

ForeWord Reviews

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

Mi Diario de Aqui hasta Alla

Amada Irma Prez

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“Will I like it?” Amada Irma, a young Mexican girl, asks herself. “Will I make new friends?” Young readers will relate to these questions, which exemplify the typical insecurities caused by the uncertainty of relocating to a new place. However, Amada’s questions are framed by the peculiarities of the immigrant experience, which add a new set of concerns: “Will I be able to speak my language? Will I always remember the place where I was born? Who will I become?” Amada asks and answers these questions while she recounts her family’s journey from Juárez to Los Angeles. Her father has lost his job in Mexico, and, motivated by what is best for his family, decides to migrate to where work is available—the United States.

Amada’s diary connects with young readers in her description of the common emotional difficulties of leaving behind a best friend and familiar surroundings. Through her young eyes, the reader learns about the socio-economic factors that cause immigration, and how economic circumstances directly affect families. Amada describes her father’s working conditions as a migrant worker in California and her family’s long wait to receive the “green cards” that will allow them to reunite with him. The girl struggles to maintain the connection between what has been left behind and the new circumstances that lie ahead

. This book is based on the author’s own experiences, and she includes a brief account of her own family’s journey to the States when she was five years old. Her previous children’s book, *My Very Own Room*, also richly illustrated by the same award-winning artist, received several prizes. The vibrant colors in Gonzalez’s full-page illustrations artfully capture the pulse of the story. The wavy, fluid lines transmit a feeling of movement and dynamism that supports the narration’s idea of connecting worlds. While the long text makes this book suitable for an older reader, the warm colors and dynamic illustrations will delight readers of all ages.

Amada’s journaling helps her to bridge her two worlds, and to adhere to the promise she made to her grandmother: “Never forget who you are and where you are from. Keep your language and culture alive in your diary and in your heart.” Written both in Spanish and English, Amada’s text shows that the new language and culture have not displaced the former one, and

that the new country has not replaced the old one. Both live simultaneously in her bilingual text. In the last entry she writes that her missed friends and beloved Juárez are “here in your pages and in the language I speak, and they are in the memories of my heart.”