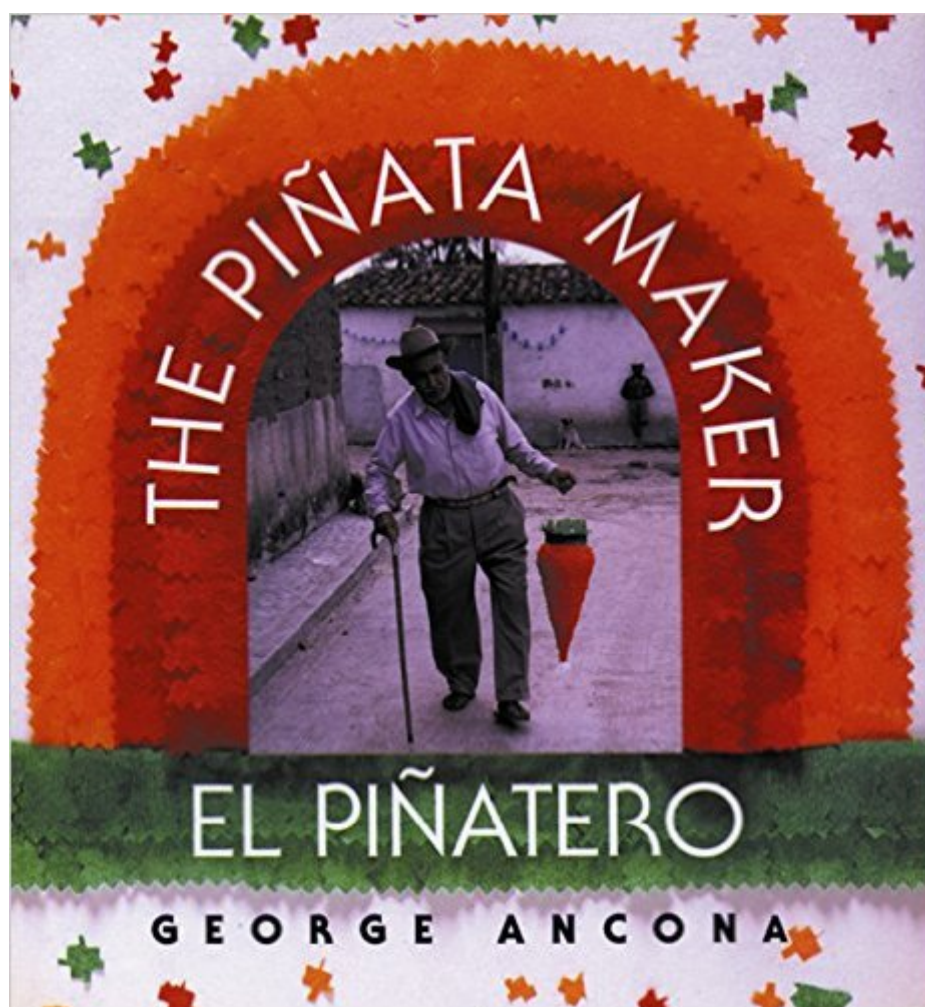


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# El Piñatero/ The Piñata Maker



## Synopsis

Told in both English and Spanish by award-winning author-photographer George Ancona, *The Piñata Maker/El piñatero* documents this traditional Latin American artform and includes a note on how to make piñatas at home. A delightful introduction to the subject and a memorable glimpse of one Mexican village and its people. --Booklist

## Book Information

Paperback: 40 pages

Publisher: Harcourt Paperbacks; 1st edition (March 30, 1994)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0152000607

ISBN-13: 978-0152000608

Product Dimensions: 9 x 0.2 x 10 inches

Shipping Weight: 4.8 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.9 out of 5 stars See all reviews (11 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #722,303 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #242 in Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Central & South America #1254 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > Foreign Language Learning > Spanish #176318 in Books > Reference

Age Range: 6 - 9 years

Grade Level: 1 - 4

## Customer Reviews

The *Piñata Maker* describes how a Mexican gentleman, Don Ricardo, became a piñata maker. It elaborates on how he makes his beautiful piñatas, while including a description of his way of life. The book is fantastic for individuals who are studying either English or Spanish. I'm using it both to become more familiar with Spanish and to teach English to a Spanish speaking person. It is written on an appropriate level for adults to use in this manner, but it is also an excellent book for children.

Both my 5 & 3 year-old children LOVE this book. It is a nice combo of something fun (the pinatas, the design, & just the thought of candy...) and reality (photos of Don making pinatas). It is simple enough for them to understand, and captivating enough for even my younger child. We haven't delved much into the spanish text, but will eventually. For now, we're working on making the star for my daughter's sixth birthday party!

Tio Rico lives in a village in Oaxaca (wah-ha-kah), Mexico. He is a 77 year-old who became a pinata maker when rheumatism made it too difficult to continue his business of making sombreros. A village boy collects newspapers and concrete sacks for Tio Rico. These he uses to fashion unusual and decorative pinatas. The process is explained by a delightful profusion of photographs which accompany the story. The author, George Ancona, also shows "puppets" which are child-size papier-mache forms worn by young folk dancers. He shows his own version of pinata formed over cardboard or balloons for those of us who cannot buy clay pots at a local market. Children everywhere will enjoy this colorful book and be eager to try the craft. With luck, they will have patient teachers and learn some Spanish and/or English words, too! My favorite companion book is "Colors of Mexico" (isbn: #1575052164), illustrated by Janice Porter. "THE PINATA MAKER" is a 5-star book for adults as well as children, and most appropriate for the 2003 church women's study of Mexico. Find a group of children to share this book with, and increase your enjoyment three-fold.

Before I retired to Mexico from teaching in Texas I used this book as a guide to classroom activities for a self-contained classroom of boys with severe behavioral problems. The response was far beyond my expectations. In both Spanish and English Sr. Ancona tells the interesting story of Don Ricardo, an elderly pinata maker in a small Mexican village. He also includes complete instructions which allow the reader to construct his or her own pinata. Using the construction process as a reward I was able to involve my elementary level students in a number of academic activities they had earlier resisted, as well as expanding the learning process into a number of new areas. In addition, behavior related problems decreased dramatically because participation in the reading, discussion, and pinata design and construction were based upon the completion of other academic work as well as classroom behavior and all wanted to engage in the interesting activities and discussions suggested by the book. The ways in which this book can be used by creative teachers are many. I strongly suggest that teachers consider using this book as inspiration for a number of enjoyable and effective learning activities.

The charming little book follows Don Ricardo as he designs, makes and delivers his pinatas in a small Mexican town. Don is 77 years old and started making Pinatas 15 years ago. You are not only taken through every step of making a creative yet traditionally made pinata, but you also get the feel for the ruralness of the town and its people through the photographs. I recommend this as great book to read to your kids, or to use to get help with making Pinatas. The bi-lingual text, helps it work

for both spanish and english speaking children.

... and Mexico, until recently, was the scene of one of the richest 'folk cultures' of the whole world, based chiefly in its villages and small cities, Tonalá Jalisco as an example of the former and Oaxaca of the latter. Sad to say, the collapse of that folk culture is almost complete in most of Mexico, due to 'globalization' and the proximity of El Norte. But don't get me started! This is a review of a charmingly sophisticated bi-lingual book for children (over eight years old, I'd recommend) and for the adults who read to them. Don Ricardo - Tio Rico, Uncle Dick, to the children of his village - has been hand-crafting piñatas, dance masks, and puppets for most of his 77 years. Though his work is entirely traditional, he's a genuine imaginative artist. The book shows him at work and describes some of the steps in his craftsmanship, in photographs as well as bi-lingual text. It also shows the lucky children of his village in southern Mexico -- visiting him in his shop, picking out piñatas, trying on dance masks and costumes for fiestas, celebrating their birthdays with Tio Rico and his wife as honored guests. There may still be a few norteamericanos who don't know what a piñata is, though the custom of breaking the piñata seems to have crossed the border and been welcomed at birthday parties from Maine to Hawaii. The piñata is a hollow urn, usually of thin ceramic or papier-mâché, highly decorated in fantastic forms, filled with 'goodies' and suspended over a patio on a rope pulled up and down by an older child or adult. The birthday-party guests take turns, blind-folded, trying to break the piñata with a stick. When the piñata is broken, the 'goodies' cascade on the patio and the children scramble to pick them up. But no one looks happier to see the most gorgeous piñata shattered than the artist Tio Rico. He knows his art is perishable -- as all art is, in the end -- and he takes pleasure in the pleasure of his 'audience.' The author of this book, George Ancona, knows that some underprivileged norteamericanos might live in place where there are no piñata makers or venders, and so he includes some suggestions for makeshifting a piñata with cardboard, balloons, and crepe paper. This book was published in 1994. The chances that Tio Rico is still crafting his folk art are scant. These days most piñatas are mass-produced -- who knows, possibly in Singapore, where the book was printed. But there's still time -- and certainly need -- for North Americans to learn to savor the humble but brilliant culture of traditional rural Mexicans, and to develop some respect for a grizzled old man with battered hands and broken teeth in somewhat shabby clothes -- just like the guy cadging odd jobs on your street corner -- who happens to have the spirit of an artist.

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