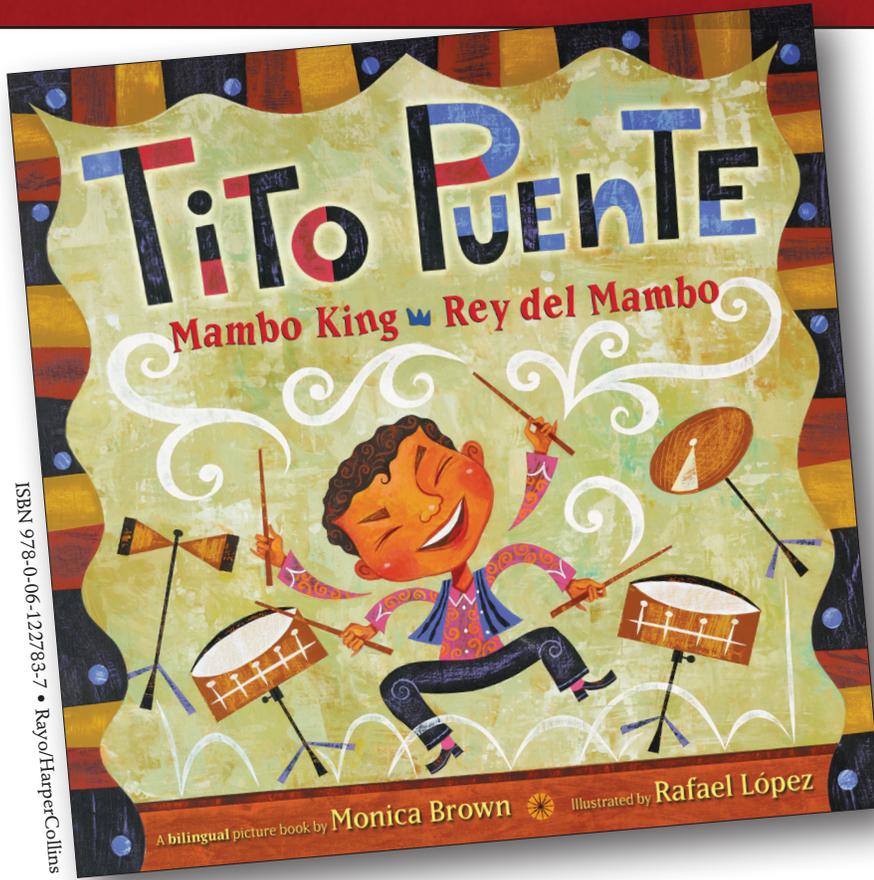


# CURRICULUM GUIDE



## Tito Puente

Mambo King /  
Rey del Mambo

BY  
**Monica Brown**

ILLUSTRATED BY  
**Rafael López**

### Meet Tito Puente—the King of Mambo!

FROM MUSICAL PRODIGY on the streets of Harlem to five-time Grammy Award winner, Tito's life was full of rhythm. Timbales and claves, saxophones and tambourines were all part of the fun.

Monica Brown's toe-tapping tribute to the King of Mambo will entertain and inspire young children as they explore the childhood and career of this icon of Latin jazz. Rafael López's dynamic, color-drenched artwork brings the man and the music vividly to life.

**"My father was an inspiration to many generations of Latin music fans worldwide. This book is a testament to that. Now his name and likeness will reach a brand new group of young fans who will discover his genius and talent." —Tito Puente, Jr.**

**"A vibrant, reverent celebration of the godfather of salsa." —KIRKUS REVIEWS**

### COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

addressed by the discussion questions and activities in this guide include:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.1.3, 1.4, 2.4, 2.7, 3.3, and 3.7, and CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.3.

For more information about the Common Core, visit [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org).

## BEFORE READING



Do you have a special talent that was evident from the time you were a baby? Maybe, like the artist Picasso, you drew on wallpaper as a child. Or perhaps you built structures from building blocks in preschool, like architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Is the talent you showed as a baby still your interest now? Tito Puente had a love of music from the time he was a toddler. This passion followed Tito through his life as a music student, musician, and eventually as a bandleader. Read his story to learn how an early passion can grow into a lifelong love.

## AFTER READING



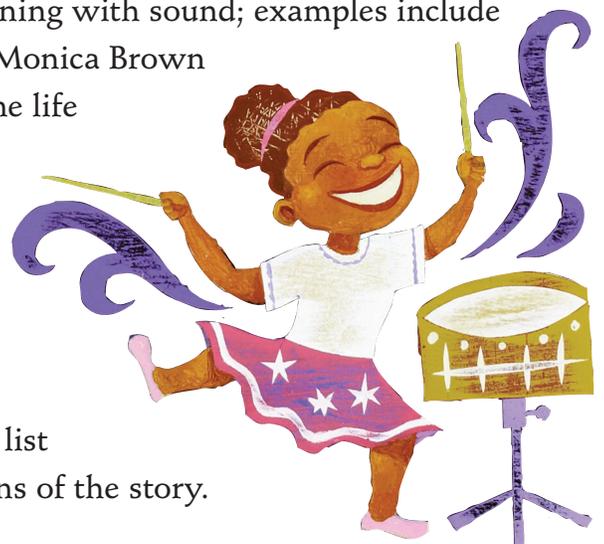
“When the Tito Puente Orchestra played . . . The tambourines sounded like rain on metal roofs.” Make a tambourine to play like Tito’s band! Supplies needed: a zipper lock plastic bag, a handful of jingle bells, and two pieces of cardboard cut close in size to the plastic bag. Slide one piece of cardboard inside the bag. With the bag lying on its side, place the bells on top of the cardboard. Next, place the other piece of cardboard on top of the bells. Push the air out of the bag and zip it closed. To add glitz and color to your tambourine, add glitter, sequins, or confetti to the bag before closing. Shake your tambourine along with a Tito recording!



Tito’s church held a “Stars of the Future” contest each year when he was young. Tito won the contest four times and was named King of the Stars! Imagine that you have been selected as the winner of the Stars of the Future contest. For what talent would you be recognized? Cut large, five-pointed stars from construction paper and pass one to each student. Have each write his/her name and special talent on the star and decorate it with colored markers and glitter. Hang the stars in your classroom to make a galaxy of “Stars of the Future.”



An onomatopoeia is a word which imitates its meaning with sound; examples include the words “boom,” “crunch,” and “meow.” Author Monica Brown uses many sound words in her story to tell about the life of Tito Puente. The use of these sound words, or onomatopoeia, adds a sense of music to the story. Look back through the story and identify the sound words. Notice the parts of the story where this device is not used: when Tito is in the Navy and when his first band, Los Happy Boys, plays at restaurants. Brainstorm a list of sound words that could be added to these sections of the story.





Listen to samples of Tito Puente’s salsa music. Pass large sheets of paper and crayons to your students and invite them to draw shapes and colors to show the feelings they experience while listening to Tito’s music. Share the musical drawings with the class. How are the drawings similar? How are they different? What words could you use to describe the colors and shapes drawn in response to salsa music?



In addition to playing music, Tito loved to play baseball in his neighborhood and to dance. How are music, dance, and baseball connected? Is there anything musical about baseball? Could dance be connected to baseball?



When Tito was in the Navy during World War II, he joined the ship’s band. Did it surprise you that a military ship in wartime would have a band? Why do you think a band would be allowed on ship? Today all branches of the military have bands. Why would they be of value to the soldiers and sailors who serve and to the non-military community?



Music can have a profound effect on mood. Play a variety of different types of music—salsa, classical, an opera aria, rock, country, mariachi, polka, hip hop, rap, etc. For each genre, have your students write a list of adjectives describing how the music makes them feel. Compare lists and discuss which type of music feels the most upbeat, the most melancholy, the most energizing, etc.



**Monica Brown**, Ph.D., is the author of many award-winning books for children, including *Pablo Neruda: Poet of the People*, winner of the Américas Award for Children’s Literature and an Orbis Pictus Honor for Outstanding Nonfiction, and *Waiting for the Biblioburro*, a Christopher Award winner. She is a professor of English at Northern Arizona University, specializing in U.S. Latino literature and multicultural literature. Learn more about her books and download free curriculum materials at [www.monicabrown.net](http://www.monicabrown.net).

**Rafael López** is an award-winning illustrator. He and Monica Brown teamed previously to create *My Name Is Celia: The Life of Celia Cruz/Me llamo Celia: La vida de Celia Cruz*, winner of the Américas Award for Children’s Literature and a Pura Belpré Honor. He divides his time between studios in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, and San Diego, California. Learn more about his life and work at [www.rafaellopez.com](http://www.rafaellopez.com).

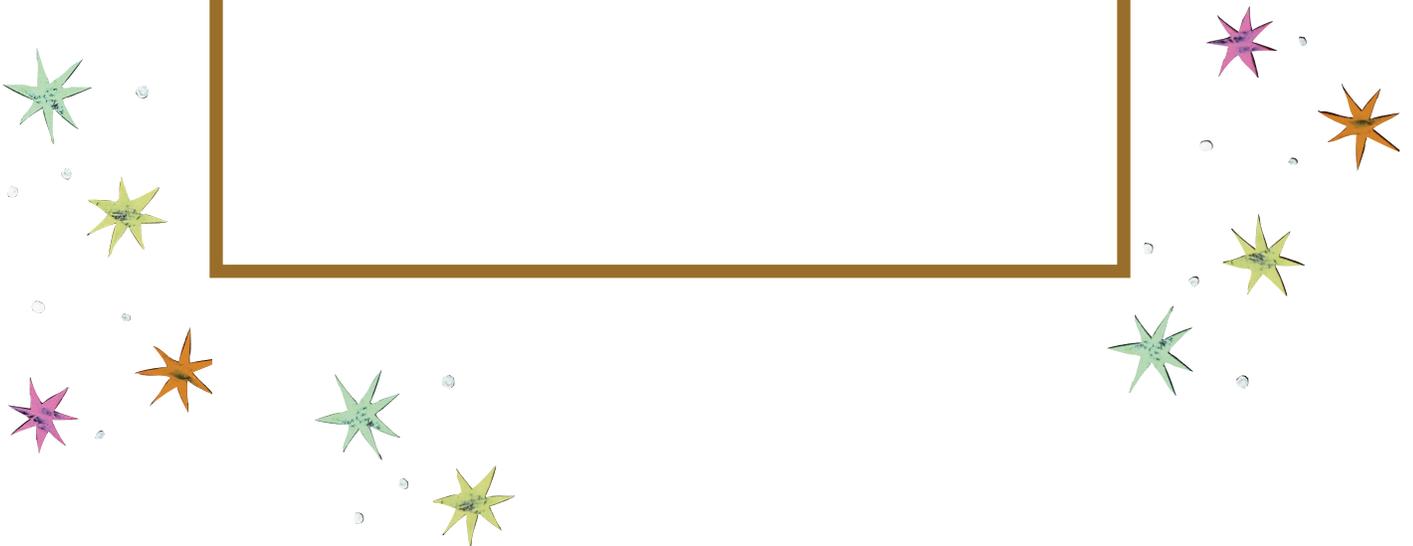
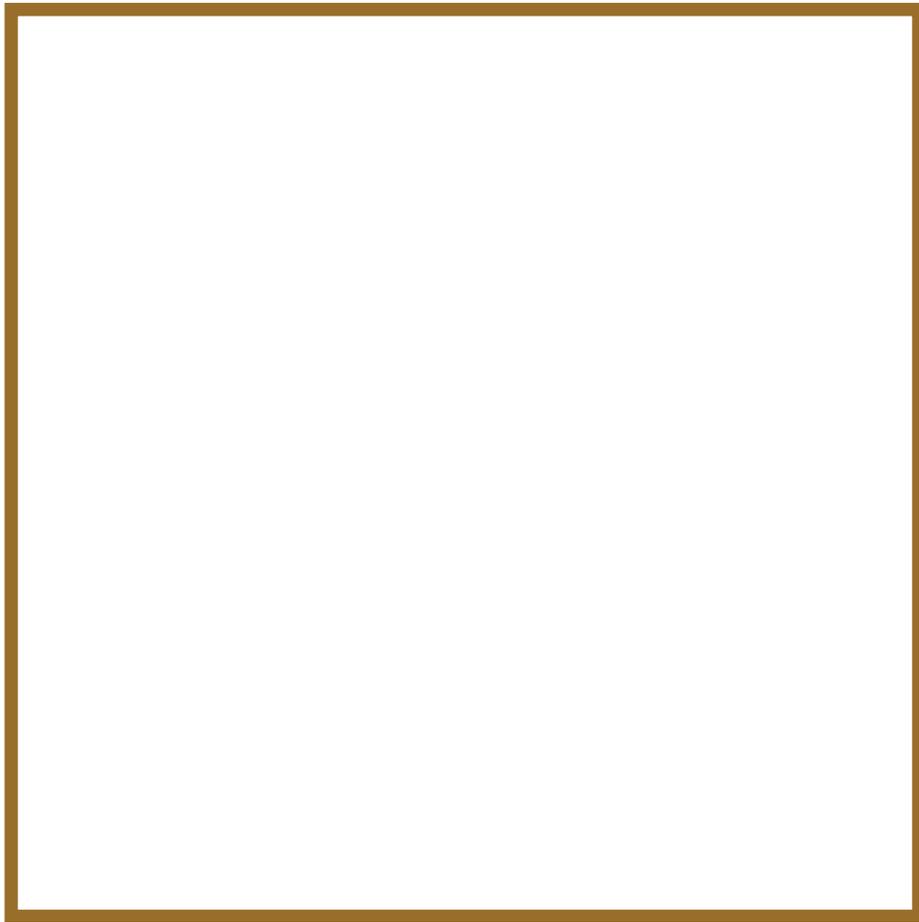
The activities in this curriculum guide were created by Leigh Courtney, PhD. She teaches first and second grade in the Global Education program at a public elementary school in San Diego, California. She holds both master’s and doctoral degrees in education, with an emphasis on curriculum and instruction.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_



# Illustration Inspiration

Artist Rafael López created lively, colorful illustrations for *Tito Puente* that capture the energy and feel of the salsa music that Tito played. Examine the story’s illustrations closely. What colors and shapes did Rafael use to give a bright and energetic feeling to the pictures? Notice the fantastical elements—like a cow playing maracas and a moon smiling down on the dancers in the ballroom. With Rafael López’s work as your inspiration, create your own illustration for a CD cover for Tito Puente’s song “El Rey del Timbal” or The King of the Timbales. Be sure to include the song title and Tito’s name as part of your design.



# A Timeline of Tito Puente's Life

Number the following events in Tito Puente's life in the order in which they happened.

Tito played with different bands at the Palladium Ballroom in New York City but he wanted to be a bandleader of his own band.

Tito won the Stars of the Future contest at his church four times!

Tito joined the Navy and played in the ship's band.

Tito won five Grammy awards for his music. He made over 100 albums!

Tito banged spoons on pots and pans, cans and windowsills.

Tito was in his first band called Los Happy Boys.

Tito began music lessons.

Tito finally had his own band.  
The Tito Puente Orchestra.



NAME: \_\_\_\_\_



# Tito's Instruments



Tito Puente dreamed of being a bandleader and one day his dream came true! He led his very own band—the Tito Puente Orchestra. An orchestra is made up of many different musicians playing many different types of instruments. Draw a line connecting the type of musical instrument found in Tito's orchestra to the correct description of it.

**TIMBALES**

**A short brass instrument  
with a flared end**

**TAMBOURINE**

**Wooden sticks that make a  
hollow sound when  
struck together**

**SAXOPHONE**

**A pair of small drums  
played with sticks**

**TRUMPET**

**A long metal wind instrument  
played by pressing keys and  
blowing into a mouthpiece**

**CLAVES**

**A round instrument with small  
metal disks around the edge that  
hit against each other when the  
instrument is shaken**

