sparcmurals.org/present/cmt/cmhistory.html>

Chicano Park Murals (San Diego, CA)

<http://www.chicanoparksandiego.com/murals/index.html>

Francisco Zermeño



Lesson Plans

Classroom Kit:

People: Francisco Zermeño
Immigration Discovery Kit

**2 – Serpientes y Escaleras
(Snakes and Ladders)**

Activity Goals

- To understand the influences of various cultures on traditional games.
- To understand that actions have consequences.

Setting the Context:

Serpientes y Escaleras is based on a traditional Hindu game, *moksha-patamu* (translated means Snakes and Ladders). In India this game was used to teach children moral ethics, vices and virtues, reincarnation, and other aspects of the Hindu religion. Through playing this game, children see how good deeds promote rebirth into a higher life form whereas bad actions result in reincarnation to a lower being. The last picture, number 100, represents Nirvana, or Heaven. Ladders represent virtues and the snakes are vices. Landing on a ladder is a symbolic journey toward Nirvana, a condition of complete happiness without desire or want. Landing on a snake reincarnates the player to an inferior form.

Although Hindu is not practiced in Mexico, Serpientes y Escaleras keeps the moral references. Instead of using symbols of reincarnation, vices are treated with other punishments. Children are still able to learn the difference between right and wrong, especially that every wrongdoing receives a punishment. For example, if a player lands on spot number 62, where the boy pulls the cat's tail, he or she must descend down the ladder to number 14, where he is scratched by the cat.

During Victorian times, Serpientes y Escaleras was incorporated into an English version. Named Chutes and Ladders, the game lost the moral teachings but kept similar rules and instructions

Materials Needed:

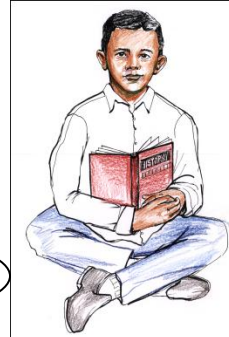
- Serpientes y Escaleras game board
- Game chips or markers
- Single die

Francisco Zermeño

Lesson Plans

People: Francisco Zermeño
Classroom Kit: Immigration Discovery Kit

**2 – Serpientes y Escaleras
(Snakes and Ladders)**



Activity Instructions:

This game is played with 2 or more people. In each turn, a single die is thrown once.

In the first turn, the player will advance the same number of points that the dice marks. When a player arrives at a number where a tail of a serpent appears, then the player will have to go to the location of that serpents' head.

Example: If the player arrives at number 62 (where the serpents' tail is), it will take you back down to square 14. If the player rolls the dice and arrives at a number where it is the bottom of the stairs, it will allow him/her to rise to the top of the ladder.

The Winner will be the first player who lands on the number 100. When the dice marks a greater number of points than necessary to land on 100, the player will have to move backwards the numbers of points they exceeded.

Example: If it is on square 99 and the dice rolls 3 points, player will have to return to number 98. If it is in the 98 and the dice marks 6 points, it will return to the 96 and since that number is the end of a serpent's tail, the player will have to slide all the way down to the number 69.

Add Language Arts!

Have the children examine the vices and virtues on the Serpientes y Escaleras game board. What lessons are being taught? Have the students create their own snakes and ladders.

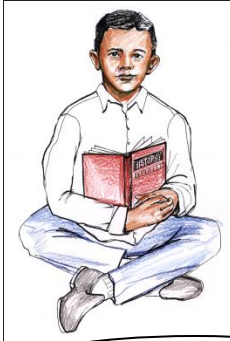
Read Francisco's story to the class and discuss the prejudices that he faced. Talk about what it must have felt like to be treated as different or inferior. List the problems and difficulties that were caused by people around him. For example, people treated him badly because he had dark skin.

Next, have them create ladders, ways they can be nice to their fellow classmates. What good things could they have done for Fernando? What can they do for a new student? For example, they can invite the new student to play with them during recess.

Discuss classroom rules – what should they be and what should happen if someone disobeys the rules. If you have already discussed class rules, think about school rules.

For example, if someone talks during class, they have to wipe down the chalkboard at the end of the day.

Francisco Zermeño



3 – La Lotería

Lesson Plans

Classroom Kit:

People: Francisco Zermeño
Immigration Discovery Kit

Activity Goals

- To demonstrate comprehension by identifying images with text.
- To connect images with phrases, prior experiences or appropriate contexts.

Setting the Context:

La Lotería is a traditional Mexican game that is still played today. Although there have been several versions of the game throughout the years, generally the same set of symbols remain.

La Lotería is similar to bingo in that each player is given a card with various images on it. A word, not a number, is called out. If the player has the image on their card, she will cover it with a bean (or token). Once a row (horizontal, vertical or diagonal) is covered, the winner will yell “Lotería!”

Materials Needed:

- Lotería cards
- Lotería gameboard (one for each child)
- Beans or game chips

Activity Instructions:

To play this game, give each student a copy of the *lotería* gameboard and a handful of beans to use as markers.

Shuffle the deck of playing cards and select one card. Call out the card. Traditionally a caller varies his or her speed. A caller can call the cards slowly or very fast...the faster a card is pulled and called, the harder it is for players to keep up!

Players with corresponding pictures on their game boards cover that picture with a bean (or other marker). Whoever covers all four of the pictures in a row in any direction, whether it is horizontal, vertical or diagonal, wins. Make sure to shout “Lotería!”

Francisco Zermeño



Lesson Plans

Classroom Kit: People: Francisco Zermeño
Immigration Discovery Kit

3 – La Lotería

Alternatives:

Play until one player fills every picture on his card.
Select a student to be the caller.

Add Language Arts!

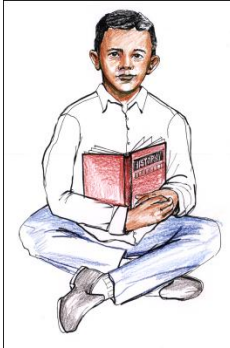
La Lotería can be used to teach students some vocabulary words in Spanish and to practice language arts.

In Mexico, callers have developed phrases for the images. Instead of just calling out the name of the image, the caller might say a verse or two that describes it. This makes the players have to guess which word is being called out. For example, instead of calling out “gallo” (or rooster), the caller can say “I sing in the morning to wake you up.”

Here are some very well known examples:

- Give me the melon or take it away from me... The melon
- It covers you from the sunlight as well as the rain... The umbrella
- Climb me one step at a time. Don't try to make it in one jump... The ladder
- Put the hat on the baby so he won't get sick... The hat
- Green, white and red is the soldier's flag...The flag
- Parrot, shake your foot and talk to me... The parrot
- Playing his mandolin is mariachi Simon... The mandolin
- As it couldn't be a violin, it had to be a cello... The cello
- You make me jump up and down like a bird on a branch... The bird

Francisco Zermeño



Lesson Plans

Classroom Kit: People: Francisco Zermeño
Immigration Discovery Kit

3 – La Lotería

Vocabulary (Vocabulario)

El Alacran = Scorpion
El Arbol = Tree
El Arpa = Harp
El Bandolon = Bandolin (a folk instrument similar to a guitar, used in mariachi music)
El Barril = Barrel
El Camaron = Shrimp
El Cantarito = Little jug or pitcher
El Catrin = Dandy (a finely dressed, fashionable man)
El Cazo = Dipper, Ladle
El Corazon = Heart
El Cotorro = Parrot
El Diablito = Little Devil
El Gallo = Rooster
El Gorrito = Bonnet (a hat tied under the chin, for women and children)
El Melon = Melon
El Mundo = World
El Musico = Musician
El Nopal = Cactus (also eaten)
El Pajaro = Bird or Parrot
El Paraguas = Umbrella
El Pescado = Fish (type you eat, not as pets)
El Pino = Pine Tree
El Sol = Sun
El Soldado = Soldier
El Tambor = Drum
El Venado = Deer
El Violoncello = Violin

La Araña = Spider
La Bandera = Flag
La Bota = Boot
La Botella = Bottle
La Calavera = Skull
La Campana = Bell
La Chalupa = Little Canoe
La Corona = Crown
La Dama = Lady
La Escalera = Ladder
La Estrella = Star
La Garza = Stork (type of bird)
La Luna = Moon
La Maceta = Flowerpot
La Mano = Hand
La Muerte = Death
La Palma = Palm Tree
La Pera = Pear
La Rana = Frog
La Rosa = Rose
La Sandia = Watermelon
La Sirena = Mermaid
Las Jaras = Arrows

**Storybook Summary - *Francisco Zermeño*
*Home At Last***

By Susan Middleton Elya, Illustrated by Felipe Davalos
Lee & Low Books, 2002

This charming book is dedicated to all students who are learning English. The main character Ana Patiño came to the United States when she was 8 years old. Her Papá works in the cannery. When she first starts school she is shy about speaking and ends up using Spanish words a lot. But then Papá starts to learn English and encourages Mamá to do as well. Mamá has trouble communicating when she is out in the community. Then, when the baby becomes ill and Papá is not home to speak with the doctor, Mamá realizes that she must learn to speak English. She enrolls in night school and eventually the whole family becomes bilingual.

This book clearly illustrates the struggles that people have in communicating when they do not speak the native language. But it also shows how each individual decides to overcome the challenge and becomes successful doing it.

Discussion Topics

- Language barriers, learning a new language, being bilingual
- Children often learn the new language first and help their parents
- Spanish is one of the most commonly spoken languages in California – why?
- What do you think is the meaning of the title of the book “Home at Last?”
- This story relates to the *Crossroads* story of Francisco Zermeño who also had to learn to speak English when he moved from Mexico