¡Si Cuba!

CELEBRATING
CUBAN CULTURE,
FAMILY & COMMUNITY

FEATURING:
UNDER THE ROYAL PALMS

Tamar Miller and Karen Sonnessa | UA SLIS | Cultural Literacy Programming | Dr. Naidoo | Summer 2011
Program Goals & Objectives

Our program goals and objectives elaborate on some of the themes of Alma Flor Ada’s *Under the Royal Palms*, such as: the culture, history, and folktales of Cuba; Family; Memory; Helping others/cooperation; Tradition; Loss; Inspiration; Imagination; Equality and diversity; Courage; and Understanding each other better through sharing stories, and activities that capture our imaginations and enrich our lives.

Age group: 8-12

**GOAL:** To promote cultural awareness for children and young adults in our community.

**OBJECTIVE:** Children will read and discuss *Under the Royal Palms*, and be provided with a recommended reading list of culturally diverse books.

**GOAL:** To identify our similarities, despite our differences.

**OBJECTIVE:** Children will identify experiences they’ve shared with those of Alma Flor Ada in *Under the Royal Palms*.

**GOAL:** To enhance children’s knowledge of geography by putting it in the context of cultural history.

**OBJECTIVE:** Using My Maps/Google on library terminals, children will pin locations mentioned in the book.
Lead-In Activity: Cuban Dominoes

Dominoes is a very popular game in Cuba. For many, the game is a daily social event that combines competition with camaraderie. This is a great way to introduce a fun past-time in Cuba and start your programming. You’ll need a set of 55 double nine dominoes. Teams of two children will play against each other.

1. Ask each player to draw 10 tiles from the bone yard. Place the remaining 15 tiles to the side, as they will not be part of this game.

2. Lay down the first domino if you have the highest double in your hand. If no one is holding a double, start over and re-deal the hand. Go around the circle to the left—or clockwise—as you play.

3. Play in teams taking turns as you place tiles in the game matching pips on one end of a played tile with one end of a tile in your hand, forming a train of dominoes.

4. Shout "Domino!" if you run out of dominoes in your hand which ends the game or end the game when no more moves can be made.

5. Count up the number of pips on the tiles left in each player's hand. The team that holds the lowest number of pips in their hand is the winner.

From:

http://www.ehow.com/how_2105093_playcubandominoes.html#ixzz1MvOh7PeG
Focus Book & Supporting Books

FOCUS BOOK:

*Under the Royal Palms*, by Alma Flor Ada.
Through a series of ten short stories, this autobiographical book by Alma Flor Ada tells of her childhood in Cuba. Each story explores themes such as compassion, grief, friendship, and remembrance. Although chronological, every story can stand on its own as part of a program or lesson. While speaking of joyful childhood activities and remembrances, she also describes the poverty and illness common during that time. Ada’s book records the pieces of her culture that have fallen away: the coal-makers, the porrons, the fresh milk and butter from the family cow. Her words evoke the strong sensory memories of childhood through descriptions of smells, tastes and physical sensations. Children see how each of their life experiences can shape who they become in this 2000 Pura Belpré Award winner.

SUPPORTING BOOKS:

*The Lizard and the Sun*, by Alma Flor Ada.
Presented in both Spanish and English, this traditional tale from Mexico shows how cooperation can get the job done. When the sun disappears from the sky, lizard discovers a rock that holds light. Lizard tells the emperor who orders her to move it. But when she is unable to, the emperor and the woodpecker help lizard release the sun trapped inside. According to the author’s note, Ada remembers this pourquoi story from an old reading text.
**The Malachite Palace**, by Alma Flor Ada. With Leonid Gore’s dreamlike art, Alma Flor Ada spins a lovely original fairy tale that celebrates the innocence of youth. The princess who lives in the malachite palace is not allowed to play with the children beyond the gates. But when the princess captures a beautiful songbird and watches as that bird loses its song in captivity, she learns a great deal of self-awareness. This is a story about trust, friendship, and acceptance.

In this poetic tale Frederika Bremer, an early women’s rights pioneer, escapes the bonds of her Swedish aristocratic home to Cuba where she stays in the luxurious mansion belonging to Elena’s family. Elena, a privileged young girl, is barely allowed out of the house. Frederika sets off to explore the magical land of Cuba with Cecilia, a young slave belonging to Elena’s family, who longs for her lost home in Africa. It doesn’t take long for Elena to envy Cecilia’s freedom to move about the countryside, and sneaks out to join them. Told from each character’s point of view the reader comes to know each woman’s thoughts and evolving feelings. As the three women travel they form a bond that rises above barriers of language and culture.

**The Surrender Tree: Poems of Cuba’s Struggle for Freedom**, by Margarita Engle.
Written in clear, short lines of free verse Engle describes those who fought in the nineteenth-century Cuban struggle for independence. Narrated through multiple perspectives, including Rosa, a traditional healer, who nurses runaway slaves and deserters in caves. Her husband, José, a freed slave, also speaks, and so does a refugee child, whom Rosa teaches to be a healer. There is also a vicious slave hunter known as Lieutenant Death. A stunning narrative on the nature of war, colonialism, slavery, and risking one’s own safety to help others.
**Tropical Secrets: Holocaust Refugees In Cuba, by Margarita Engle.**
Daniel is a 13 year-old Jew living in Nazi Germany. His parents could afford to send only one family member away, and after being denied access to Canada and the USA, he is allowed to enter Cuba. He befriends Paloma, who treats the refugees with kindness while her father exploits them for financial gain. This book will expose children to a facet of Cuban history - the welcoming of Jewish refugees - of which they may not be aware. Themes of kindness, and lessons in accepting people for who they are, highlight this book which is rendered in a poetic style. Winner of the 2010 Sydney Taylor Book Award for teens’ and children’s literature that portray the Jewish experience.

**Dance, Nana, Dance / Baila, Nana, Baila: Cuban Folktales in English and Spanish, by Joe Hayes and Mauricio Trenard Sayago (illustrator).**
Thirteen Cuban folktales incorporating the influence of Cuba’s Spanish, African, and Caribbean heritage are presented in this Americas Honor Book. The book includes comprehensive notes for the reader or storyteller.

**Cuban Ballet, by Octavio Roca, with Forewords by Alicia Alonso and Mikhail Baryshnikov.**
This book about the National Ballet of Cuba provides many starting points for discussion for older children: while the Cuban government supports dancers, and access to the arts for all people, why do some dancers leave? Can you love your country and its heritage, and simultaneously disagree with some of its policies? Alicia Alonso - the Director of the National Ballet of Cuba and supporter of Fidel Castro, and Mikhail Baryshnikov - premier danseur and defector from the USSR - provide additional insights on the artistic experience. The themes for discussion can easily be extended beyond dance to all the fine arts, and politics as well, and show children how there are two sides to most important stories. Written by Octavio Roca, dance critic and native of Havana.
**Drum, Chavi, Drum!/¡Toca, Chavi, toca!, by Mayra L. Dole.**
Even though drums are for boys only in her Cuban-American neighborhood, Chavi decides that she was born to make music with drums. Having the courage to follow her dreams despite family and societal gender roles, Chavi prevails and shows everyone how good she is at the drums. A great message for kids to believe in their dreams, and be proud of their talents, despite what family and society has defined as acceptable.

**The Bossy Gallito/El gallo de bodas: a Traditional Cuban Folktale, by Lucia M. Gonzalez.**
A bilingual Cuban folktale about a feisty little rooster on his way to a wedding who finds he needs help but is denied by everyone and everything until the Sun agrees to help. This is a classical “cumulative” tale told in a rhythmic repetitive style with bright, fun illustrations.

**Juan Bobo Goes to Work: a Puerto Rican Folktale by Marisa Montes.**
The Puerto Rican equivalent of a Foolish Jack tale. Juan is a bumbling boy and loses his payment from work in a series of humorous events, but he manages to get his reward in the end through his ability to make a young girl laugh.

**Martina the Beautiful Cockroach, by Carmen Agra Deedy.**
A sweet retelling of a Cuban folktale, Martina the beautiful cockroach finds love by listening to her grandmother’s hard to believe advice about finding a suitor.
**Discussion Topics and Questions**

1. Encouragement from your teachers. Alma’s ballet lessons: although Alma was not a natural dancer, she loved the beautiful form of the dancers. Her teacher was supportive. Have you had a teacher encourage you in this way?

2. How did Alma’s family help shape her life? In the story, there are many examples of Alma’s family helping each other and the community. For example, Alma’s mother helps Marie by providing space in her store for Marie to sell things, and Alma’s father’s uncle and aunt devote their medical careers to helping people with leprosy. Can you think of positive actions your family has done that might influence your life?

3. Alma’s uncle loved flying even though he was risking his life. Alma’s mother bucked societal gender roles by becoming the first female certified public accountant in Cuba. Can you think of people who love what they do, even thought it might be risky or require courage? Why do you think they do that?

4. One of the themes in Under the Royal Palms is teamwork: Alma’s family works together to make inexpensive Nativity figures so that anyone in the town had access to them. What are the benefits of doing things together? What activities do you do with your family and friends?

5. Find the stories in your own lives. What are some of your experiences - happy or sad - that have formed you? Talk about ways that children share the same feelings through the eyes of different cultures.
Hands-On Activities

Poetry Writing
In *Under the Royal Palms* Alma’s grandmother has a shrine to the Cuban poet Jose Marti. Each day Alma and her grandmother collect flowers for a vase that is in front of a photograph of Marti. José Martí (1853-1895) is best remembered as a Cuban exile who spoke out against the injustices of government. Read a poem of Marti’s, such as the one below, and identify themes from the poem that echo the book. Then have kids write a poem on the theme of friendship and tolerance.

*I cultivate a White Rose*
I cultivate a white rose
In July as in January
For the sincere friend
Who gives me his hand frankly.

And for the cruel person who tears out the heart with which I live,
I cultivate neither nettles nor thorns:
I cultivate a white rose.

Family Tree
Making a family tree is a great way for children to understand where they came from.

MATERIALS:
Family tree templates (these are used by genealogists and are available from many historical associations and can be easily found on the Internet or you can create your own)
Crayons, Pencils

DIRECTIONS:
Ask each child to fill out the tree for his or her family, adding names they know. The children should ask parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles for help filling in more names. After the family tree is completed, the children can decorate with photographs, and add the names of countries where family members are from. (from texasdia.org/toolkit.html)
Hands-On Activities

Book making/write your biography
Under the Royal Palms is the autobiography of Alma Flor’s life as a young girl. Having children write their own biography with the help of their parents or caregivers is a lovely way for children to be aware of the narrative of their own life.

Books can be made very simply by hole punching card stock and looping a plastic key ring through the hole. There are many ways to create books and another easy design is the accordion fold style. Take long strips of drawing paper, measure out the size of each page and mark it with a pencil. Use a bone folder (common book making tool that can be sourced at an art supply store) or a plastic ruler to fold the paper at the marks, in alternating directions to create the accordion. Cut book board into rectangles slightly larger than the accordion stack. Glue white or solid colored paper to the board, glue the boards to the first and last page. Children can decorate and title their autobiography.

Create-A-Map
To thoroughly understand a culture, you should be aware of its location, topography, and physical relation to other countries and the earth itself. This activity will put the setting of the book in geographic context using My Maps, by Google. Children can mark locations, physical features such as rivers, and regions of interest on a map. They can also add descriptive text, embed photos and videos, and view their maps on Google Earth.

It is recommended that the librarian set up program accounts, so children can log into their group’s map after the program is over and continue to update it.

Using library computers, children can be broken up into small teams of 2-3 per computer. With the guidance of a librarian, children can brainstorm for the geographic details in the book. For example: “Where did Alma grow up?” “In what country was that?” “Where is Cuba in relation to the United States? Florida?” Other areas mentioned in the book are the islands of the Caribbean, the Gulf of Mexico, and the city of Havana. (continued next page)
Hands-On Activities: Map

For this exercise, children can begin by creating a map, then inserting placemarkers and text at these points on the map:

1. Go to Google Maps.
2. Sign in to the library Google Account using the link on top right corner.
3. Click on the My Maps link under the search box.
4. Click the Create new map button.
5. Add a title and description for your map. You can make your map public or unlisted.
6. Click the Save button.
7. Type "Cuba" in the search box and zoom in to get a closer look. Once you've zoomed in, click the My Maps link to come back to your map.
8. Click on the Satellite button located at the top right of your map. Under the Satellite button, keep Show labels checked. This way you can see the aerial imagery as well as road information.
9. Continue; for example, search for “Hispaniola”.

Next, placemarkers:
1. Click the blue pointer at the top left of the map. The cursor should change into a placemark icon with an "X" crosshairs. The crosshairs indicate where the placemark will fall.
2. Mark the starting point. Find Camaguey, and move the cursor to the appropriate location. If you want to dismiss this placemark, press the Escape key.
3. Click your mouse button to place your placemark. It should bounce into place.
4. Add a title and description.

Further activities, directions, and screenshots can be found at http://earth.google.com/outreach/tutorial_mymaps.html


**Take-Home Craft Activities**

**Make your own clay sugar bowl:** The clay pot used in this craft is evocative of the book, and echoes the surrealistic art for which Cuba is known. Sugar, a major crop of Cuba, can also be discussed. Patterns could be traced beforehand, or simplified for younger children.

**MATERIALS:**
Small clay flower pot and saucer that will fit over the top; 1” wood ball, glue, small sponge, 1.5” wood disks, enamel paint in black, white, yellow, red, light blue, brown, and sienna; fine and round brushes, tracing paper, graphite paper.

**DIRECTIONS:**
1. Wash and dry the pots and saucer. Glue a wood disk in the bottom of the pot to cover the hole.
2. Use the 1” brush to basecoat the lid and wood ball with Christmas Red. The pot is Baby Blue. Dry.
3. Pick up a small amount of Gloss White with the corner of the sponge, then sponge clouds into the blue sky on the pot.
4. Trace the pattern onto tracing paper. Lay the pattern onto the surface, slide graphite paper under it, then go over the pattern with a stylus so that it shows on the surface.
5. Sugar canes are painted with the round brush with Sable Brown. Use the brush to mix a little white with Sable Brown to paint the ends. Use Burnt Sienna to make the sections in the canes. Notice that if you push a round brush down, the paint goes wide. If you paint on the very tip of the brush hairs, you can create thin lines.
6. Paint the letters with Gloss Black using the round brush.
7. Stars can be freehanded. Follow the step by step instruction below. Use the round brush to paint them with Cadmium Yellow.
8. Clean your brush out carefully with soap and water. Allow your painted pot to air dry for 7 days before hand washing it.

From http://www.crafts4kids.com/projects/900/908_2.htm
Take-Home Craft Activities

**Placemats (mantelitos)**
This activity is appropriate for programs in which family members have been asked to participate.

**MATERIALS:**
White construction, paper, crayons, colored pencils, laminating machine and laminating film.

**DIRECTIONS:**
Encourage adults to share memories of growing up or memories of a favorite relative or friend. Children can draw a picture to capture a scene from one of these experiences, to which the parent or family member can then add a caption. Laminate these to create keepsake placemats (mantelitos) that the families can take home.
(www.texasdia.org)

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**Homemade Butter**
In this activity, children will learn what it’s like to prepare their own butter, just as Alma did in the book. Each child will get to take home his or her own container. The butter can be enjoyed with bread, black beans and rice, and flan for a Cuban meal.

**SUPPLIES:**
1 jar for each child (you can use sterilized baby food jars)
heavy cream (enough to fill each jar ⅔)
salt, cinnamon, or herbs (optional)

**DIRECTIONS:**
Fill each jar ⅔ full with heavy cream, and refrigerate until very cold. Give each child a jar, and have them shake their jars very fast - perhaps in time to a song. Add herbs, or salt, as desired. Cinnamon is a traditional Cuban spice.
(Adapted from http://www.ehow.com/how_5458208_make-homemade-butter-children.html)

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Rhymes and Songs

Muu, Moo! Rimas de animales/Animal Nursery Rhymes, By Isabel Campoy and Alma Flor Ada

There is an evocative passage of Under the Royal Palms where Alma’s father goes out in a strong thunderstorm at night to check on their cow, who is in labor. If there are a group of younger kids, sing rhymes from Muu, Moo! Rimas de animales/Animal Nursery Rhymes.

Guantanamera

La Guantanamera is a world-famous Cuban song. The song is based on Simple Verses, a poem written by Jose Martí, a Cuban poet loved and admired by many, including Alma and her grandmother.

La Guantanamera, as it known today, was written by Julián Orbón, who combined Joseito Fernandez Diaz's original music with José Martí’s lyrics. Both Díaz's and Orbón's Guantanamera versions share the famous chorus: "Guantanamera, guajira guantanamera, Guantanamera, guajira guantanamera."

Teach children the chorus and play your favorite recordings of it, and have the children sing along when the chorus is sung. It’s been recorded by many artists: Celia Cruz, Buena Vista Social Club, Los Lobos, The Gypsy Kings, and Pete Seeger, to name a few.; your library is sure to have one.

An excellent resource for world folk music lesson plans is at Smithsonian Folkways: http://www.folkways.si.edu/tools_for_teaching/lessons.aspx
Click on the two balloons marked on Cuba and there are many ideas, including two for La Guantanamera.
Interview with Alma Flor Ada about her love of reading and words. 
http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-4404051616850597391#

Alma Flor Ada’s website on TeachingBooks.net: http://www.teachingbooks.net/vlr.cgi?url_id=12438&r=7&ri=1615&i=280803

Alma Flor Ada’s website: www.almaflorada.com

Information on Jose Marti
http://www2.fiu.edu/~fcf/jmarti.html


American Folkways:
http://www.folkways.si.edu/tools_for_teaching/lessons.aspx

Cuban Music History Timeline:
http://www.pbs.org/buenavista/music/timeline_1900.html

Nature exploration in Cuba:
http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/episodes/cuba-wild-island-of-the-caribbean/introduction/1243/

Multicultural Education Through Miniatures—Caribbean page.
http://www.coedu.usf.edu/culture/Maps/Caribbean.htm

Demographics of Cuba based on Census information:
References


