

# THE TERRIBLE TRAGADABAS / EL TERRIBLE TRAGADABAS

Pages 47-63 in *Tell Me a Cuento / Cuéntame un Story* by Joe Hayes

## STORY SUMMARY

The three sisters—Little Bitty (La Pequeñita), Middle Size (La Mediana) and Great Big (La Grandota)—are so helpful to their grandma that she gives each one some money to go to the store to buy little cakes and honey. At the store each one meets the Terrible Tragadabas. When the grandma goes looking for her girls and hears the Tragadabas, she thinks her granddaughters have been swallowed alive. But it's not true. A helpful bee comes along and chases the Tragadabas away. The grandma finds her grandchildren safe and sound, and everyone goes into the store to eat little cakes and honey.

## PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

### DISCUSSION AND ART

#### Materials for art project

- ✂ White piece of paper
- ✎ Pencil
- ✏ Crayons, paint or markers

1. Share the title of this book with your students. Ask them what they think a Tragadabas might be? Have them draw a picture of what they think the Tragadabas might look like.
2. Read the verse from the story:

<i>Little Bitty, Little Bitty</i>	<i>Pequeñita, Pequeñita</i>
<i>Don't you come inside.</i>	<i>No entres para acá.</i>
<i>I'm the Tragadabas,</i>	<i>Soy el Tragadabas,</i>
<i>And I'll swallow you alive!</i>	<i>¡Y te voy a tragar!</i>

Ask if this verse gives them any new ideas about the Tragadabas. Have them draw another picture of the Tragadabas. How are the *before* and *after* pictures different from each other?

3. Ask your students what they would do if they went to a building and heard a voice inside that sounded like a monster?

## INTRODUCTION TO VOCABULARY

Because the main characters of this story are three sisters of varying size, the story forms an ideal basis for a lesson dealing with size and the comparison of adjectives in a second language.

1. Have the students draw three sisters: one small, one middle-sized and one very large.
2. Ask the class to describe the differences between each girl. Ask them if they notice the different sizes of each girl. Which one is the biggest? Which one is the smallest? Which one is middle-size?
3. Introduce the class to the words for size in their second language.

pequeño/a	small (many children will be familiar with “chico”)
mediano/a	middle size
grande	big

This concept of size will be reinforced in the story by the sizes of the girls’ socks and the description of their legs as they run down the street.

4. In Spanish, size can also be expressed by a suffix. *Small* is often expressed by the suffixes —*ita* and —*illa*.. Big is most often expressed by the suffixes —*ote* and —*on*. And these suffixes can also be used to emphasize the adjectives for size. So the girls names in the story become:

La Pequeñita	Little Bitty
La Mediana	Middle Size
La Grandota	Great Big

Introduce the students to each of the girls using their names in both Spanish and English. Write the names up on the board in both Spanish and English. Repeat the names aloud in both Spanish and English. Have your students repeat after you.

Below each figure, have your students write the girl’s name in both Spanish and English.

Other vocabulary words that you will want to introduce your students to:

grandma	la abuela, la abuelita
money	el dinero
little cakes and honey	las tortitas y miel
socks	las medias
to sew	coser
to run	correr
to sing	cantar
to knock	tocar

branch	la rama
tree	el árbol
bumblebee	la abeja
to jump	brincar

Write the vocabulary words out on the blackboard.

Before reading the story, review the vocabulary words with your students. If you are going to read the story bilingually, introduce the words in both languages.

Review a second time, asking your students to repeat after you. Reviewing the words before reading the story will help them to recognize the words in the second language. They will also learn the rhythm and inflection patterns of the second language.

## **PRESENTATION OF THE STORY**

### **BILINGUAL READING**

Read the basic story in the students' first language, using the second language for the frequently repeated elements, such as the girls' names, the verses, and the girls' speeches. To prepare for a bilingual reading of this story, first locate words and phrases which you will say in the second language. Underline or highlight these passages. Review these passages in the second language. As you read, use the second language when you reach these passages.

If your students' first language is English, you might read page 47 from the storybook as follows:

*Long ago there was una abuelita, an old grandma, con sus tres nietecitas, with three granddaughters. She called the youngest girl La Pequeñita, Little Bitty. She called the middle one, La Mediana or Middle Size. And she called the oldest girl La Grandota or Great Big.*

If your students' first language is Spanish, you might read page 47 as follows:

*Hace muchos años vivía a grandma, una abuelita, with three little granddaughters, con sus tres nietecitas. A la menor le decía Little Bitty, la Pequeñita. A la del medio le decía Middle Size o la Mediana. Y a la mayor le decía Great Big o la Grandota.*

When Little Bitty has her encounter with the Tragadabas, you might want to read their discussion by translating back and forth between Spanish and English.

If your students' first language is Spanish, you might want to read the following passage from page 51 from the storybook this way:

*Dentro de la tienda una voz rugió: —WHO IS IT? ¿QUIÉN ES?  
Respondió la niña: —I'm Little Bitty. Soy Pequeñita.*

*Rugió la voz:*  
—LITTLE BITTY, LITTLE BITTY,  
DON'T YOU COME INSIDE.  
I'M THE TRAGADABAS  
AND I'LL SWALLOW YOU ALIVE.  
PEQUEÑITA, PEQUEÑITA  
NO ENTRES PARA ACÁ.  
QUE SOY EL TRAGADABAS  
¡Y TE VOY A TRAGAR!

If your students first language is English, you might read the selection this way:

*From inside the store, a voice roared, “¿QUIÉN ES? WHO IS IT?”*  
*The girl answered, “Soy Pequeñita. I’m Little Bitty.”*  
*The voice said:*  
“PEQUEÑITA, PEQUEÑITA  
NO ENTRES PARA ACÁ.  
QUE SOY EL TRAGADABAS  
¡Y TE VOY A TRAGAR!  
LITTLE BITTY, LITTLE BITTY,  
DON'T YOU COME INSIDE.  
I'M THE TRAGADABAS  
AND I'LL SWALLOW YOU ALIVE.

When La Mediana (Middle Size) and La Grandota (Great Big) encounter the Tragadabas, your students will already be familiar with the conversation that ensues between the girls and the Tragadabas. So it won't be necessary for you to provide a translation.

Once you know the pattern of this tale, begin telling it without the book, in your own words. You'll be able to use the enriching language more spontaneously when you tell the story, rather than read it.

### **STORYTELLING TIPS FROM JOE HAYES**

Children always ask for a “scary story.” They really mean, Tell us a story that can make us feel a little scared, if we want to. For primary-age children, this is a scary story. They jump when the monster pops out. Of course, I give a bit of a shout and lurch forward when he appears to help startle them. I try to sneak the shout up on the kids. The first time I say, “Out...jumped...the...TRAGADABAS!” Next time around I say, “She went into the store, and...OUT! jumped the Tragadabas.” Last time I say, “Se...le...saliÓ! el Tragadabas.”

The children will laugh after they jump, to dissipate the nervous energy. You have to pause for ten or fifteen seconds to let them do it, but then go on, even if they haven't finished laughing. They'll settle down to hear what happens next.

I sing the song in a simple, sing-song melody like the one kids use when they taunt: nyah, nyah, nyah, nyah, nyah. Of course I invite the kids to join in. We all move our

elbows as if we're running. The second time around I tell them to sing it in a middle-sized voice (a little louder). The big girl sings in a GREAT BIG VOICE!

Be alert to kids' reactions and comments when you tell this story. They'll give you lots of ideas to improve your telling. I didn't used to have the grandma sing, but once when she started down the street, a little boy said, "How does she sing?" and ever since then I've had her sing in a wavering, viejita's voice.

Don't strain your voice when you impersonate the monster. If you pay attention to your throat and try to keep an open feeling, like you're about to yawn, in you throat as the monster speaks, you won't lose your voice at the end of the story.

## FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES

### COMPARISONS

#### Materials

- ~~/~~ Two pieces of 8½ x 11 inch paper per student
- ~~/~~ Crayons, markers or colored pencils
- ~~/~~ Scissors
- ~~/~~ Glue

1. After you have read the story to your students, introduce them to the following pattern for comparing objects of different sizes. Write on the board:

the little bitty socks	las medias pequeñas
the middle-sized socks	las medias medianas
the great big socks	las medias grandotas
little bitty legs	las piernas pequeñas
middle-size legs	las piernas medianas
great big legs	las piernas grandotas

2. With your students, discuss the pattern for comparing different-sized objects that they see in both languages.
3. Tell your students that they are going to help the sisters in this story to mend their socks. To mend their socks the sisters will need a needle, a spool of thread and a pair of scissors.
4. Tell your students to draw a torn-up sock, a needle, a spool of thread and a pair of scissors for each sister on a piece of paper using crayons, markers or colored pencils. Tell them to draw three sizes for each object—great big, middle-sized and little bitty.
5. On a second sheet of paper, tell your students to draw each of the sisters—Great Big,

Middle Size and Little Bitty.

6. On the board, write down the names of the objects in both Spanish and English.

needle	la aguja
sock	la media
spool of thread	el carrete de hilo
scissors	las Tijeras

7. Introduce the second language word for each object.
8. Ask the students to use their scissors to cut out all the socks.
9. Ask them to name each sock in their first language according to its size.
10. Ask them to name the socks in their second language according to size.
11. Have them do this for each object.
12. Have a student write on the blackboard the different sizes for each object using the pattern introduced to them in number 1 of this activity.
13. Ask another student to repeat the exercise, but in the second language. Encourage the whole class to help the students at the board with the exercises—especially if they are having trouble.
14. Throughout this exercise, it would be useful to have your students repeat the phrases several times together so they become comfortable with the rhythm and inflection patterns of the second language.
15. The sisters are going to sew up their socks like the ir grandma asked them to. The students will need to give the girls all the tools they will need to do this. Using glue, have your students paste each object close to or on the figure of the girl who is appropriately sized. For example, they will paste the middle-sized needle on the hand of Middle Size, La Mediana.

### **EXTENSION**

In their first language, tell the children to write a story or paragraph about each girl using the objects that surround her. Remind them to use the appropriate adjective to name each object. This activity can be done in groups.

### **CHALLENGE**

1. Have students translate their stories into their second language. They may need a Spanish/English dictionary to help out.

2. Remind students that when they don't know a word in their second language, they can use the word in their first language.
3. When the students are finished, ask them to pair up with another student to review each other's translations. If there is a word that a student can't figure out in his or her second language, his/her partner may be able to help.
4. You might also have them turn the stories in so that you can make suggestions and corrections.
5. When you return the stories to the students, have them rewrite the stories with your suggestions.

### **READING A STORY BILINGUALLY**

The story of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* is another story that emphasizes the different sizes of things.

1. If the students' first language is English, read them the story of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. (We suggest the version that is retold and illustrated by James Marshall and published by Dial Books for Young Readers.) If the students' first language is Spanish, read them the story of *Ricitos Dorados y los tres osos*. (We suggest the companion version, also retold and illustrated by James Marshall and published by Penguin Ediciones.)
2. Ask your students to name the objects that come in three different sizes.
3. Ask the students to use the patterns for comparing different-sized objects to figure out how you would say these different-sized objects in their second language.
4. Ask students to read the story bilingually to one another. When they come to a section that has the different-sized objects, they will say those objects in both their first and second languages. The students can take turns passing around the book to read each new section.

### **MORE COMPARISONS**

1. Read page 63 of the storybook to your students again.
2. Discuss the difference between the branches of the tree. This is a different pattern for defining size than in the previous exercise.
3. Read the same paragraph in the students' second language.

4. Ask the students to name the different-sized branches in their second language.

a high branch

una rama alta

an even higher branch

una rama aun más alta

highest branch of all

una rama más alta de todas

5. Ask one student to come to the board and draw a house. Tell your class that is a big house, una casa grande.
6. Ask another student to come to the board and draw an even bigger house, una casa aun mas grande. Using the pattern introduced above, ask them to say this in their second language. Write this on the board.
7. Ask another student to draw the biggest house of all, la casa mas grande de todas. Ask them how they would say this in their second language? Write this on the board.
8. Do this exercise with other objects, such as a tall man, un hombre grande or a small stone, una piedra pequeña.