

Juana & Lucas

by: Juana Medina (Candlewick Press, 2016)

Who?

The story of *Juana & Lucas* mirrors a *Junie B. Jones* or *Judy Moody* -esque story that takes place in Bogotá, Colombia. **Juana's** story begins with her introducing herself and listing off some of her favorite things like: Brussels sprouts (or *repollitas*), bike riding, reading books, and playing *fútbol* (soccer). Another one of Juana's favorites is **Astroman**: a superhero that wears a bright red intergalactic suit and shiny helmet and knows all the constellations from A to Z. Juana's goal throughout the text is to be able to visit Astroman at Astroland in Florida.

In addition to all of Juana's favorites, she also has an extensive support system. **Lucas** is Juana's loving pet, whom she describes as the smartest and most amazing *perro* ever born. Lucas is Juana's best friend. She loves Lucas because of how well he listens to her and because no one is better than Lucas at playing spies! Throughout Juana's story, Lucas is loyally at her side to cheer Juana up. **Juli**, or Juliana, is Juana's dear friend; they have known each other since they were 5 years old and share many interests and favorites. Juli and Juana sit next to each other on the bus and support each other throughout the school day—although their chattiness can sometimes get them in trouble!

Juana also has a very supportive family that includes **Mami**, and her **abuelos**; Juana's family encourages her to learn English though she has some doubts about the importance of learning another language. Juana describes her mom as the most important person in her life and admires her bravery and strength. Mami always shows Juana how to find happiness in the little things. Unfortunately, Juana's father passed away during an accident, so it's just Mami, Juana and Lucas in their home. However, her abuelos are very involved in her life and encourage her love for books. When Juana begins to struggle with her English and math classes, her abuelos encourage her to work harder in school and to continue practicing her English to be able to converse with Astroman at Astroland. Overall, *Juana & Lucas* is a very uplifting and relatable story that promotes language learning.

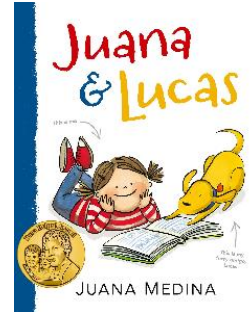
Where? When?

Juana & Lucas is a contemporary tale that takes place in Bogotá, Colombia, which Juana describes as a magical city, surrounded by the Andes Mountains, that is very near to her heart.

Key Themes:

Friendship: Friendship is a very central theme to this great read. Juana's relationships with her best friend, Juli, and with her loving dog, Lucas, are very important to Juana as she deals with the struggles and triumphs common to many young students. The support Juana receives from her two great friends is very admirable and can help young readers cherish the friendships and relationships in their lives.

School/ Language Learning: The recurring question that Juana asks everyone in her life is whether she should study English (as a second language) and why it is important to study another language. Juana struggles with learning the pronunciations of words in English, which makes her doubt the importance of language learning. This theme is very relatable for language learners of all ages and can help learners reflect on the value of languages.



Other resources to facilitate the use of *Juana & Lucas*:

To help students pick up the Spanish that Medina has sprinkled throughout the text, consider having students chart the Spanish terms and phrases they find in the text and use context clues or cognates/word friends to guess the meanings in English. Charting terms can help students identify prefixes and suffixes in Spanish and English. For example, the terms in the chart below can help students see that the suffix *-mente* in Spanish often correlates to the suffix *-ly* in English. This exercise can help students relate to Juana's struggles with learning another language.

Word/ Phrase in Spanish from the text	What do you think this word/ phrase means in English?	Was your guess correct? If not, correct it.
Inmediat <u>amente</u>	Immediately	😊
Especial <u>mente</u>	Especial <u>ly</u>	😊
Conversac <u>ión</u>	Conversat <u>ion</u>	😊
Com <u>er</u>	<u>To</u> eat	😊
Habl <u>ar</u>	<u>To</u> talk	😊

A reoccurring topic in *Juana & Lucas* is why it is important for Juana to learn another language despite the struggles she faces with it. Have your students track the reasons that Juana's friends, teachers, and family members give her throughout the text. Then, compare these reasons with the reasons that Auburn University lists: <https://cla.auburn.edu/forlang/resources/twenty-five-reasons/>; and with the benefits SpanishDict.com includes on this infographic.

To have students mimic Juana's way of introducing her friends and family members, have your students use the template below to present themselves, their friends and/or family.

Name:

Friends:

Favorite Foods:

Family:

Drawing:

Favorite Hobbies:

