

Grade 3: Unit 6, Week 3 Good Citizens

Read Aloud: **Clotilde Garcia: Doctor of the Barrio** by Sammye Munson

Wonderful Words: *opportunity, compete, medicine, pioneer, dominate*

Clotilde Garcia: Doctor of the Barrio

It was well past midnight. The telephone rang and Clotilde Garcia was awakened from her sleep. One of her patients was calling to say that her baby was coming. Dr. Garcia rushed to the hospital after a long day's work.

After delivering the baby, Dr. Garcia smiled at the newborn child. "My greatest pride is seeing a new being born into this world with all the great opportunities for him or her in the future," she said.

Dr. Cleo, as she was called, delivered well over 10,000 babies in her forty years as a doctor. She was sometimes called the "doctor of the barrio" because she practiced medicine in a neighborhood where Spanish was the main language spoken. She loved people and was a friend as well as a doctor to her patients.

Garcia wanted to become a doctor when she was a small girl. But it took many years for her dream to come true.

Her parents wanted all seven of their children to become doctors. Six of the seven succeeded. Growing up in a large, loving family was good for Dr. Cleo. She learned to be independent and think for herself. Competing with her brothers and sisters made her want to achieve.

While attending the University of Texas, she worked at many jobs. She was a bookkeeper, sales clerk, and library assistant. She studied pre-med to prepare for a career in medicine. But she also took education courses that would enable her to teach school.

After graduation, she knew she had to find a job. Her two older brothers were in medical school, and her younger brothers and sisters wanted to go to college.

It was not easy for a Mexican American woman to find a teaching job in those days. She was finally hired to teach in a two-room ranch school. She earned \$800 a year.

During World War II she married a soldier and had a son. When the marriage failed, she had to work to support herself and her child. She also helped her brothers and sisters.

She wondered if she would ever be able to go to medical school. Her brother, Dr. Hector Garcia, encouraged her to apply at the University of Texas.

Few women were accepted into medical school in the 1940s. Women were expected to stay home and raise a family. But Dr. Cleo applied and was accepted. She withdrew \$600 from her teacher's retirement to help pay her way.

The school did not encourage Dr. Cleo and the other four women who were accepted. The first year was very difficult. But the five of them realized that they could succeed and did not give up.

Dr. Cleo studied hard and graduated in 1954 near the top of her class. She was one of the first Mexican-American women to enter the medical profession.

She then returned to Corpus Christi to begin her medical practice. She soon learned that she had to teach her patients as well as treat them. Many of them had poor

nutrition. Dr. Cleo gained their confidence as she taught them about proper diet and how to care for their bodies.

She was always teaching her patients to develop good health habits. She was especially interested in seeing babies and children develop into healthy adults. Money was not important to Dr. Cleo. Keeping people healthy was her concern.

Dr. Cleo helped people in other ways besides as a doctor. She joined her brother, Dr. Hector Garcia, in his efforts to see that Mexican Americans were fairly treated. He organized the American GI Forum after World War II to help veterans receive education, employment, and health benefits.

When she did take a few days off, she studied Texas history. She was especially interested in the role the Mexican people played in the early days when Texas was not even a state.

After studying old records, maps, and books, she wrote and published five books on Mexican history.

This active woman worked with twenty-nine different community organizations. She gave her energy and time to further education, health, employment, and historical projects.

Her list of honors is too long to include. But two stand out as we look at her life. Because of her service to Corpus Christi and to Del Mar College, the college named a building in her honor. It is called the Dr. Clotilde P. Garcia Science and Health Building.

Another great honor came to her in 1984. She was inducted into the first Texas Women's Hall of Fame. She was given this award for her service as a doctor and for her

concern for the needs of Mexican American people. She also has been called a pioneer for women. She was not afraid to pursue a career in a field that men dominated.

In 1994 Dr. Cleo retired, taking with her over forty years of memories and expressions of love for the many people she cared for in her community. Her dedication to medicine and civic work remains a lasting emblem of empowerment to others even after her death in May of 2003.

opportunity

Define: An **opportunity** is when you have a good chance for success.

Example: After graduating from college, my mom had an **opportunity** to get a good job.

Ask: When have you had an **opportunity** to help someone?

compete

Define: To **compete** is to try to outdo or win something from another person or persons.

Example: Our math club was **competing** against one of the strongest clubs in the state.

Ask: Tell about a time when you had to **compete** with someone.

medicine

Define: **Medicine** is the practice of finding, treating, and preventing injury or disease.

Example: He wanted to practice **medicine** so he could help people stay healthy.

Ask: Who might be your patients if you studied veterinary **medicine**?

pioneer

Define: A **pioneer** is a person who is first or among the earliest in his or her field.

Example: George Washington Carver was a **pioneer** in finding which plants were best suited for farming in the south.

Ask: Why would you consider Neil Armstrong, who walked on the moon, a **pioneer**?

dominate

Define: To **dominate** is to rule or control.

Example: My brothers and I glanced at each other as our bossy cousin **dominated** the conversation at dinner.

Ask: Is it better to **dominate** or be dominated in a sport by another team? Why?