

LEVEL 3.5

DANCING RAINBOWS

Mott, Evelyn Clarke

It's the day before Feast Day. Curt and his grandpa, Andy are excited. Every year on June 24, their pueblo has a big party with food and dance. Pueblo is a Spanish word for town. Curt and Andy Garcia are Pueblo Indians. Their tribe is called Tewa. They live in San Juan Pueblo New Mexico. San Juan Pueblo is named after Saint John. On Feast day, native dances honor the pueblo's patron saint and celebrate the power of the summer sun.

Curt ancestors were farmers. they grew corn, beans and squash. Now most Tewas work at business outside the pueblo, but some still farm. "We must always take care of our land." Andy

tells Curt. "We must respect Mother Earth." Curt spends a lot of time with his grandpa. He learns so much. They share many laughs. Andy is an elder in his tribe. That means he is very respected. He is well known among his people as a great dancer.

"Dance with all your heart!" Andy says. All Tewa dances are prayers. The Tewa people dance to cure the sick. To bring the tribe together, to pray for good crops, and to have fun! Because the Tewa's land is very dry, every dance is also a prayer for rain. "Let's hurry grandpa!" Curt says. "It's time for the Buffalo Dance!" Curt and Andy rush to the plaza.

The plaza is the center of town. It's where the tribe meets. Three people dance in buffalo costume. Tewa's believe that people and animals once spoke the same language. This ended when

people started to lose respect for the animals. Tewas show respect for all the animals with the Buffalo Dance. This dance blesses tomorrow's Feast day. It is said to give the tribe strength and power.

The smell of baking bread welcomes Curt and Andy home from dance. For Feast Day, Curt's mom and relatives all help bake over seventy loaves of bread in the horno, and oven for baking bread, cakes, and cookies. It is shaped like a beehive. The horno sits outside the house. Curt's mom makes a fire to heat the oven. Then she cleans out the ashes and puts in the dough. The dough bakes in the warm oven. Curt's mom pulls out the hot bread. Dogs wait near the horno eager for a taste! The Garcia house smells of stew, bread, cakes and candy. Everyone looks forward to

tomorrows feast!

Andy wakes up early on Feast Day. He prays in the hills. He asks for a good mind, a good heart and a good life. He sprinkles some cornmeal as a gift to the earth. Today looks bright and sunny. But even if it rains everyone will dance. Teras believe rain is good luck. They say their ancestors come back as raindrops to help them live. Rainbows are also good luck. They join Mother Earth with Father Sky.

Soon all the Garcia's are awake. Everyone hurries to get ready. Andy's wife Verna sprinkles salt on his head. She says it keeps away bad spirits. Andy helps Curt put on face paint. Curt pulls a fox skin over his head.he puts on his Comanche costume. Andy fixes his bustle. He ties on his headdress. With everyone ready, the

Garcias head toward the plaza.

Boom! Boom! Boom! The drummers move through the crowd. Indians say drums have great power. They believe a drum sounds the heartbeat of Mother Earth. Drummers sing in Tewa. They sing of many things, plants, animals, clouds, and rainbows. They try to sing like birds. Bird songs are so beautiful.

The Comanche Dance starts. Over a hundred Tewas, from three to eighty years old, move to their beat of the drum. In this dance, they are imitating Comanche warriors, acting as they would in battle. The dances pray for the Tewa tribe and give thanks for their blessings. Colors twirl and swirl. Andy dances proudly. Tewas dance their thanks to the Great Spirit. They pray for their tribe's happiness. They pray for Mother Earth.

Jingle... Jingle... Jingle. Bells ring as Curt moves his feet. He thinks of his grandpa's words, "A Tewa never dances for himself. He dances for all things and people." Curt sends out prayers to the crowd. He wishes them a good life and a safe trip home.

In 1923 the United States made Indian Worship illegal. Tewas could no longer visit their kivas -A place of worship. Indians could not dance all Indian dances were seen as war dances. It wasn't until 1934 that Indians could dance again.

Now at Feast Day the flag flies proudly. Many Tewas have fought for the Country. Some dancers show pride for their country. Tewa women dance with grace. To the celebrate the power of the sun, they pain the red on their cheeks. The men yelp loudly for the Comanche Dance. They wear

fancy costumes. Tewa children dance with honor. They learn to dance as soon as they walk. That is why they are good, strong, dancers. Costumes have many meanings. Shells sound like waves hitting the shore. Tassels look like raindrops. Bells sound like falling rain Embroided designs look like clouds.the dancers go home for the feast. Tewa homes fill with friends and family. There is so much to eat. Andy says he doesn't hear any talking. Only chewing!

After the feast, everyone meets at the plaza. they dance again in the hot sun. as the sun sets, the dancers go home. Sometimes, Curt and Andy practice their dances. Andy teachers Curt. Curt respects his grandpa because he is very wise. Curt tries to be like his grandpa. Curt and his brothers do the Eagle Dance. They swoop, soar, land, circle

and rest. They keep perfect time to the beat of the drum.

The eagle flies higher than any other bird. Tewas believe that eagles are messengers. They say that eagles bring prayers to the clouds and messages back to the earth. Tewas dance to give thanks to the great bird. Andy started a dance group for Curt and other young Tewa dancers. The group often dances outside the pueblo, fairs, schools, hospitals and powwows. The day after the Feast Day, Curt dances at a city fair. He says it doesn't matter where he dances. His prayers still reach the clouds. Curt is proud to be a Tewa. His ancestors have given him so much; beautiful songs, and colorful dances. Curt is happy to follow his grandpa's footsteps. Dancing for rain and rainbows.