

Welcome!

Grade 4, Unit 3

Contemporary Fiction

Dear Family Member,

This unit is centered around excerpts from the novel *Letters from Heaven* by Lydia Gil. The chapters students will study are appropriate for Grade 4 and have been included in this unit.

What's the story?

Lydia Gil's novel *Letters from Heaven/Cartas del Cielo* centers on the main character's, Celeste's, journey of preserving traditions, memories and relationships after losing her grandmother. Celeste mysteriously receives letters from her deceased grandmother, containing recipes for some of the family's favorite Cuban dishes. As she cooks her way through these dishes, Celeste processes the loss of her grandmother and discovers ways to carry on family traditions and keep her grandmother close to her heart. Students will read excerpts from this novel that have been chosen to appropriately support their understanding of contemporary fiction in Grade 4. The unit includes guidance for teachers to aid students in understanding the theme of loss throughout the novel. The lessons build on each other throughout the unit to help students explore the **characters** and **themes** in the text with **multiple readings, uncovering the rich English and Spanish language** and **vocabulary** used throughout the story.

What will my student learn?

Students will learn to be slow, **careful readers** who can peel back many **layers of meaning** in a text. They will dig deeper and discover new meaning as they **read excerpts** from the novel.

Students will move flexibly between **reading** and **writing**. They will engage in lessons that teach them to take what they have learned in their reading and **apply that understanding to their writing**.

Conversation starters

Ask your student questions about the unit to promote discussion and continued learning:

1. At this point in your reading, what do you know about the main character?
2. Where do you think the letters are coming from? Why do you think the author chose to keep it a mystery from Celeste and from the reader?
3. You have been learning about themes in your reading. What is a theme? What is a theme that you have explored in *Letters from Heaven*?

4. You have been discussing relationships between characters in this unit. What are some of the relationships that affect Celeste's feelings and behavior in the story?
Follow up: Why do you think relationships have such an impact on Celeste? What are some relationships that are important to you?
5. What are some of the types of figurative language you have learned about?
Follow up: Can you give me some examples of those types of figurative language you have seen in your reading?