



## **Bringing Household Items to Life**

By Erin Armstrong

Visiting Writer-in-Residence

Grade Level: 3rd - 5th

Time Frame: 60 minutes

Learning Objectives:

- To introduce Latin American Folktales, specifically from Bolivia
- To introduce the idea of personification
- To inspire students to think of everyday items in a magical or mystical way
- To provide students with the opportunity to free write in such a way that they can bring inanimate objects to life.

### **Sequence of Activities**

#### I. Warm-up

- Ask students to define a folktale, record some of their responses
- Ask students if they have ever imagined things in their room coming alive: toys, desks, pictures, etc.
- Introduce the idea of folktales/focus for the Poetry Joeys
- Read the excerpt from the Bolivian story
- Introduce the idea of personification: the attribution of a personal nature or human characteristics to something nonhuman, or the representation of an abstract quality in human form.

## II. Activity

- Generate a list of things that students might find in their kitchen
  1. Pot
  2. Pan
  3. Cutting Board
  4. Spoon
  5. Cup
  6. Plate
  7. Glass
  8. Sponge
  9. Soap
  10. Food
  11. Stove
  12. Fridge
  13. Microwave
  14. Clock
  15. Spatula
  
- Collaborative Activity: have students choose one of the items from the list
- Have them imagine that this item has come to life, then ask them a series of questions:
  1. What would the item say?
  2. What does it look like? Does it have arms and legs? How does it get around?
  3. Who are their friends? What other kitchen items?
  4. Whose kitchen are they in?
  5. What are their owners doing? Do their owners ever know that the item comes to life? Do they ever talk to one another?
  6. When does the item come to life? At a specific time? During the day? At night? What time?
  7. What is the item's favorite thing to do?

8. What is one thing that the item wishes?
9. How does the item feel?
10. If the item could do anything, what would it be?

- Have students answer these questions as a class. Once they've finished, have students choose a different item and do the activity individually.
- Have them spend a few minutes with their pencils down simply thinking/using their imaginations before they begin writing.
- Have students write 10-15 lines. It can be in paragraph form or line form.

### III. Sharing

- Have students share their work with each other
- If there is time, have students draw their object.

### **Extension Activities:**

Have students illustrate their lines/paragraphs. If students finish early, read another Bolivian folktale (attached). Talk about how this folktale is different from the first one they read. What do they like about this one? How is personification used in this folktale? What do they think of the girl?

### **Required Resources:**

“The Revolt of the Utensils” (From Tacana, Bolivia) and “The Mouse King” (From Bolivia by Amalia de Ordóñez), both from *Latin American Folktales: Stories from Hispanic and Indian Traditions* edited by John Bierhorst. Available from [Google Books](#).

Excerpt, “The Revolt of the Utensils”

*In the old days clay pots and other objects were like people. They could talk, visit, dance, and make chichi...*

Excerpt, “The Mouse King”

*All right, they say that in those olden days there was a hut where a peasant couple lived at the edge of a forest, and they had a pretty daughter. The daughter went out for a walk in the forest and found a white mouse asleep at the base of a tree. She picked it up and said, “I’m going to take this home.”*