



HANDS ON!

Make a Memory Key

Tia Fortuna gives her niece Estrella the key to her casita. Here's an activity to create a special key for your home, with different options for how to display it.

Supplies:

- Paper
- Scissors
- Pencils / markers / crayons
- Colorful string or yarn (optional)
- Hole puncher (optional)

Draw an outline of a large key on a piece of paper and cut it out.

Think about this question: What is one place you've visited that you miss and wish you could return to? Write down the answer on one side of your key.

Now consider this question: What is one place you hope to visit? Write down the answer on the other side of the key.

If you like, you can add decorations to the key, like a lucky blue ojo (eye) or other favorite good-luck symbols.

Use the key as a bookmark, or put it up on your wall to remind you of these special places. If you like, you can poke a hole in the top of the key with a hole puncher, thread string or yarn through the hole, and make a necklace to wear just like Tia and Estrella.

Tia Fortuna's New Home

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How do you share hope with others?

A Spanish That's Jewish, Too

Some words in this story are Spanish, such as *hola* (hello), *adiós* (goodbye), and *gracias* (thank you), but others are Ladino, which was spoken by Sephardic Jews (Jews of Spanish and Portuguese descent) for centuries. When the Sephardic community fled persecution in Spain in the 15th century, they took Ladino with them; over time, Ladino took on elements from many languages, including Hebrew, Turkish, Arabic, French, Italian, and Greek. We can hear these elements in Tia Fortuna's blessing for *mazal bueno*, a phrase that combines the Hebrew word *mazal* (luck) and the Spanish word *bueno* (good), and when she says *mashallah*, an Arabic expression that literally means "God willing." Tia Fortuna proves that a language can be a home just as warm and inclusive as a pink casita. To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/tiafortuna.

Be Sure to Keep a Key

Tia Fortuna was born on the island of Cuba. When she came to Miami, she brought along special things to remind her of home, like the *mezuzah* (a small decorative case containing a written blessing) attached to her doorpost. She also took the "key to a home gone forever" and wore it on a chain around her neck. Many Sephardic Jewish families took the *yave* (Ladino for "key") when they had to leave Spain, in the hope that one day they would be able to return to their homes. These keys, often kept in a special drawer (*kashon*), were passed down from generation to generation. Even Tia's yummy *borekas* are a piece of Sephardic history that can be packed for a journey — though they will probably all get eaten before they can be hidden in a drawer!

Bringing Luck, Keeping Hope

Sephardic culture has many superstitions involving luck. Tia Fortuna wears lucky-eye bracelets that "tinkle and twinkle." The *ojo* (eye) hanging on Tia's wall is an ancient symbol of luck and protection in many cultures. As much as she believes in the *ojo's* magical power, Tia Fortuna also believes in the power of *esperanza*, hope. She tells Estrella, "We come from people who found hope wherever they went." Hope is something that dwells inside you but can also be shared with others, just like a cheese-filled *boreka*. No matter where in the world Fortuna's and Estrella's family travels, they know they will always have their Jewish traditions, the Ladino language, and *esperanza*, hope. After all, wherever you are, *las estreyas* (the stars) always light up the darkness.

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

WHAT do you see Tia Fortuna packing in her suitcase? Compare what she packs in her suitcase when she leaves Cuba, to when leaves the Seaway. If you were moving, what would you take with you?

HOW does Tia Fortuna make her new home comfortable? Do you think she will like living there? Why?

WHY does Tia Fortuna give Estrella the key to the Seaway? What do you think the key means to Estrella?