

SHANTÉ KEYS AND THE NEW YEAR'S PEAS

by Gail Piernas-Davenport

Adapted for Reader's Theater by the author, from her picture book published by Albert Whitman & Company, Morton Grove, Illinois, 2007

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PREVIEW: Shanté is looking forward to New Year's Day with her family, but the day—and the year—could turn out to be disastrous without her quick thinking.

GENRE: Holiday

CULTURE: Multicultural

THEME: customs, sharing, perseverance

READERS: 12 or more

READER AGES: 5-8

LENGTH: 10 minutes

ROLES: Narrators 1-4, Shanté Keys, Grandma Louise, Miss Lee, Mr. MacGhee, Señor Ortiz, Hari, Auntie Marie, Mom, Chorus (remainder of the class)

NOTE: *Shanté* is pronounced "shahn-TAY"; *Hari* is pronounced "har-EE"

NARRATOR 1: It's New Year's Day for the Family Keys.

SHANTÉ KEYS: (*happily*)
Happy New Year, Grandma Louise!
Mom said we'll eat lucky New Year's peas.

GRANDMA: (*expressing shock*)
Mercy, child! I'm weak in the knees.
I cooked lots of food, but forgot black-eyed peas!

Chitlins, baked ham, macaroni and cheese,
Greens and hot cornbread, but no black-eyed peas!

It's a year of bad luck if we don't eat cowpeas.
Quick—go to Miss Lee's and borrow some, please!

SHANTÉ KEYS: *(knocking on Miss Lee's door)*
Happy New Year, Miss Lee. It's Shanté Keys.
Gram wants to borrow some black-eyed peas.

MISS LEE:
My New Year is later because I'm Chinese.
I'll make crisp golden dumplings instead of cowpeas.

SHANTÉ KEYS:
I'm sorry to bother you today, Miss Lee.
Come join us for dinner so you can try peas.

NARRATOR 2:
Shanté thinks of the grocer's—Mr. MacGhee's.

SHANTÉ KEYS: *(approaching Mr. MacGhee)*
Your aisles are stocked with such delicacies.
Why can't I find lucky black-eyed peas?

MR. MACGHEE:
Back home in my Scotland, far overseas,
For New Year's we toast, and eat haggis and cheese.

SHANTÉ KYES:
Happy New Year, anyway, Mr. MacGhee.
Come join us for dinner so you can try peas.

NARRATOR 3:
Next Shanté goes to ask Señor Ortiz.
He's a wonderful chef with great recipes.

SHANTÉ KEYS: *(approaching Sr. Ortiz)*
What do you eat for New Year's luck, Chef Ortiz?
If you cook blackeyes, may I borrow some, please?

SEÑOR ORTIZ:
I am from Mexico, down by Belize.
For luck, we make noise and eat grapes like these.

SHANTÉ KEYS:
Happy New Year, anyway, Senor Ortiz.
Come join us for dinner so you can try peas.

NARRATOR 4: Next Shanté will try at her good friend Hari's.

SHANTÉ KEYS: (approaching Hari)
Hari, do you have lucky black-eyed peas?
For our New Year's meal, may I borrow some, please?"

HARI: We celebrate Diwali with other Hindu families.
We light lamps and eat sweets—but no black-eyed peas.

SHANTÉ KEYS: Thank you, anyway,
Come join us for dinner so you can try peas.

NARRATOR 1: Now Shanté is frantic; she's in a time squeeze.

NARRATOR 2: She thinks hard and rushes to Auntie Marie's.

(*Shanté at Auntie Marie's door*)

AUNTIE MARIE: I'd have too many if I cooked all of these.
Hon, take what you need of my New Year's peas.

SHANTÉ KEYS: Thanks and come eat at Gram's with me, please!

(*Shanté and Auntie back at Grandma's*)

NARRATOR 3: Grandma chops onions to cook with the peas.

NARRATOR 4: Auntie adds a coin for luck and a pinch of bay leaves,
And Shanté cooks the rice while Mom oversees.

MOM: Shanté, can you get the door, please?
Your friends are here for dinner, come to try peas!

CHORUS: (*happily, everyone together*)
The peas are delicious! We all can agree!
Happy New Year and thank you, Shanté Keys!