

## Second Reaction: A New Life: Dreaming of a Brighter Future

Morales, Yuyi. *Dreamers*. New York: Neal Porter Books, 2019. Print.



*Angelica Arizmendi*

Do you want to empower your young readers to embrace their differences and dream big? Prepare yourself for a powerful conversation of sacrifices and new beginnings. *Dreamers* by Yuyi Morales will help start the conversation about cultural backgrounds and making sacrifices in hopes for a brighter future.

*Dreamers* takes readers on an exciting yet difficult journey across the country to a land that is different from the one they know. A land with new people, places and a language foreign to their own. The brightly colored illustrations paint the optimism the characters have while on their journey to America. Morales brilliantly incorporates the character's native language throughout the book to further enhance the language barrier the characters must overcome. This picture book will make a perfect addition to helping any teacher diversify their classroom library. This is also a perfect book to use in the classroom while teaching character traits, character motivation and feelings, and theme. Young English language learners will instantly be able to connect on a deeper level with the meaning of the book.

Initially when looking at the book cover, I was excited to see that it was written and illustrated by a Mexican author. Knowing the background of my students, I was instantly excited

to share this book with my third-grade dual language class. The entire makeup of my class roster is Hispanic students, all of which read, write, and speak the Spanish language. I knew right away that this book would lend itself to a powerful conversation of our families' past and help us understand the struggles that helped get us to where we are.

As someone who has immigrant parents, I know the difficulties the characters faced while on their journey to America. I know that there are many challenges that my parents had to overcome to get me to where I am today. This was something I knew that my students and their families would be able to relate to as well. We had already had a conversation on where our families are from. My students were all excited to know that many of our families have roots in Mexico. We have discussed how powerful it is to be able to understand and communicate in multiple languages. We had also previously discussed how difficult it was for us to learn the English language while simultaneously speaking only Spanish in our household. I initially asked my students this question: "How would you feel if you traveled to a new country with people who spoke a language different from English or Spanish?"

Many of them mentioned that they would feel scared, excited and very nervous. Some said they would feel lost and confused. I made note of the emotions they would feel and followed up with, "What are some things that would make you feel more at home in this new country?" Many responded with food, family, and personal belongings.

As we read the book, we stopped periodically to discuss the character's traits and feelings. One student noted that the woman was very loving toward her child. Another student noted that the woman was very confused when looking at the map of the city. We were able to further talk about the struggles the characters faced, what the characters found comfort in, and the opportunity the young child now has because of his and his mom's courageous journey.

After reading the book, I asked my students if any of their parents or families had made a journey like the main characters. I allowed a few students class time to share where their families immigrated from and what had brought them here. One student mentioned that his mom and dad traveled here when they were young and left behind their families in Mexico to come to the United States to work. The students that did not know were encouraged to ask their parents about their journey and the dream they were chasing while on that journey.

Students enjoyed making connections between the characters and themselves. Many of them were still wanting to share what they knew about the dreams their parents had. However,

time was limited so I look forward to hopefully having the chance to let them write or record a video sharing their family stories and listening to the dreams they have for their future. Based on the powerful conversation and stories that were shared, I noticed my students felt a greater sense of pride toward themselves and their families.

### **Works Cited**

Morales, Yuyi. *Dreamers*. New York: Neal Porter Books, 2019. Print.

### **About the Author**

**Angelica Arizmendi** is a dedicated third-grade dual language teacher at Cooke Magnet Elementary School. She lives in Waukegan, Illinois.