

Tools for Teachers: My Name is Gabriela \* Me llamo Gabriela  
The Life of Gabriela Mistral \* la vida de Gabriela Mistral  
By Monica Brown  
Illustrated by John Parra  
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Gabriela Mistral loved words and sounds and stories. Born in Chile, she grew to become the first Nobel Prize-winning Latina woman in the world. As a poet and a teacher, she inspired children across many countries to let their voices be heard. Celebrate the power of words and the importance of following dreams!

Curriculum Connections:

Poetry  
Biographies  
History  
Creativity  
Individuality

### **Activity #1 Get to Know Gabriela Mistral!**

*Book Connection:* My Name is Gabriela is a biography. Biographies bring history to life. They give us a peek into the lives of others. After reading the story, we learn that Gabriela was born in northern Chile, in the town of Vicuna. Locate Chile on a map. What do you know about Chile? Research and discover the types of foods common in Northern Chile. Discover traditions practiced in Chile. What plants and animals are common there? Create a poster decorated with facts and discoveries you learn about Chile: Chile's people, places, food, animals, plants, history.

### **Activity #2 Comparing the Past to the Present**

*Book Connection:* Gabriela was born in 1889. What do you think it would be like to be a child in the 1890s? Research that time period. Use a Venn Diagram and compare the late 1800's to the present.

#### A Child's Life, Past and Present

[Insert sample of blank venn diagram – two overlapping circles]

Consider comparing: types of transportation, games children played, what school was like, what type of clothing was worn (shoes, dresses, shirts).

### **Activity #3 First Person Fun!**

*Book Connection:* The author, Monica Brown, wrote My Name is Gabriela in *first person*. This means the author pretended to be Gabriela. She wrote the story as if Gabriela was the one telling it.

Pretend that you are Gabriela.

Write an imaginary diary entry in first person about a typical day you might have. What are your chores? How do you spend your days? Who are your friends, and what do you do?

Today's date _____
Dear Diary,
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

**Activity #4 What's in a Name?**

*Book Connection:* The name Gabriela was given at birth was Lucila Godoy Alcayaga. However, Gabriela was the name she chose for herself. Why do you think Gabriela chose to change her name?

Research the origin of your name. Does it have a meaning or translation?

Have each student write their name with large lettering on an 11 x 14 piece of paper. Fold the paper in half. Have students decorate half of their paper with pictures of items that represent them (their talents, likes, personality traits, favorite foods.) Have students decorate the other half of their paper with pictures or items that represent the true meaning of their name. How do the two sides compare? Are they similar?

Ponder: If you could change your name, what would you change it to? Why?

**Activity #5 Becoming a Wordsmith: Playing with Poetry**

*Book Connection:* Gabriela Mistral was a poet. She loved to write about happy times and sad times; mothers and children, and even parrots, peacocks and rats! She loved to play with words and the way words sounded.

Poetry *is* wonderful. It does not have to be poetic. It does not have to rhyme. It can be written using any type of language and about any subject.

Share poetry books written for children. Then, allow students to practice writing their own poems in the classroom. Here's a lesson to get you started!

Poetry Activity #1 Create Metaphor Poems!

Background content: Metaphors and similes make comparisons. A simile uses words such as "as" or "like" when comparing: *White as snow; hot like fire.*

Metaphors compare two things without using the words "like" or "as". The two comparisons become one: *My puppy is warm sunshine. My Grandpa's head is a snow topped mountain.*

Metaphors are powerful writing tools because they create images. Because of this, metaphors are effective for creating poetry.

Select one familiar place at school for students to write about, such as the classroom or playground.

As a class, brainstorm describing words (adjectives) about the place.

An example: Playground.

Adjectives to describe the playground - noisy, loud, busy, fun...

Brainstorm and list specific things that match each adjective.

Adjective: *Noisy*. What else is noisy? (horns, trains, traffic, people....)

Adjective: *Fun*. What else is fun? (playing, games, parties...)

Create poems about school using this template:

### Playgrounds

Playgrounds are (adjective)

They are (specific metaphor to match adjective)

They are (specific metaphor to match adjective)

That's what playgrounds are.

This format can be applied to any subject: family, weather, food, pets, friends...

### Further Activities

1. Visit a local library and borrow poetry books written by Gabriela Mistral. Discover her poetry.
2. Research the Nobel Prize. When did it originate? Who wins it?
3. Visit a local library and borrow biographies about Gabriela Mistral. Learn more about her life.
4. Practice becoming a wordsmith and think like a poet!
  - a. Select one word and write down as many rhymes as you can to go with it.
  - b. Select an object, even something very ordinary. List as many describing words (adjectives) as possible to describe the object. Include senses, such as taste, sound, sight and smell.
  - c. Become familiar with poetry forms (free verse, haiku, cinquain, concrete, limerick...) and practice writing your own poetry in different forms.
  - d. Spend time observing. Grab a pencil and paper, and find a place to sit and observe. Sit indoors. Sit outdoors. Tune in your senses and jot down everything you see and everything you hear.
  - e. All writers and poets need ideas. Don't let your ideas get away from you! Practice jotting them down as soon as you get them by keeping a small notepad and pencil or pen with you.
5. Visit a local library and check out poetry books written specifically for children. Spend time reading and exploring the many styles and themes published.

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