

Curriculum Guide for

Water Day

By **Margarita Engle**

Illustrated by **Olivia Sua**

About the Book

Margarita Engle will inspire and educate readers of all ages with *Water Day*, a story about water scarcity in Trinidad, a historically rich town in Cuba. Engle's characters, including a young girl narrator, anxiously await the water man's delivery every fifth day. Engle's prose is upbeat, but the message is stark: Trinidad used to get enough rain to fill the wells and tinajones (big clay jars), but things have changed.

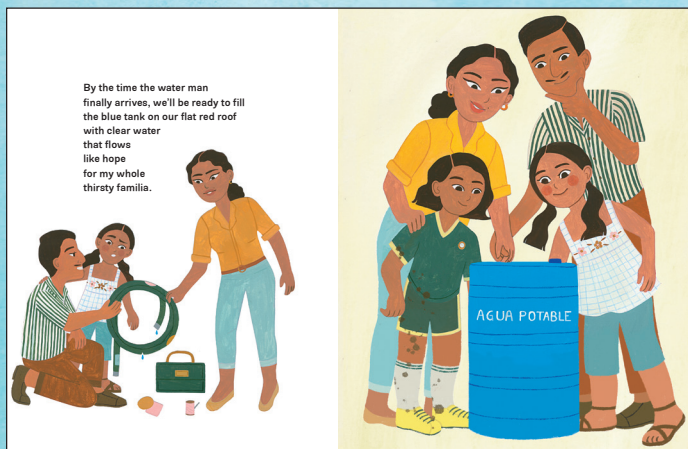
Engle beautifully narrates the shared experience of a community adapting to environmental hardship. The author's note shares more information about Trinidad's experiences. *Water Day* is the perfect way to raise awareness about the global freshwater crisis and encourage students to help conserve.



Building Knowledge

- Did you know Trinidad is a UNESCO World Heritage Site? Build students' knowledge by encouraging them to find it on a map. Discuss the geography, climate, population, and history of this historical city.
- Take a picture walk through the book and think about how the setting is important to the story. Notice this book has a lot of Spanish words mixed in with the English words.
- Have students work with a partner to find some of the Spanish words and discuss why they think the author included those words in her story. Play a game where you hold up a Spanish word from the story and ask students to share where they found it in the book and what they think it means.

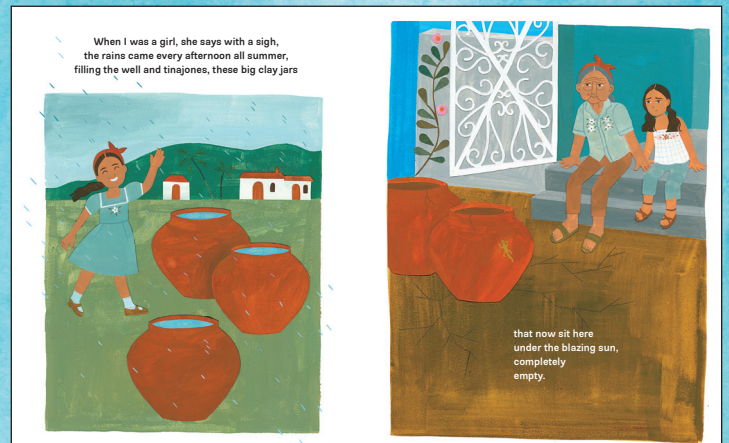
Discussion Questions



1. What are Mami, Papi, and the little girl getting ready for? What evidence from the book (text and pictures) shows you?



2. Do a close reading of this page (text and images). Why is Water Day so important?



3. Describe what you see in both pictures. How are they related to each other? Why do you think the illustrator designed the page this way?



4. Who is the lady on the bicycle? Why are the fish important?



5. Why do they have to boil enough water to drink for nearly a week?

Questions on Craft

Margarita Engle uses figurative language to bring her stories to life in the minds of her readers. Figurative language is used to help describe something ordinary in a new, creative way. **Personification** is one example of figurative language. Personification is when you give human traits to something that is not human.

- On the page with the narrator hugging her great-grandmother, the young narrator laughs when she hears Bisabuelita tell her fruit trees she'll soon "get their toes wet." What does Bisabuelita mean by this? How is this an example of personification?
- Read aloud to the class the page with this line: "Water day always feels / like a river of joy that flows / for my whole / thirsty / familia." Can a river be joyful? Why does the author write it this way?
- The little girl is the narrator in this story, and she tells the story from her point of view. How might the story be different from someone else's point of view? Bisabuelita? The water man? Mami?
- Why do you think the author decided to write this book and share this story? Which part was most surprising or interesting to you?
- Water Day* explains what happens when a town experiences a drought, or an extended period of time without rain. What does the word *drought* mean? Complete the Frayer model template to explain it in your own words.

| | |
|----------------|----------|
| Definition | Sentence |
| Drought | |
| Visual | Synonym |



Group Activities

1. Imagine you woke up on Saturday morning and there was no running water in your home. You couldn't take a shower, get a drink, flush your toilet, wash your hands, or use water to prepare meals.

Create a list of the ways your family would get through the day with no running water.

Hint: Divide your day into morning, afternoon, and evening and think of the main things you do during those times.

2. Encourage students to raise awareness about water conservation by creating a poster or public service announcement to conserve water.

Here are some tips from the Environmental Protection Agency: <https://www.epa.gov/watersense>

3. Visit a local water treatment plant and learn about how water is cleaned.
4. Invite an expert into the classroom to learn about how local water sources (like streams and rivers) are affected by pollution.

Class Demonstrations

How much freshwater is on earth?

Demonstrate the ratio of freshwater to salt water with this simple model.

Materials:

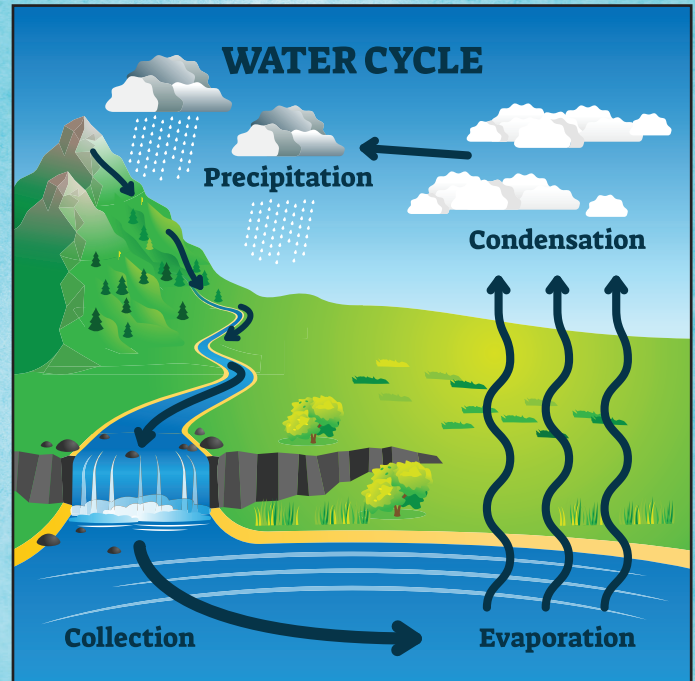
One-gallon sized jug, two empty clear cups, teaspoon, water.

Directions:

1. Fill up a gallon-sized container with water. Explain that the full gallon represents all the earth's water.
2. Measure 23 teaspoons of water out of the gallon and pour into the first empty cup. This represents the freshwater on earth—3 percent of all the earth's water.
3. From that cup, take 8 teaspoons out and pour into the other cup. This represents the amount of usable freshwater on earth—1 percent.

4. Tell students the original gallon now represents the amount of salt water on earth—97 percent.
5. Discuss!

What is the water cycle?



Demonstrate the basic water cycle with the following "water cycle in a bag" activity.

Introduce science vocabulary words like **evaporation**, **condensation**, **precipitation** (and **infiltration/runoff** and **collection**, depending on your class's age group).

1. Add a few drops of blue food coloring to a cup of water.
2. Use a permanent marker to draw the water cycle on a gallon-sized zipper-closure plastic bag.
3. Pour in the water.
4. Seal the bag and tape it to a sunny classroom window to observe the water cycle in action throughout the day!

Discussion Topics

Use *Water Day* as an entry point to a unit about water. Give students an overview of the water crisis, ensuring they know these key points:

- There is a limited amount of freshwater on earth, and it is not distributed equally around the world.
- Pollution and climate change make freshwater scarcity a crisis in many regions around the world.

Share resources to help students deepen their knowledge about water scarcity around the world, including the United States. Students can work in small groups to watch the videos, study the images, and read (or listen to) the article. Engage in whole class or small group discussions after reading and watching with discussion questions.

- What is the issue people are facing with water?
- Compare and contrast the reasons for water shortages in different regions.
- How does the problem affect people?
- Why is it important to solve this problem?

Resources

Basic water information:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rEJ5yuFR3f8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oaQCiwzjnCM>

Water crisis in Kenya:

<https://www.worldvision.org/clean-water-news-stories/how-to-talk-kids-global-water-crisis>

Learn about the water crisis in Jackson, Mississippi:

<https://www.timeforkids.com/g34/tfk-explains-the-jackson-water-crisis-g3/?rl=en-660#:~:text=The%20United%20States%20Environmental%20Protection,dishes%2C%20or%20brushing%20their%20teeth.>

Study the images and read the captions.

https://kids.kiddle.co/Water_scarcity (scroll down to the images)

More Books About Latinx Characters

Island Treasures: Growing Up in Cuba by Alma Flor Ada, illustrated by Edel Rodriguez and Antonio Martorell

Good-bye, Havana! Hola, New York! by Edie Colón, illustrated by Raúl Colón

Definitely Dominguita series by Terry Catusus Jennings, illustrated by Fatima Anaya

More Books About Water

Are We Running Out of Water? by Isabel Thomas, illustrated by El Primo Ramón

All the Water in the World by George Ella Lyon, illustrated by Katherine Tillotson

Raindrops Roll by April Pulley Sayre

More Picture Books from Margarita Engle

A Song of Frutas, illustrated by Sara Palacios
Available in Spanish, *Un pregón de frutas*

Light for All, illustrated by Raúl Colón
Available in Spanish, *Luz para todos*

Dancing Hands, illustrated by Rafael López
Available in Spanish, *Manos que bailan*

The Flying Girl, illustrated by Sara Palacios
Available in Spanish, *La joven aviadora*

All the Way to Havana, illustrated by Mike Curato
Available in Spanish, *Todo el camino hasta la Habana*

Drum Dream Girl, illustrated by Rafael López
Available in Spanish, *Una niña, un tambor, un sueño*

BRAVO! Poems About Amazing Hispanics, illustrated by Rafael López
Available in Spanish

Miguel's Brave Knight, illustrated by Raúl Colón
Available in Spanish, *Miguel y su valiente caballero*

The Sky Painter, illustrated by Aliona Bereghici

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