



*The seeds she has planted,*  
the roots that grew shoots into  
the open air of possibility,  
have become a lush landscape  
into which she steps, as though she has never left.





# Planting Stories

## The Life of Librarian and Storyteller Pura Belpré

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### About the Book

Pura Belpré moves from Puerto Rico to New York City, and while she is working at the New York Public Library, she realizes that the library has no stories from her homeland. Through storytelling, puppetry, and writing, Pura is able to share the folktales she grew up with, bringing the joy, language, and heritage of her beloved Puerto Rico to children everywhere.

### Discussion Questions

- ✿ Show the students a map and point out San Juan and New York City. Then read the first two pages of the story. How are the two cities different? How does Pura feel about New York City? How do you know?
- ✿ Read the page, “What began as a visit to celebrate her sister’s wedding becomes the first steps in a new land—y una vida nueva—for Pura.” Ask the students what they believe the Spanish phrase means and to explain their thinking.
- ✿ What is a garment factory? Does Pura enjoy working there? Why or why not?
- ✿ When Pura takes the job at the library, what does she discover? When she realizes there are no stories from Puerto Rico, what does she do?
- ✿ What does the author mean when she writes, “Now Pura has a wish, too: to plant her story seeds throughout the land”?
- ✿ How does Pura decide to bring her stories to life? When she shares her stories, what languages does she use? Why do you think she speaks in more than one language?
- ✿ How does Pura bring books about Puerto Rico to the library? Why is this so important?
- ✿ When Pura returns to the library in 1961, how has it changed?
- ✿ Why is this book called “Planting Stories”?
- ✿ What character traits would you use to describe Pura?

### Extension Activities

**Puppet Play.** Pura designed beautiful puppets to convey her stories. Have the students work in small groups to create their own puppets to retell a story. Students can choose to convey a folktale they know, or a book that they have read. Provide the students with an opportunity to practice their puppet show and then perform it for the class.

**Watch Your Language.** Many Spanish words and phrases are sprinkled throughout this story. Ask the students what words they know in other languages. Have them teach each other words and phrases in different languages. Older students can create a multilingual dictionary by writing and translating the words that they know.

**Coming to America.** Ask the students to interview an older relative or family friend to find out about their heritage. In what country were they (or their parents/grandparents) born? When and why did they come to the United States? What was it like when they first came to the country? Did they speak English? Have the students create a poster or report to share the information that they learned.

**Planting Our Own Stories.** Ask the students to explain how Pura is able to “plant her story seeds.” Discuss how plants grow and produce seeds so that the plants endure, just as Pura’s stories did. Then provide students with seeds and soil to do their own planting.