

Abuelos

Pat Mora

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In this delightful story two young children, Ray and Amelia, discover an old New Mexican tradition -- 'los abuelos' -- for the first time.

Long ago, in the cold midwinter of Northern New Mexico, village men would go up into the mountains, disguise themselves as scary old men and then go down to the village to see who had been good and who had been bad. The villagers would gather around huge bonfires, or luminarias, where the abuelos -- wearing masks and covered with soot -- would tease the children and then have them sing or dance around the fire. Afterwards everyone would enjoy a party with traditional treats such as bizcochitos (anise cookies) and empanadas (turnovers with sweet fillings).

This midwinter masquerade, which contains elements of Spanish and indigenous Pueblo culture, as well as sharing features common to solstice celebrations in other parts of the world, died out in New Mexico for a time, but has been revived in recent years.





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