

“Allegra and Abuela Sing, Swing, and Clean!”  
By Talya Fleisher, Jaden Moore, Henry Masin

1. Allegra didn't want to clean her room. “Cleaning is so boring!” she said. (Allegra stands in a typical childhood bedroom, which is very messy. Clothes lie unfolded all over the floor.)
2. “I'd rather sing a song! Or go to the park!” (Allegra holds a hairbrush as a microphone, then imagines herself on a playground.)
3. “But Allegra, me reina,” said Mama, “Abuela is coming to visit for Purim. She'll be here very soon. We must clean the house to get ready!” (Allegra's mother stands in the doorway of the bedroom, hands on her hips. Allegra frowns.)
4. “Papa cleaned the kitchen” (Allegra's father scrubs a kitchen counter and washes dishes.)
5. “I cleaned the living room” (Allegra's mother vacuums a living room carpet and dusts a bookshelf.)
6. “Now you need to clean your room, Allegra. Start by folding your clothes.” (Allegra's mother holds up a tiny pink t-shirt with a map of Morocco printed on it.)
7. Allegra still didn't want to clean her room. But what would Abuela think if she arrived to see a messy room? (Allegra holds the pink t-shirt and looks at the room, despairingly.)
8. Allegra thought about this for a long time. It made her scared. (We see a thought bubble next to Allegra's head. In the bubble, Abuela stands frowning at a much messier version of Allegra's bedroom.)
9. Then came a KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK on Allegra's bedroom door. (The door shakes. Allegra turns to look at it, afraid.)
10. “Allegra! I missed you!” It was Abuela. (The door is now open and Abuela stands, grinning in the doorway.)
11. “Abuela, don't look at my room!” Allegra yelled. “I was supposed to clean it but I didn't.” (Allegra tries to jump up and cover Abuela's eyes. Abuela laughs.)
12. Abuela hugged Allegra. “Hermoza,” she said, “I understand. Cleaning a messy room is boring...” (Abuela kneels and hugs Allegra.)
13. “... alone! Why don't we work together?” (Abuela holds up a shirt. Allegra smiles and nods.)
14. “When I was your age,” said Abuela, “I did all my chores with my friends” (We FLASHBACK to Abuela as a young girl. She hangs clothes on a clothesline, smiling, surrounded by other girls.)
15. “In my hometown, a town called Tetouan, in Morocco, we lived in a big house with many other families. When we cooked, we cooked together. When we cleaned, we cleaned

together.” (A few women roll dough out in a kitchen, smiling. Little girls stand around them, helping.)

16. “We would sing ballads called *Canteras de Matesha* while we did our chores. And when we were done, we would swing!” (Young Abuela and other girls swing on a swing set in a courtyard)
17. Abuela started to sing a beautiful song in a different language, called Haketia. “Vivas tú, y viva yo, y vivan todos los judíos!” *Long life to you, long life to me, long life to the Jewish people!* (Abuela sings, music notes fill the room, Allegra claps her hands.)
18. They worked together to put away all the clothes, make the bed, and clean the floor, singing songs the whole time. (Allegra and Abuela fold clothes, make the bed, and vacuum the floor. Their mouths are open as if they are singing.)
19. And the room was clean before they knew it! (We see Allegra’s bedroom, sparkling and clean. Allegra and Abuela smile and admire their work.)
20. “Now that we’re done cleaning,” said Abuela, “We have to swing!” (Abuela holds up her finger like she has an idea.)
21. “But Abuela,” said Allegra, “I don’t have a swing in my house like you did when you were a kid.” “No,” said Abuela, “but you do have...” (Allegra frowns. Abuela places her hand on her shoulder.)
22. “... the park!” (Now we’re in a park. Abuela pushes Allegra on a swing. Allegra’s mother stands nearby, smiling.)
23. “Allegra, Abuela,” said Allegra’s mother, “you cleaned the room so fast! How did you do it?” (Now they are sitting around a dinner table in the clean kitchen.)
24. “Together!” said Allegra and Abuela. (They smile and bite into hamantaschen. Now Allegra is wearing her pink Morocco shirt.)

#### Glossary:

- Me Reina - A Haketia term of endearment meaning “my queen”
- Purim - A Jewish holiday celebrating the survival of Jews in Persia
- Hermoza - A Haketia term of endearment meaning “pretty girl”
- Tetouan - A city in Northern Morocco where many Jewish families lived in the 20th century
- Canteras de Matesha - Translation: “Songs sung in swings” - traditional ballads sung by Moroccan Jewish women in Haketia, sung after completing domestic tasks
- Haketia - A Jewish language spoken in Northern Spanish Morocco
- “Vivas tú, y viva yo, y vivan todos los judíos.” - From the song “Esta Noche de Purim”

Note to parents:

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We are excited to share our book, “Allegra and Abuela Sing, Swing, and Clean” with you and your children. As you read our book with your child, or let them read it on their own, we hope you find joy and happiness in the story, but also that the book can teach valuable lessons to your child. There’s no better way to educate your child and foster in them a love for their culture than through fun and educational children's books like this one. This book was inspired by stories told to us by a native speaker of the Haketia language, and we are so excited to bring this story to life for all children, whether they are Jewish or not, Moroccan or not, Haketia speakers or not. Language and literature are so important for ensuring that they will carry on history and culture through themselves while also creating memories they associate with books that they may pass on to their future kids. So on behalf of the other authors, we thank you and are honored that you have entrusted us to tell this story to your child.

Enjoy,

Talya Fleisher, Jaden Moore, Henry Masin

Author's statement:

Our interviews, particularly our interview with Oro, was very much oriented around the traditional songs and ballads sung in Haketia-speaking Moroccan Jewish communities and the customs surrounding those songs. Oro discussed many traditions she associated with various songs, and we settled on an excerpt from the ballads, which are called *Canteras de Matesha* as a musical inclusion for the story. This song, "Esta Noche de Purim," is a traditional Haketia song sung the night before the holiday of Purim, so we decided to orient the story around this holiday as well. We weren't able to learn much other information about Jewish Moroccan Purim traditions, other than the fact that communities would gather and bake together, so we focused the story on the relationship between Allegra and her grandmother, and tied in the concepts of community and preparational tasks for the holiday meal.

In the interview with Alicia, we learned that much of what Haketia sounds and looks like is essentially just Spanish with minor differences in consonant pronunciation. This means that not only does this story give the reader a lesson in Haketia, but also in Spanish. It also shows how interconnected Haketia is, as well as other Jewish cultures and languages are, with the surrounding non-Jewish population. Even though the community of Hakeita is small and therefore may not be as relatable to some of the readers, it's showing everyone how to take in the community that surrounds them and use it to grow as a person. Both the language and Allegra follow this lesson.

Haketia is a language that has very little likelihood of being revived in a significant way, due to the diaspora of its speakers from Morocco, so instead of writing this book with the intention to teach young readers the actual language, we opted to focus on the cultural aspects

associated with this language, as these are more salvageable subjects and more tangible to younger generations, particularly those descended from native Haketia speakers. However, we also included various Haketia terms and words, which can easily be picked up and adopted by children and parents alike. The Haketia language is spoken by a very small population today and is highly based in little tradition, but because of its similarity to Spanish, it is much more accessible to non-speakers than some other Jewish languages. This was an advantage for us, as it means that some of the loanwords in our book can be understood by children who know Spanish, as well as children who know Haketia.

We chose to use the grandmother character trope which is common in children's books, not only because it is a popular and effective story-telling device, but also because of the necessity of making a connection to the past, due to Haketia's decline in popularity. From readings about children's books and how to write them, we learned about how we should structure our story and what kind of vocabulary to use to tell the story that would make it appealing to a young audience. We tried our best to center our book around a relatable problem to young children, not wanting to clean their room, but to also tie in Haketia and Jewish culture. We chose to call the grandmother character "Abuela" rather than "Grandma," "Safta," or some other title, because we wanted to immediately connect her with the language and the Spanish Moroccan heritage.

We applied many teachings from class to our project. We incorporated the concepts of loanwords, postvernacular engagement, and quasilect when writing our children's book. We felt that the best story to tell would be one that was similar to those told to us by our interviewees. The rituals and routines Oro described from her childhood in Tetouan were the perfect catalyst for this story, and the flashback in the book is an image that is taken directly from our interview

with her. We are happy we could learn about this beautiful language and culture and share it with our readers.

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