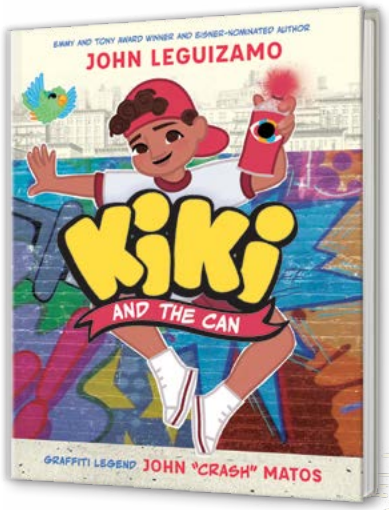
ACTIVITY GUIDE



English HC: 9781338785692 • $19.99
Spanish PB: 9798225061517 • $9.99
Ages 4–8 • Grades P–3
Also available as an ebook in English and Spanish

When the citywide mural project comes to town, and kids are given special permission to "paint it like it is," Kiki finds a spray can of paint, and turns his neighborhood into a colorful canvas that lets him express himself through his vibrant artistry. At the same time, he shows the world the super-power of his cultural community and celebrates what it truly means to be a hero. Golden Globe nominee, Tony Award–winning actor, and cultural historian John Leguizamo collaborates with his childhood friend, internationally renowned graffiti artist John "Crash" Matos, to bring their beloved childhood experiences to the page in this love letter to creative expression.

"This book fills a vital gap in children's literature by amplifying Latino voices. Kiki's engaging and visually captivating story introduces young readers to the rich history of heroes of color, encouraging them to believe in themselves and others—and empowering them with the inspiration and courage to pursue their dreams. ¡Sí se puede con *Kiki and the Can*!"

—DOLORES HUERTA
Legendary civil rights activist and labor leader

"What a fun, informative, and necessary book! John's narrative and Crash's art invite readers in from page one. I wish I'd had *Kiki and the Can* growing up, showing me and my friends that we've always had heroes."

—ROSIE PEREZ
Academy Award–nominated actress

"*Kiki and the Can* reminds us that every child deserves an opportunity to create a better world."

—RUBÉN BLADES
Grammy Award–winning salsa & Latin Jazz innovator

"Positive change begins with our youth. With books like this, we enlighten our children."

—ROBERT RODRIGUEZ
Acclaimed filmmaker and composer

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JOHN LEGUIZAMO is a cultural historian, actor, and producer whose commitment to illuminating Latin and Indigenous stories has been widely recognized through his work in the worlds of film, television, and stage. He is the recipient of a Golden Globe Award, Primetime Emmy Award, and Special Tony Award. His acclaimed works include the hugely popular Broadway production *Latin History for Morons*, as well as the acclaimed MSNBC docuseries *Leguizamo Does America.* He is the creator and host of the award-winning PBS program *Voces American Historia: The Untold History of Latinos* and serves as a founding trustee for the National Museum of the American Latino, whose mission is to celebrate the important contributions made by Latino and Latina heroes, history, and culture.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

JOHN "CRASH" MATOS has been credited as a pioneer of the Graffiti art movement, catapulting the art form to prominence throughout the world. In 2019, Crash participated in New York City's *Beyond the Streets*, a graffiti and street art exhibition and gallery that brought a massive new showcase to the evolution of graffiti and street art, securing graffiti's importance as a global phenomenon. Crash and his groundbreaking work have been featured in the *New York Times*, as well as in numerous international exhibitions. His series of custom-painted guitars for rock musician Eric Clapton received widespread attention and praise. Crash's commission murals can be viewed throughout the nation in a multitude of public spaces.

LIZ CASAL is a book designer and illustrator. She is the author-illustrator of the picture book *Baller Ina.* Liz is a second-generation Cuban American from Miami.

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Connecting Readers, One Book at a Time

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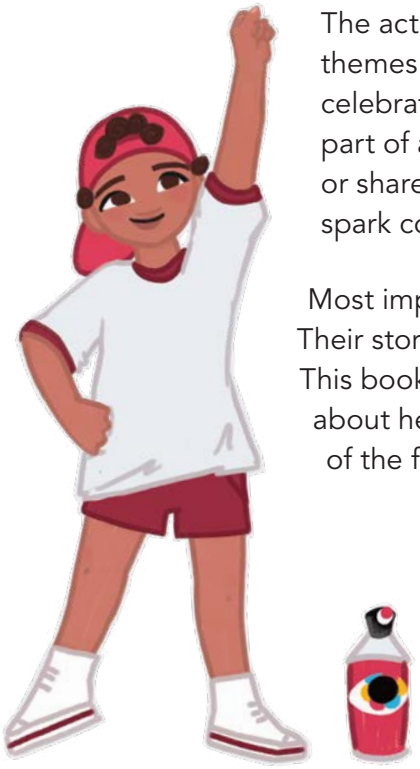
A NOTE ABOUT READING THIS BOOK WITH CHILDREN

Kiki and the Can is a story about curiosity, pride, and the power of discovering where you come from. When Kiki hears his friends talking about the amazing accomplishments of people from their cultures, he starts to wonder about his own. That curiosity opens the door to learning about the artists, musicians, inventors, leaders, and changemakers from Latine communities whose creativity and courage have shaped the world. With his spray can in hand, Kiki turns learning into art, transforming knowledge into a vibrant mural that celebrates culture, identity, and possibility.

When sharing this book with children, it can be helpful to approach it as both a story and an invitation. The book encourages young readers to ask questions: Who came before me? What stories live in my culture? How do creativity and history connect? There are no "right" answers, only opportunities to explore, imagine, and feel proud.

This story also gently introduces the idea that culture is not one single thing. Latine identity includes many countries, languages, traditions, and experiences. Children may recognize parts of their own lives in Kiki's discoveries, or they may be learning about Latine culture for the first time. Either way, the book creates space for curiosity, respect, and celebration.

Kiki's mural is especially powerful because it shows that learning doesn't have to stay on the page. Knowledge can become art. History can become color. Stories can become something you make and share. As children read, they may feel inspired to express what they learn through drawing, writing, movement, or conversation, just like Kiki does!



The activities that follow are designed to help readers engage with the book's themes in playful and creative ways. They invite children to reflect on identity, celebrate accomplishments, explore creativity, and imagine themselves as part of an ongoing cultural story. These activities can be done independently or shared with friends, family members, or caregivers, and they are meant to spark conversation as much as creation.

Most importantly, *Kiki and the Can* reminds readers that their voices matter. Their stories matter. Their cultures are filled with brilliance worth celebrating. This book is not just about looking back at achievements from the past, but about helping children see themselves as creators, artists, and changemakers of the future.

ABOUT THE WRITER OF THIS GUIDE: Dr. Karina Quilantan-Garza is a university professor and former school librarian from deep-South Texas who has spent nearly two decades working with bilingual learners. She believes in the power of stories to empower young people and amplify their voices.

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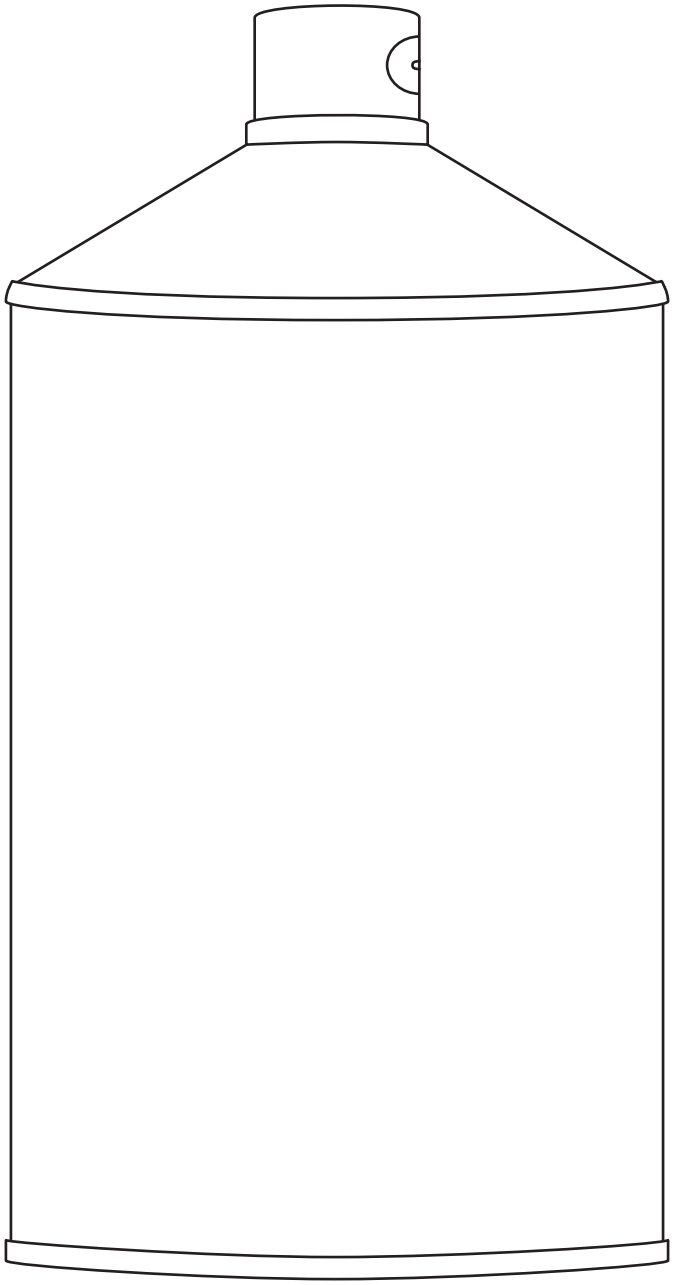
WHAT POWERS YOUR SPRAY CAN?

When Kiki gets permission to paint his neighborhood as part of a citywide mural program, his can represents creativity, curiosity, and self-expression. Imagine that the spray can on this page belongs to you. Color and decorate it to"fill" the can with words or art that represent the people, places, ideas, or experiences that fuel your creativity.



Think about:

- What gives you ideas?
- What makes you feel proud of who you are?
- What story does *your* spray can tell?

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A MURAL OF INSPIRATION

Kiki paints a mural to honor people whose creativity and accomplishments helped shape the world. His mural tells a story through color, images, and symbols. Create your own mural celebrating people who inspire you, for example: artists, musicians, leaders, inventors, family members, or people in your community—past or present. Fill your mural with details that show why these people matter to you.

Think about:

- Who inspires you?
- What qualities of theirs do you admire?
- How do their stories connect to yours?

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WRITING YOUR OWN STORY

As Kiki learns about the accomplishments of others, he begins to imagine what he might create one day. Stories from the past can inspire the stories we write for ourselves. On this page or using additional paper, tell your own story about what you hope to accomplish one day. You can draw, write, or do both to represent your vision! Your story might be about something you want to create, change, learn, or share with the world.

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Think about:
- What kind of story are you writing for yourself?
- What do you hope to accomplish?
- How might your story inspire others?

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A LETTER TO THOSE WHO CAME BEFORE YOU

Kiki and the Can celebrates the artists, musicians, inventors, and leaders who came before us—people whose creativity and courage opened doors for others.

Write a letter to those who came before you. You might thank them, ask questions, or share what you hope to carry forward. Your letter can honor their impact and reflect on what their stories mean to you.

Dear _____ ,

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

From _____
YOUR NAME HERE

Think about:
- What would you like to thank them for?
- What do you want to learn from them?
- How will you honor their legacy?

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BY EMMY AND TONY AWARD WINNER
AND EISNER-NOMINATED AUTHOR

JOHN LEGUIZAMO

Kiki AND THE CAN

GRAFFITI ART BY

JOHN "CRASH" MATOS

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