



Classroom Guide for
CORA COOKS PANCIT
Written by **Dorina Lazo Gilmore**
Illustrated by **Kristi Valiant**

Reading Level

*Reading Level: Grades 2–3
Interest Level: Grades PreK–2
Guided Reading Level: M
Accelerated Reader® Level/Points: 3.1/0.5

*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

Themes

Families, Food and Cooking, How-to, Identity, Self-Esteem and Confidence, Mothers, Responsibility, Growing Up, Filipino Culture and Heritage, Asian/Asian American Interest

Synopsis

Cora loves being in the kitchen, but she always gets stuck doing the kid jobs like licking the spoon. One day, however, when her older sisters and brother head out, Cora finally gets the chance to be Mama's assistant chef. And of all the delicious Filipino dishes that dance through Cora's head, she and Mama decide to make *pancit*, Cora's favorite noodle dish.

With Mama's help, Cora does the grown-up jobs like shredding the chicken and soaking the noodles. (Perhaps Mama won't notice if she takes a nibble of chicken or sloshes a little water on the floor.) Cora even gets to stir the noodles in the pot—carefully—while Mama supervises. When dinner is finally served, her siblings find out that Cora did all their grown-up tasks, and Cora waits anxiously to see what everyone thinks of her cooking.

Dorina Lazo Gilmore's text delightfully captures the warmth between mother and daughter as they share a piece of their Filipino heritage. With bright and charming illustrations by Kristi Valiant, Cora's family comes alive as Cora herself becomes the family's newest little chef.

A glossary of terms and a pancit recipe are included at the end of the book.

BACKGROUND

Pancit: According to the [Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism](#) (PCIJ), pancit has been adapted from Chinese noodle dishes and the word *pancit* is derived from the Hokkien *pian i sit*, which means “something conveniently cooked fast.”¹ Indeed, pancit is easy to make, nicely complements other dishes in the meal, and is flexible enough to accommodate all kinds of add-in ingredients. The noodle stir-fry dish uses rice noodles, and any meat or vegetables to be included are thinly sliced. People make both dry pancit and pancit with soup. Spices, vegetables, and meat that are added reflect the region and adaptability of the dish. The Filipino food blog, Pepper, has a great [infographic](#) displaying the many variations of pancit.² Pancit is eaten at special holiday meals and everyday meals, and it is a quick takeout meal. Birthdays are a particularly popular time to make and consume pancit because the long noodles [symbolize](#) long life as borrowed from Chinese tradition.³

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

1. Take a look at the front and back covers. Take a picture walk. Ask students to make a prediction. Do you think this book will be fiction or nonfiction? What makes you think so? What clues do the author and illustrator give to help you know whether this book will be fiction or nonfiction?
2. Have you ever heard of the noodle dish called pancit? From what culture do you think it originates? What other dishes do you think might be similar?
3. Share a time you made a meal or dish for your family. What did you choose to make and why? Who helped you prepare the food? What challenges did you face? What advice would you give someone who wants to try a new recipe?
4. What do you know about the Philippines? Where is it located? What is the geography like? What languages do people in the Philippines speak? What are some Filipino foods or dishes?
5. What is *responsibility*? Share a time you demonstrated responsibility. What was your goal? What challenges did you face? How did you show you were ready to handle the task?
6. Why do you think I chose this book for us to read today?

Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1, and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

Talk about the title of the book. Ask students what they think the title means. Then ask them what they think this book will most likely be about and who the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?

Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, title page, copyright page, dedications, illustrations, glossary, and pancit recipe. Introduce students to the glossary terms at the end of the book so they will be familiar with the words during the reading.

¹ <http://pcij.org/i-report/1/pancit.html>

² <http://www.pepper.ph/the-history-of-pancit/>

³ <http://www.pepper.ph/the-history-of-pancit/>

Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out why Cora wants to cook and how Cora shows her family she is responsible. Encourage students to consider why the author, Dorina K. Lazo Gilmore, would want to share this story with young people.

VOCABULARY

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below. Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

CONTENT SPECIFIC

Filipino	grown-up jobs	kid jobs	apron	papayas	celery
pineapples	cupboards	refrigerator	cabbage	soy sauce	wink
mushrooms	ginger	shredding	tongue	copper	tiptoes
sizzle	spices	somersault	curry	banana leaves	
platter	eyes grow wide	bit her lip			

ACADEMIC

longed	darted	scrunched	pranced	be-bopped	countryside
harvested	imagined	unwrapping	scooping	ingredients	package
soak	plopped	clump	stash	snuck	noticed
tickled	arranged	sloshed	straining	escaped	usual
hollered	accident	impressive	sparkled	beamed	pride

There are a few Tagalog words in the English text. English translations mostly follow these words and students have enough context clues to practice inferring the meanings of the context. A glossary with a pronunciation guide is included at the end of the book.

If you have a student in your class who speaks Tagalog, encourage her or him to help translate the words for her or his classmates. In doing so, the student will feel proud of sharing the role of teacher to her or his peers.

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite evidence with their answers.**

Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1 and 3)

1. Why does Cora get to cook with her mom today?
2. What dish does Cora choose to make? Why does she choose this dish?
3. What is the purpose of an apron?
4. What does Cora like about cooking?
5. What challenges does Cora face while cooking pancit?
6. How does Cora's family react when they find out she cooked the pancit almost all by herself (with her mother supervising)? What does the family think of the meal?

7. What are the steps for making pancit?
8. What does Mama do to support and encourage Cora throughout the cooking process?
9. What are examples of “grown-up jobs” and “kid jobs” in the book?
10. Which steps does Mama do instead of Cora?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4–6)

1. What motivates Cora to cook?
2. Why does Cora want to do “grown-up jobs,” not “kid jobs?”
3. Why does Cora wash her hands before cooking? Why would Mama make that a rule?
4. Why are Cora's sisters and brother surprised to learn that Cora cooked the pancit?
5. Why might Cora not have been allowed to or be able to handle “grown-up jobs” before?
6. Describe Cora's relationship with her mother.
7. Describe Cora's relationship with her older sisters and brother.
8. Why do you think the illustrator, Kristi Valiant, includes the family dog throughout the story? How is the dog similar to Cora? How do both show persistence and a desire to be accepted?
9. Why does Cora “bite her lip” while her family tastes her pancit?
10. Why does Mama wink at Cora when they begin preparing the noodles?
11. Why does Mama chop vegetables and work the stove instead of Cora?
12. Now that Cora has cooked pancit, what do you predict will happen next time the family cooks a meal together? What jobs might Cora get to do? Why?
13. How does this story celebrate growing up?

Literature Circles

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)

If you use literature circles during reading time, students might find the following suggestions helpful in focusing on the different roles of the group members.

- The **Questioner** might use questions similar to the ones in the Discussion Question section of this guide.
- The **Passage Locator** might look for lines or sentences in the story that Cora is responsible.
- The **Illustrator** might create an illustration to show how Cora is responsible enough for grown-up jobs after the meal is done and it is time for cleanup.
- The **Connector** might find another story about a character cooking a recipe, such as Lee & Low's [Hot, Hot Roti for Dada-ji](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2749),⁴ [Rainbow Stew](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2816),⁵ [Hiromi's Hands](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2404),⁶ [Auntie Yang's Great Soybean Picnic](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2768),⁷ or [Sweet Potato Pie](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2459).⁸ The connector should compare how the central idea and author's message in the books are similar and/or different from one another.
- The **Summarizer** might provide a brief summary of the group's reading and discussion points for each meeting.

⁴ <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2749>

⁵ <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2816>

⁶ <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2404>

⁷ <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2768>

⁸ <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2459>

- The **Investigator** might look for information about other Filipino dishes, including their ingredients, how and when they are made, and when they are most commonly eaten.

Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 2 and 3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion. You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. Describe a time you prepared and made a dish. Why did you pick that particular recipe? Who helped you prepare the dish? What challenges did you face? With whom did you share the final result? What advice would you give cooks for when they have to follow a recipe's instructions?
2. Cora wants more responsibility, like her brother and sisters. Describe a time you wanted more responsibility or you were given more responsibility. How did you feel in that situation? How did your parents or guardians show you they were proud of you? How do you think increased responsibility is important to growing up?
3. In this story, pancit is "comfort food" made for a regular dinner. What is a comfort food? What foods comfort you? What foods bring your family together? Who makes them? When do you eat them? What are the ingredients?
4. If you were to make pancit, what ingredients would you include? Write your own recipe for your version of pancit. Be sure to include the list of ingredients, with measurements, and steps for cooking the dish.
5. Think about how the story ends and imagine you are asked to write the next scene. Write the next episode for Cora and her family, picking up where the story ends. What jobs might Cora do to clean up after the dinner? What might happen the next time Cora's family prepares a meal together?

ELL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader. If you have a student who speaks Tagalog, she or he can help with the pronunciations of the Tagalog words in the book.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
 - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
 - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about what they admire about Cora or her mother in the story.
5. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies.

Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Student who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

Writing

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1 and 2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

Ask students to imagine that Cora's pancit is such a success that she decides to open a restaurant. Have students write an advertisement Cora can use promoting her pancit. What is in the dish? What makes it delicious? What makes it special compared to other foods? For ideas, show students food magazines or food advertisements.

Cooking, Culinary Science, and ELA

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1 and 2, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7 and 9)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. Have students research the history and tradition of pancit. What are its origins? How has it evolved over the centuries and regions? During which holidays is pancit eaten? What other dishes around the world are similar to pancit? How can people make different kinds of pancit? What characteristics make pancit so popular?
2. Bring in a package of the dry rice noodles that are used in pancit as well as other kinds of noodles (wheat, egg, etc.) for students to study. Have students make a chart comparing the types of noodles. Encourage students to observe their length, width, color, texture, smell, and so on. What happens when they put the noodles in water? How do the noodles change? Then have students compare and contrast two kinds of noodles using a Venn Diagram.

If you have access to cooking facilities, students might enjoy cooking some of the different kinds of noodles and having a tasting. They can add "taste" to their chart comparing the different kinds of noodles studied.

3. Encourage students to write a food review of pancit. If possible, make the pancit recipe from the book in the cafeteria kitchen for students to try, or have them cook the dish under your supervision. Otherwise, bring in pancit from a nearby Filipino restaurant or instant pancit that can be prepared in a microwave. Have students research and read examples of food reviews so they know what kinds of information to include in their own reviews.

Mathematics

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1)

(Mathematics Standards, Measurement & Data, Grade 3, Strand 2 and Measurement & Data, Grade 2, Strand 8)

(Mathematics Standards, Operations & Algebraic Thinking, Grades K–3, Strands 1–4)

1. Show students the book's pancit recipe and point out the note that tells how many people it will feed. Have students calculate how much they need to increase or

decrease the recipe so that it makes just enough to serve everyone in the class. How does changing the amount of people affect the amount of each ingredient?

2. What is the final cost? Have students make a list of all the ingredients needed and the quantity of each required and then look up how much each ingredient would cost at a local grocery or supermarket. Students can add all the prices together to figure out how much this recipe would cost to make.

If possible, take students on a trip to the store to see the ingredients and record the prices for the amounts they need.

3. Have students study the measurements in the recipe and imagine that they only have a teaspoon with which to make the recipe. Using a [measurements conversion chart](#), convert all the measurements to teaspoons.⁹ Guide students to convert all the ingredients with tablespoons to teaspoons. Next, convert all cups to tablespoons and then to teaspoons. Next, convert all ounces to cups, then to tablespoons, then to teaspoons. How does the ingredient list look now?

Arts

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strand 2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4 and 5)

1. Using the pancit recipe included in the book, students can create an illustrated step-by-step book for someone to use. Students can divide one or two sheets of paper into eighths with a pencil and cut the paper into the smaller sections. On each page students can write and draw a step. Once all the steps are finished, students can staple the pieces together to make a mini-book. For younger grades, each student or small group can write and illustrate one step in a larger class book of the pancit recipe.
2. Show students different kinds of pancit and draw their attention to the cooking styles, ingredients, and presentations that make pancit recipes unique. The Filipino food blog, Pepper, has a great [infographic](#) displaying the many variations of pancit.¹⁰ Encourage students to create their own. What meat, vegetables, spices, and other ingredients would they put in their pancit? Give each student a sheet of paper and draw a large oval in it to represent a bowl. Inside, students can draw pictures of food or add images cut from magazines that they would put in their pancit. Other art supplies may also be used, such as green tissue paper for lettuce and pipe cleaners for noodles. Let students present their creations to the class.

School-Home Connection

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)
(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strand 2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4)
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. Make photocopies of the pancit recipe included in the book for each student to take home. Encourage students to make the recipe with a parent or guardian. Students can interview family members who helped make or who ate the dish. How is this recipe different from dishes they typically make and eat? What was challenging about this recipe? What made this recipe tasty? In class, have students reflect on the experience.
2. Have students bring and share a recipe that is special to their families. For what occasion do they make this dish? What is the story or history behind the dish? Does the dish have any special cultural, religious, or holiday significance? Have students write and illustrate their recipes' ingredients and steps. Include each student's recipe in a class cookbook and make copies of the book for students to take home.

⁹ <http://startcooking.com/measurement-and-conversion-charts>

¹⁰ <http://www.pepper.ph/the-history-of-pancit/>

If time allows, have a classroom potluck. Encourage students to bring in their dishes to present to and enjoy with classmates.

3. Ask students to interview their parents or guardians about growing up. When was there a time they wanted to show they were ready for more responsibility? What could they not wait to do when they grew up? How did they show their parents that they were responsible and could be trusted? How did it make them feel to perform “grown-up jobs?”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dorina K. Lazo Gilmore grew up in a Filipino-Italian family with a kitchen filled with her mama, aunties, and grandmas. She loves to create healthy recipes and share stories in the kitchen with her friends and daughters. Dorina has a B.A. in English and Journalism and an M.F.A. in Children's Literature from Hollins University in Virginia. Dorina is originally from Chicago. She now lives with her husband and their two daughters in Fresno, California.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Kristi Valiant loves cooking, red walls, monkeys, and penguins, all of which are found in the book. Her husband loves hippos, so you may find hippos lurking there too. Kristi graduated from Columbus College of Art & Design with a major in Illustration. She has illustrated dozens of leveled reader books, and her illustrations can be found in magazines and on Christmas cards. Kristi grew up in Wisconsin, studied in Ohio, moved to Texas, spent a summer in China, and now lives in Indiana.

Book Information

\$17.95, HARDCOVER

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32 pages, 9 x 10-3/4

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RESOURCES ON THE WEB:

Learn more about *Cora Cooks Pancit* at: <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2840>

ORDER INFORMATION

On the Web:

<https://www.leeandlow.com/contact/ordering> (general order information)

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2840> (secure online ordering)

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