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## Immigration Picture Books by #ownvoices Authors

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## **Immigration Picture Books by #ownvoices Authors**

The call for diverse children's literature has grown in the last few years. The creations of spaces such as the *We Need Diverse* movement and the growing visibility for the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) diversity statistics has created an imperative to diversify classroom libraries in order to reflect the lives of all children. Studies continue to show us that classroom libraries continue to reflect White middle-class stories (Crisp et.al, 2016). Bishop's (1990) metaphor asks us to consider how children's literature can serve both as mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. The mirrors in children's literature are those texts that reflect the lives of children. Windows are texts that allow children to view the experience of others and sliding glass doors allows children to enter into a book and embody the characters in the story. These reviews focus on immigration picture books that can be used in classrooms with children.

#OWNVOICES picture books are books written by authors who share the marginalized identity of the character(s) or experience that they are writing about. These identities may include writing about race, class, gender, language, ability, etc. The #OWNVOICES movement was a grassroots movement that emerged as authors and children's/YA literature scholars called for picture books that authentically represent the experiences or identities of diverse characters in books . The hashtag was first used on twitter by Corrine Duyvis, a novelist and the founder of the website Disability in Kidlit when she made the following recommendation on twitter, "#ownvoices, to recommend kid lit about diverse characters written by authors from that same diverse group" (Duyvis, 2015). It's important to note that this movement does not seek to exclude authors from writing outside of their own identities, but it does seek to center the voices of authors from marginalized populations.

The use of the hashtag was to find a way that teachers could identify texts that were written by authors that shared the identities of characters they were writing about. It was also a call to teachers to be more critical of the texts that are read to children and to consider how not all texts that display Black and Brown children authentically depict the lives of Black and Brown children.

The reviews that we share here are picture books focused on immigration. These books are #OWNVOICES picture books as they were written by authors who share the marginalized identity of being an immigrant. It's important for teachers to share texts that portray the realities of immigration (Rodriguez & Braden, 2018) with children. We provide a short summary of the book as well as questions that teachers can ask when they read the books with students.

***My Shoes and I* by Rene Colato Laínez**

“Sana, sana, colita de rana, si no sanas hoy, sanarás mañana”. Mario is a little boy from El Salvador headed to the United States with his Papá to reunite with his Mamá. Before they start their journey, Mario receives a package in the mail from his Mamá. It was a pair of shoes! Mario and his shoes go on many adventures to get to the border. His regular shoes go from dusty shoes, to water shoes, to muddy shoes. The story details the hardships that families encounter as they leave their home country and it is told from the perspective of the little boy.

- What are some of the hardships that Mario experiences in the story?
- How do you think Mario is feeling throughout the book? Does he always stay happy?

### ***Somos como las nubes/ We Are Like the Clouds* by Jorge Argueta**

This book is offered in Spanish and English, *Somos como las nubes* (We Are Like the Clouds) is a collection of poems written to portray the journey from leaving their home country to the U.S. Many people flee from countries like El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico to find a safe place for their families. This book showcases the journeys in Spanish and English through the eyes of children.

- What do you think the title “We Are Like the Clouds” tells us about the stories ahead?
- What are some of the reasons why the families may be leaving their home countries?

### ***Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote* written by Duncan Tonatiuh**

Animals on a ranch are suffering from a drought. Papa Rabbit and some other animals leave their families to go and find an area to grow crops to earn money for their families. Pancho Rabbit was the eldest son of Papa Rabbit. Pancho Rabbit and the rest of the town were celebrating Papa Rabbit coming back home, but he never made it. Pancho Rabbit sets out to find his Papa and meets a coyote on his way. Coyote offers to lead Pancho Rabbit on a shortcut to his father, but had many demands of Pancho Rabbit for him to lead him. The book details the difficult journey that Pancho Rabbit goes through to go North and find his father.

- Who do you think the animal characters represent in the story?
- How do you think Pancho Rabbit felt when all those obstacles got in the way of him finding Papa Rabbit?

### ***From North to South/ Del Norte al Sur* by René Colato Laínez**

This parallel text written in English and Spanish is a story about a family’s experience of being separated by immigration. Jose and his parents live in San Diego, California where Jose and mama enjoy taking care of their garden. Jose and his papa wait for mama to come home

from work, but later receive a heartbreaking call that his mom has been deported to Mexico because she does not have the right papers.

- How would it make you feel if, like Jose, you were far away from someone you loved?
- What is the *Centro Madre Assunta* where mama is staying? How are Jose and the children who stay here alike and different?

***My Diary From Here to There/ Mi Diario de Aqui Hasta Allá* by Amanda Irma Pérez**

This is a story about a young girl named Amanda and her experience moving from Mexico to the United States. Her mama explains to her and her five brothers that they are moving in hopes of finding better job opportunities for papa and creating a new life together. She writes her thoughts and feelings about leaving her homeland behind in her diary and shares what she learns along her journey.

- How did Amanda's feelings change in the story?
- Why did papa make the decision to move? Do you agree or disagree, and why?

***Dreamers* by Yuyi Morales**

In this picture book, Yuyi Morales shares her story of immigrating from Mexico to the United States with her two-month-year-old son. Unable to speak English Yuri arrives in San Francisco where she and her son explore and learn about the new country they have moved to. She discovers her purpose in an unimaginable place, the library. She explains how books shaped her and inspired her to share her life story as someone with hopes and dreams of a better life; a Dreamer.

- What do you think it means to dream? What do you think is the message of the book?
- Have you ever been to an unfamiliar place? How did you feel?

Our goal for providing these reviews is that they will provide teachers with picture books that they can use focused on the topic of immigration with children. We believe that these books can be an asset in the classroom and can be used as a tool when implementing a culturally relevant curriculum. We also know that discussions about such a controversial topics may be difficult, but they are necessary since “for many students the immigration experience reflects their lived reality.” (Rodriguez & Braden, 2018, p. 57)

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