

Too Many Tamales

Soto, G. & Martinez, E., ISBN# 0-698-11412-4

Themes: traditions, childhood dilemmas, honesty, responsibility, loss of property

This book lends itself to DEEP COMPREHENSION. Such comprehension goes beyond a surface summary into the feelings, plans and consequences the critical character experiences from beginning to end, by separating the book into several episodes. The book is first analyzed for its Literate Language Features. In a story, the Literate Language Features, comprise the micro-structure (vocabulary, sentence structure and grammar). The following Literate Language Features should be woven into the teaching of the text through the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) model.

Literate Language Features of the Book

Episodic Structure: Interactive/Multi Episodic

Conjunctions: so, or, but, and, because

Elaborated Noun Phrases:

- Sparkled like Christmas lights
- Delicious smelling curls of steam
- Large pot on the stove
- Stomachs stretched til they hurt
- Tear sparkling like a jewel

Mental State Verbs: think, remember, believe, realize, know, suspect

Linguistic Verbs: said, cried, scolded, sobbed, asked, gasped

Adverbs: slowly, gently, loudly, finally, cheerfully

**EPISODIC STRUCTURE FROM A *DEEP COMPREHENSION* POINT OF VIEW
ALLOWS US TO DIVE DEEPLY INTO THE STORY FOR MINI-LESSON PURPOSES**

General Summary for the Story as a Complete Episode:



Character: Maria (family members)



Setting: Christmas eve, celebration time, tamales (traditional food) to eat



Kick-Off: Maria realizes she lost her mother's diamond ring in the tamale masa (batter).



Feeling: Maria is shocked and scared.



She THINKS the ring is probably in the masa.
She KNOWS her mother would be very upset that she lost her diamond ring.



Plan: She wants to find the ring.



Attempts:

1. runs to the kitchen to see if the tamales are still there
2. asks cousins to help her find it by eating the tamales
3. eats all the tamales with the help of her cousins



Direct Consequence: As a result of eating all the tamales, she does not find the ring in them.



Resolution: She is upset and now knows she must tell her mom. When she tells her Mom, Mom understands. All ends with making more tamales and lessons learned all around:

Maria: not to “borrow” someone else’s property without permission

Mother: not to leave the diamond on the counter lest it gets lost

In-Depth Episodic Analysis Episode #1:

SETTING THE STAGE FOR WRITING



Character: Maria (relatives), all dressed up for a celebration



Setting: Christmas Eve at home, making tamales in the kitchen for dinner; relatives coming; expectations go with the schema for the occasion



Kick-Off: Maria sees her mother’s diamond ring on the counter. Mother has gone out of the room to answer the phone.



Feeling: (notice pictures) Maria feels tempted to try on her mother's ring. (“She wiped her hands on the apron and looked back at the door.”)



She KNOWS her mother left the kitchen without her ring.
She REMEMBERS she shouldn't try it on because it is precious and expensive.
She THINKS she may have time to try it on before her mother comes back.
She KNOWS that her parents treat her like a grown up and trust her.



Plan: Maria wants to wear the ring “for just a minute.” She decides to do so.

**Attempts:**

1. puts the ring on her thumb
2. admires the ring
3. began kneading the masa again:

“The ring disappeared, then reappeared in the sticky glob of dough.”



Direct Consequence: She had the ring on her thumb while kneading the masa.



Resolution: Although she knew she shouldn't be wearing it, she felt very grown up and thrilled. (notice pictures)

Episode #2

Character: Maria (parents, cousins, aunts/uncles, grandparents)



Setting: At home on Christmas Eve, relatives have gathered for a celebration. Maria and her cousins play upstairs in Maria's bedroom until called for dinner. They are cutting out possible presents from ads in the newspaper.



Kick-Off: While cutting out a pearl necklace, Maria thinks about her mother's ring...once on her thumb. It is gone! Lost! “The ring!, she screamed.”



Feeling: “Shock spread through her body.”



She THINKS she will be in big trouble if she has lost the ring.
She SUSPECTS that the ring was baked into the tamale masa.
She BELIEVES that if her cousins help her eat the tamales and find something hard in one of them, they will find the ring.



Plan: She had to find the ring! She wanted her cousins to help her find the ring.

**Attempts:**

1. Ran to the kitchen to see if the tamales were still there
2. Asked the cousins to help her
3. Told them how they could help her by eating the tamales in search of the ring:
“If you bit something hard, tell me.”
4. All began to eat the tamales and got very full.
5. Shared bites of the last one



Direct Consequence: She did not find the ring in the tamales. Also, Danny said that he may have swallowed something hard.



Resolution: Maria is devastated: “She wanted to throw herself on the floor and cry.” “How could she tell her mother?”

EPISODE #3

Character: Maria (mother)



Setting: Maria is now entering the living room where the adults are sitting talking.



Kick-Off: Maria realizes that she must tell her mother about the missing diamond ring.



She KNOWS her mother will be very disappointed in her.

She BELIEVES that the ring is gone.






Feeling: She “could feel tears pressing to get out.” Notice her body language in the picture. She feels devastated, ashamed and sad.



Plan: She decided to tell her mother about losing the ring. “But I have to, she thought.”



Attempts:

-  1. Interrupted adults
-  2. Went to her mother and said “I did something wrong.”
-  3. “Got ready to confess.”

EMBEDDED EPISODE: (Abbreviated)

New Kick-Off: Saw the ring on mother’s finger!



REALIZED that the ring wasn't lost after all.

THOUGHT she should still tell her mother what had happened.



Feeling: Surprised, relieved, confused (this is a good opportunity to have children infer her emotions from the evidence in the book)



Direct Consequence: Told mother all the details about how she desired to wear it for a minute, unknowingly lost it in the tamales, asked cousins to help eat the tamales in order to find it.



Resolution: Relieved it had been found and that everyone was happy.

Mother forgave her...gently.

Her aunt suggested they make more tamales so all was not lost!

EPISODE #4 (Practically all inferred)



Character: Maria's mother



Setting: At her home on Christmas Eve, preparing for visiting relatives, making tamales with Maria, her daughter. She has given Maria permission to wear lipstick. She seems to regard Maria as responsible.



Kick-Off: Notices that her ring is in the tamale batter/dough



REALIZES that her daughter would desire to wear it (remembering her childhood?)

THINKS that her daughter must have "lost" it in the dough, not noticing.

Can you think of another IE which will coincide with the outcome of the story?



Feeling: She was empathetic toward Maria but also annoyed that Maria's actions may have lost the ring.



Plan: To let her daughter discover her error and be kind as she teaches her a lesson



Attempts:

1. Washes the ring off
2. Puts it on her finger
3. Welcomes the guests
4. Converses in the living room with them
5. Waits for Maria to notice and come to her.
6. Maria comes and she says, smiling gently: "You were playing with it?"
7. Listens to Maria tell the story.



Direct Consequence: She has taught Maria a lesson. Maria has been responsible in coming to tell her the truth.



Resolution: All is forgiven as everyone gathers to cook up another batch of tamales.