

The Cot in the Living Room

Written by Hilda Eunice Burgos,
Illustrated by Gaby D'Alessandro

Kokila

978-0-593-11047-8 | Hardcover
40 pages | \$17.99 | Lexile: AD490L



Penguin
Random House
PENGUIN YOUNG READERS

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

The Cot in the Living Room celebrates how a Dominican American community cares for one another. The main character learns empathy through her mother's refusal to let her sleep on the cot in the living room. The author uses repetition through the main character's response to explore the power of empathy. In this lesson, students will discuss the purpose of repetition in writing and interpret its meaning in the text.

LEARNING TARGETS

1. Students will define the meaning of repetition.
2. Students will identify repetition in a piece of literature.
3. Students will evaluate the meaning of the repetition used in a piece of literature.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- *The Cot in the Living Room* by Hilda Eunice Burgos and Gaby D'Alessandro
- Can You Repeat That? worksheet
- Repetition Website: tinyurl.com/4ws8m5x9
- I Have a Dream Speech: tinyurl.com/yjrs89pp

Finding Your Place in the World:

*Lessons for Reading
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SUMMARY

A young Dominican American girl in New York City moves from jealousy to empathy as her parents babysit children whose families work the overnight shift in this honest and warm picture book debut. Night after night, a young girl watches her mami set up a cot in the living room for guests in their Washington Heights apartment, like Raquel (who's boring) and Edgardo (who gets crumbs everywhere). She resents that they get the entire living room with a view of the George Washington Bridge, while all she gets is a tiny bedroom with a view of her sister (who snores). Until one night, no one comes, and it's finally her chance! But as it turns out, sleeping in the cot in the living room isn't all she thought it would be.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

As a teacher, you will determine how deep you want to go in the world of repetition. It can be as simple as introducing the concept or as deep as using it for literary analysis in a high school classroom.

- Introduce *repetition* to students. This information can be found on the Can You Repeat That? worksheet or in the Masterclass link provided.
- Read *The Cot in the Living Room* by Hilda Eunice Burgos and Gaby D'Alessandro to students. Encourage students to note the repetition in the story. Note that the last example of repetition, "It's not fair," changes in meaning. The main character shifts the focus of herself and focuses on the needs of someone else.

Questions to ask:

- What is the purpose of the repeated phrase, "It's not fair"? Is it positive or negative?
- Why does the meaning change? Is it positive or negative?
- How does the main character's perspective change with the last use of repetition? Does the character become more empathetic?
- Students should complete the Can You Repeat That? worksheet
- Provide students with a copy of I Have a Dream speech by Martin Luther King. Students should read the copy independently.
- Have students highlight or underline the repeated words or phrases used in the speech. Answer the questions on the Can You Repeat That? worksheet.
- Students can share their findings as a class, in a group or with a partner.

Can You Repeat That?

Repetition Definition:

The same word, sound, or phrase used several times in a poem, speech, or any piece of writing.

Directions: Listen to *The Cot in the Living Room* by Hilda Eunice Burgos and Gaby D'Alessandro and focus on the words or phrases that are repeated. Use the text leads below to find the repeated word or phrase on the page. Jot down the word or phrase that you hear in the 2nd column below. Determine if the word or phrase is being used the same way and jot down your answer in the 3rd column. Finally, answer the questions below.

Text	Repeated Word or Phrase	Is the repeated word or phrase used the same way?
"I wish my room had a big window to let in the lights from the George Washington Bridge."	Example: "It's not fair"	Example: Negative
"He gets a snack and my toy?!"		
"Mami turns off the TV and I go to my room, where there is nothing to watch."		
"It's Wednesday and Raquel's dad is working the night shift again, so she has to sleep on the cot in the living room. All by herself. She must really miss him."		
What is the purpose of the repetition? Why does the author make this decision?		
The meaning of the repeated words or phrases is NOT the same in ONE example. How does the meaning change? Why does it change?		