

Leeny Del Seamonds
¡Vive el Cuento! (Live the Story!)
Educational Guide, Grades PreK-12



About the Performance

Master Story Performer™, author, and winner of the National Storytelling Network ORACLE Circle of Excellence award, **Leeny Del Seamonds** invites students to “Live the Story” and “Be the Best You Can Be!” with international tales of kindness, inspiration, and the bravery to overcome adversity and make a difference! Leeny writes and performs animated, uplifting stories demonstrating the passion, resiliency, and triumphs of the human spirit inflected with her Cuban-American sense of humor. Students learn about the universal elements of storytelling along with the unique flavors of different cultures.



Drawing from her diverse and extensive repertoire, Leeny can adapt her program to accommodate repeat hosts, grade appropriateness, and curricular/seasonal requests.

About the Artist

Leeny Del Seamonds is a multi-award-winning, internationally acclaimed performer of Latino, original, and World stories spiced with exquisite mime, a cornucopia of characters, and love of people. With a twinkle in her eye and fire in her heart, Leeny breathes life into stories as she masterfully and effortlessly springs from one character to another. A dedicated teaching artist, Leeny encourages listeners to feel positive about themselves and rejoice in human and cultural diversity, inviting them to share in her Latin/Cuban-American sense of humor and love of performing. In addition to writing and performing her stories and songs, Leeny is a certified professional voice actor.

Program Learning Goals

1. To experience the art of storytelling.
2. To empower students to create and tell their stories.
3. To broaden students’ awareness and understanding of cultural diversity.

Essential Questions

1. What can learning about other cultures teach us?
2. How can we use our distinct voices to tell stories?
3. Why is it important to have pride in who you are?

Vocabulary

- **Storytelling:** the art of telling a story about real or imagined events using gestures and words to bring the events and characters of the story to life in the minds of those listening.
- **Storyteller:** a person who tells or writes stories.
- **Author:** a person who writes a story, novel, poem, or other written work.
- **Oral Tradition:** stories, memories, and knowledge that is passed down from generation to generation, person to person, by word of mouth. Stories passed down through oral tradition can be real or made up and can be an important way to learn about the past.
- **Folktales:** stories that are passed from generation to generation through song, dance and storytelling.
- **Fairy tale:** a story about magical events and creatures in a make-believe world.
- **Myth:** a traditional story about historical events that helps explain a belief or phenomenon.
- **Legend:** a traditional story about a person or place that is based in truth but may have developed fictional elements.

Key Facts and Context for Students

Where is Latin America?

Most countries south of the United States make up **Latin America**. This includes Mexico and the countries of Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. Many of the stories in Leeny's performance feature Latin American locations, characters, themes, and humor.



Questions for the Writing Process

Every author's writing process is unique, yet all storytellers seek to answer the same questions in their stories:

- Who are the characters?
- Where and when do they live?
- What do they do?
- Why?

Pre-Performance Discussion Questions

- Who tells stories in your life?
- What is different about learning a story from a person instead of from reading, listening to a recording, or watching a TV show, play, or movie?
- When you listen to a story, the imagination helps to paint pictures in your mind. How do you get clues to help with these pictures?

Pre-Performance Activity: Sharpening Listening Skills

Learning Goals:

- To hone listening skills
- To explore everyday sounds and creative imagery

Materials:

Timer, paper and pencils

Directions:

1. Discuss the sounds students hear in their everyday lives. Break the sounds down to particular times of day or events (i.e. meal time).
2. Ask students to close their eyes and take two deep breaths for relaxation. Set a timer for 20 seconds and have students identify five sounds in the classroom and/or outside.
3. After 20 seconds, have students list the sounds they heard on paper.
4. Share students' lists and make a log of the sounds. Ask students to describe the sounds in as much detail as possible. What types of sounds are the most common on the list? Are there any surprising sounds that students heard?
5. Have students sit with their eyes closed again. Ask them to imagine different scenes such as:
 - the seashore in summer and/or winter
 - their yard/favorite park in the spring and/or autumn
 - the cottage from *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*
 - Cinderella's dress before and/or after the ball
 - the Beast from *Beauty and the Beast* before and/or after the spell
6. For each scene, ask students what they saw in their minds. Be as specific as possible. What sounds or emotions might accompany these scenes?



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Pre-Performance Activity, continued

Extensions:

- Read or tell a familiar story but leave out the ending. Have the students create different endings to complete the story.
- Create a picture while writing or drawing following only verbal directions.
- Play a verbal activity game such as “Simon Says” or share jokes and riddles.



Post-Performance Discussion Questions

- What was your favorite story from the performance? Why?
- What did you learn about storytelling? How did Leeny make her characters come to life?
- How did Leeny change her body movements, facial expressions, and voice to create different characters? Can you imitate one of her characters?
- How is hearing a story told out loud different from reading a book or watching a movie? How is it similar? Do you have a preference?

Post-Performance Activity: Improvisation/Pantomime

Learning Goal:

To explore the imagination and collaboratively create with body and voice



Directions:

1. Divide students into four groups. Read the following descriptions and have each group act one out in pantomime:
 - *The old, sickly King slowly opened the large, wooden door and crossed the threshold into a crowded gathering. With all of his strength, he smiled at the people and waved back to them.*
 - *The beautiful young maiden finished combing her long, red hair and walked through the silk curtains onto the balcony. She scanned the courtyard searching for the person who left her the golden comb.*
 - *Through the tall weeds leading to the gate, the mysterious, evil troll/witch carefully carried the purple bottle containing poison. Suddenly, they stumbled on a large rock and fell to the ground!*
 - *A young child held a pouch of priceless jewels and pushed open the cottage door to search for their mother. Spotting their mother, they opened the pouch and showed the valuable reward inside.*
2. Have each group think of words and dialogue to add to their pantomime. What would the characters say? How would they say it? Explore voice pitch, volume, and special ways of talking.
3. Next add physicality to the characters. Consider body movements, posture, and facial expressions to match the choices made for each character's voice.
4. Have each group act out their scenario again in character with dialogue.
5. Discuss the performances and students' approaches to embodying their characters.

Extensions:

- Review one of Leeny's stories for its emotional content. What are the important feelings in the story? What situations evoked those feelings? How did the character(s) express that feeling?
- Have each student illustrate their favorite moment or scene from Leeny's performance.
- Have students play Charades using only their bodies.

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Further Resources

- [Leeny Del Seamonds Artist Website](#)
- [The Kennedy Center's Digital Collection on Myths, Legends & Folktales](#)
- Bauer, Caroline Feller: *Read for the Fun of It: Active Programming with Books for Children*, H.H. Wilson Company (1992)
- Gregory, Cynde: *Childmade: Awakening Children to Creative Writing*, Station Hill Press (2010)
- MacDonald, Margaret Read: *The Storyteller's Start-Up Book: Finding, Learning, Performing and Using Folktales*, August House Publishers (2006)
- MacDonald, Margaret Read: *Twenty Tellable Tales: Audience Participation Folktales for the Beginning Storyteller*, ALA Editions (2004)
- Sanders, Joshunda: *I Can Write the World*, Six Foot Press (2019)
- Sawyer, Ruth: *The Way of the Storyteller*, Penguin Publishing Group (1977)
- Trelease, Jim: *Read-Aloud Handbook: Eighth Edition*, Penguin Books (2019)
- Yolen, Jane: *Favorite Folk Tales from Around the World*, Pantheon (1988)

Media by Leeny Del Seamonds

Book:

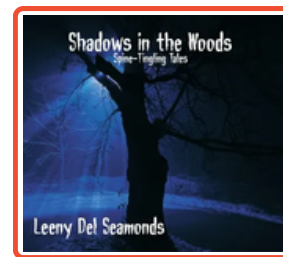
- *Techniques to Rule the Stage: Pathways to Command Your Story Performance*

Audio recordings:

- *¡Ay Caramba! ¡Ay Ay Ay! Cuentos y Canciones (Latino Stories & Songs)*
- *CelloTales: The Melding of Music, Myth & Memories*
- *It Takes Two to Tango - Ties that Bind Us*
- *Shadows in the Woods - Spine-Tingling Tales*

Television/DVD:

- *Ribert and Robert's Wonderworld (PBS)*



Curricular Connections

Arts Standards: Theatre

Creating

- Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work. (T.Cr.01)
- Organize and develop artistic ideas and work. (T.Cr.02)

Performing

- Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work. (T.P.06)

Responding

- Perceive and analyze artistic work. (T.R.07)
- Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work. (T.R.08)
- Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work. (T.R.09)

Connecting

- Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art. (T.Co.10)
- Relate artistic ideas and works to societal, cultural and historical contexts to deepen understanding. (T.Co.11)

English Language Arts and Literacy Anchor Standards

Writing

- Write narratives to develop experiences or events using effective literary techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured sequences. (W.PK-12.3)

Speaking and Listening

- Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally. (SL.PK-12.2)
- Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric. (SL.PK-12.3)

Language

- Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening. (L.PK-12.3)

History and Social Science

PreK

- Topic 1: Civics: fairness, friendship, responsibility, and respect (HSS.Pre-K.T1)
- Topic 2: Geography: maps and places (HSS.Pre-K.T2)
- Topic 3: History: personal experiences and memories (HSS.Pre-K.T3)

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Curricular Connections, continued

History and Social Science, continued

K

- Topic 1: Civics: classroom citizenship (HSS.K.T1)
- Topic 2: Geography: connections among places (HSS.K.T2)
- Topic 3: History: shared traditions (HSS.K.T3)

Grade 1

- Topic 1: Civics: communities, elections, and leadership (HSS.1.T1)
- Topic 2: Geography: places to explore (HSS.1.T2)
- Topic 3: History: unity and diversity in the United States (HSS.1.T3)

Grade 2

- Topic 2: Geography and its effects on people (HSS.2.T2)
- Topic 3: History: migrations and cultures (HSS.2.T3)

World Languages Standards

Communication

- Engage in, negotiate with, and improvise with cultural norms, etiquette, and nonverbal cues. (S.4.e)

Linguistic Cultures

- Analyze and evaluate variations among products and practices and how they relate to perspectives in multiple cultures and communities. (S.5.a)
- Analyze and evaluate the contributions of various cultural influences in the development of identity. (S.5.b)
- Investigate, explain, and reflect on the nature of culture through comparisons of diverse target-language cultures and their own (S.6.a)

Lifelong Learning

- Research, analyze, evaluate, and hypothesize about diverse perspectives and distinctive viewpoints found in authentic materials from target-language cultures. (S.7.b)
- Apply cultural and linguistic skills to participate in the school, local, and global community (S.8.a)

