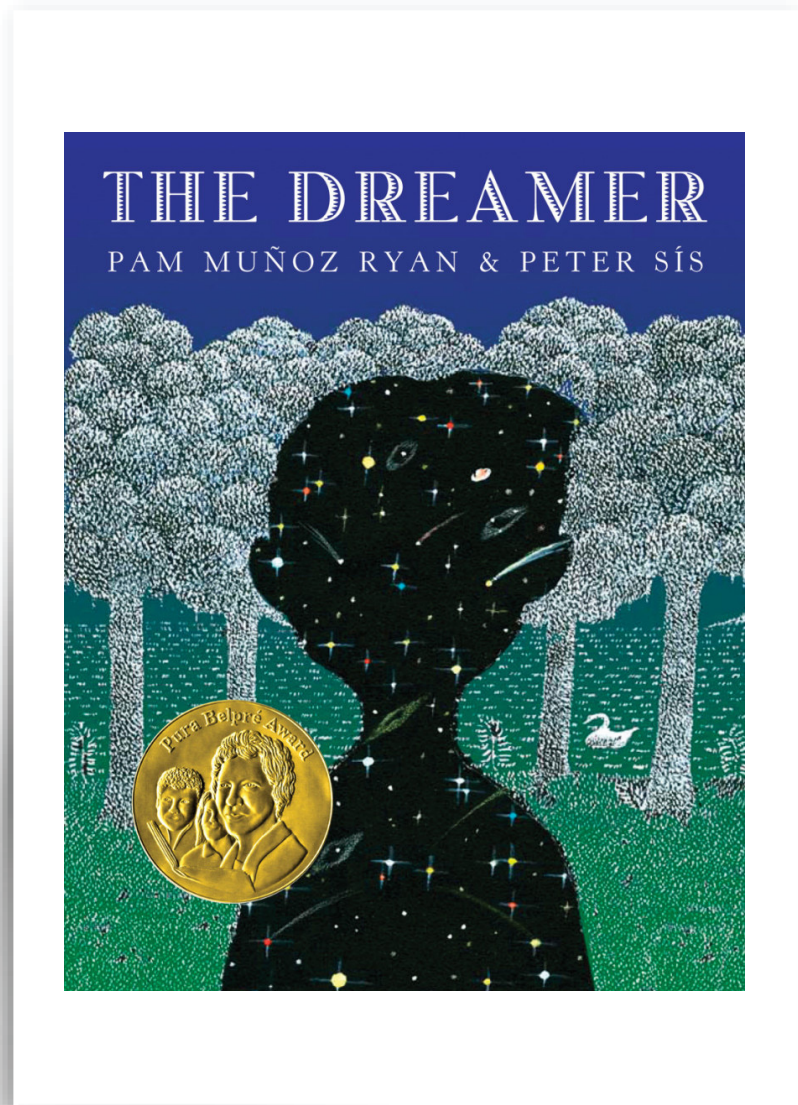


VAMOS A LEER

teaching latin america through literacy



VAMOS A LEER

Educators Guide

The Dreamer

Written by Pam Muñoz Ryan

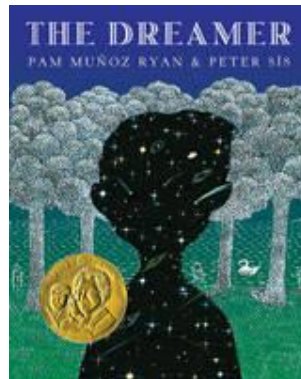
Illustrated by Peter Sís

Published by Scholastic Press, 2010

ISBN: 9780439269704

Ages 9 and up

Grades 4-9



BOOK SUMMARY

From the time he is a young boy, Neftalí hears the call of a mysterious voice. Even when the neighborhood children taunt him, and when his harsh, authoritarian father ridicules him, and when he doubts himself, Neftalí knows he cannot ignore the call. Under the canopy of the lush rain forest, into the fearsome sea, and through the persistent Chilean rain, he listens and he follows. Combining elements of magical realism with biography, poetry, literary fiction, and sensorial, transporting illustrations, Pam Muñoz Ryan and Peter Sís take readers on a rare journey of the heart and imagination.

AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS

- The Pura Belpré Award
- The Américas Award
- NCTE Notable Book in the Language Arts
- Kirkus Best Children Books of 2010
- Smithsonian Notable Book
- Boston Globe-Horn Book Honor
- The PEN USA Award
- Booklist Editor's Choice 2010

AUTHOR'S CORNER

A little bit about Pam Muñoz Ryan in her own words:

I was born and raised in Bakersfield, California. Until the end of fourth grade at McKinley Elementary, I walked to my grandmother's house after school, where my parents picked me up after work. . . One of my earliest memories about books is that my grandmother had a set of encyclopedias. I would tip each of these volumes out of its space and look at the top of the book to see if there were any sections printed in color. If I saw the definitive stripes, I'd take it off the shelf and go to those spots in the book. I studied the illustrated anatomy pages with the plastic overlays. I poured over the botanical plates. My favorite volume was G, because it contained an illustrated section of Greek myths. How I loved those encyclopedias! Once, I even tried to copy an entire page, but did not succeed.



The summer before fifth grade, my family moved across town to Irene Street, near the original Green Frog Market. I was the new kid on the block and the new kid in fifth grade at Longfellow Elementary. I spent much of my free time riding my bike to the East Bakersfield Library to borrow books. It was through books that I coped and fit in. I became, what most people would consider, an obsessive reader.

My first job after college graduation, immediately following the Viet Nam War, was as the Red Cross Coordinator for all of the Vietnamese playschools at the relocation camps at the U.S. Navy Base at Camp Pendleton. Shortly after, I married and moved to North San Diego County. I taught for three years as a bilingual Head Start teacher in Escondido. After my children were born (two girls and twin boys), I stayed home with them for almost twelve years. . .

By this time, my children were all in elementary school. I went back to school one night a week to get my Master's degree in Post-secondary Education, with the intention of someday teaching children's literature. A few weeks before I finished my master's, one of my professors asked me to stay after class. She wanted to know if I'd ever considered professional writing as a career or a vocation. When I told her no, she encouraged me. Coincidentally, a few weeks later, a colleague in education asked me if I would help her write a book for adults. She thought of me because several years prior, I'd written her as a thank you poem that she loved and had saved. I could not stop thinking about the possibility that I could be a professional writer. The seed had been planted and wouldn't stop growing.

I began to write stories for children. I submitted manuscripts to many children's publishers but with no luck. I wish I knew how many, but I didn't keep track and there were so many rejections that, at the time, it would have been painful to count. . . After a number of picture books, my editor at Scholastic, Tracy Mack, encouraged me to try a novel and I did. More novels followed. One book led to another. And I became something I'd never been before.

Today, I cannot imagine not writing. But I have a very practical approach to it. It is my job. One that I love. I want to deliver, for my publisher, for my reader, and for myself. People frequently ask me, "What is your motivation to write?" The answer is simple. I want the reader to turn the page. *(Taken from <http://www.pamMuñozryan.com/pages/extendedBio.pdf>)*

For more on Ryan check out the links below:

- [The Pam Muñoz Ryan website](#)
- [A Reading Rockets Interview with Ryan](#)

**USING THE
DREAMER IN
THE
CLASSROOM**

I'll be honest, before I read Pamela Muñoz Ryan's *The Dreamer*, I knew very little about Pablo Neruda. My knowledge of Neruda could be summed up in one simple statement: he was a famous poet from Chile. But all that changed with Muñoz Ryan's account of Neruda's childhood. *The Dreamer* isn't strictly fiction or biography. Instead, as it's described on the inside cover, it weaves together "magical realism with biography, poetry, literary fiction, and sensorial, transporting illustrations, Pam Muñoz Ryan and Peter Sís take readers on a rare journey of the heart and imagination." In the novel, Neruda, the famous Nobel Laureate literary figure, is dramatically transformed into the imaginative, reflective, shy, and loving child of Neftalí Reyes who would one day become the famous poet.

I find myself struggling to communicate how truly beautiful and captivating this book is. I read it in one sitting because I just couldn't make myself put it down. I've read many reviews and comments of the book that say it is for a "certain" type of child. I understand why they say that, yet I disagree. While "certain" children may take to it immediately, bonding with Neftalí easily, I believe others will be intrigued, as Neftalí's story shows them an entirely different way of looking at the world—one filled with wonder and awe at the more simple encounters of life. Many students may have once shared Neftalí's approach to life, but have forgotten it the longer they've been part of an institutionalized education system that focuses on achievement, competition, drill and skill, and regimented schedules. Illustrated rhetorical questions like "Which is shaper? The hatchet that cuts down dreams? Or the scythe that clears a path for another?" (p. 92-93) are sprinkled throughout the novel, representing a quite different approach to life.

As I read the book, I was reminded of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's discussion that one must be able to read the world before reading the word. There is a definite political component to Freire's theory that I believe the teenage Neftalí would have understood. Yet, there is another aspect of reading the world that I think young Neftalí actually embodies. He goes through his days reading his world—literally putting words onto the tactile and tangible things he discovers in the world around him. Peter Sís' beautiful illustrations bring Neftalí's inner ruminations to life. Neftalí's story is one of a true adventurer or explorer—but one who does no harm to the people and things around him. If we compare Neftalí with some of the more famous explorers often included in our curriculum, I believe we would find an alternative definition of what it means to explore. In many ways, the book is an homage to nature and the very tangible and tactile world around us. It would be the perfect book to read in preparation for a nature or science walk.

As Neftalí discovers the world, he's also discovering and accepting who he is. Often he finds himself at odds with his father, and suffers the consequences when he doesn't meet his father's expectations. Yet, Neftalí remains true to himself. While he is quiet and reserved, his story is one of strength and resistance. Our students need to read stories like this—both so that they have the strength to be and accept who they are, but also so they see the importance of accepting their peers as they are, even if they don't understand them. Readers watch as the quiet and shy young boy grows into a young adult, ultimately finding his voice as a famous poet and advocate for the oppressed.

LESSON PLANS & ACTIVITIES

In addition to the lesson plans and activities included here, check out the other resources below:

- [Scholastic's Discussion Guide for *The Dreamer*](#)
- [Pam Muñoz Ryan's *The Dreamer: Opportunities for Reflection and Extension*](#)—a great article on using *The Dreamer* in the classroom
- Scoop It's [Unit Plan on *The Dreamer*](#)

The following lesson plans are divided into three main sections

- Guided Reading Questions organized by the section of the story they accompany. These questions address content comprehension as well as elements of literary and descriptive language; foreshadowing; character development and vocabulary development.
- Reflective writing questions that can be used in multiple ways, including as individual closing assessments.
- Research projects involving important background information about Pablo Neruda and Chile included in both the Pre-Reading Activities and the History and Social Studies sections

Pre-Reading Activities

The Dreamer is a fictionalized biography of the famous Chilean poet Pablo Neruda. Pablo Neruda was not always his name, he didn't change it until he was older. As a child, his name was Neftalí Reyes. Before you begin reading the story with students, it would be helpful to provide a general introduction to Pablo Neruda—general facts about his life, what he is famous for, and photos of him. The following are books, links or other resources that may help you. Depending upon the age level of your students you could also have them do brief research projects on Pablo Neruda, creating essays or posters to present to the class. Some book and website resources are listed below.

- [Pablo Neruda: Poet of the People by Monica Brown](#)—A children's book
- [DFW International Tribute to Pablo Neruda: Educational Guide for Teachers](#)
- [To Go Singing Through the World: The Childhood of Pablo](#)

Geography

- [Neruda by Deborah Kogan Ray](#)—A children’s book
- [When I Was a Boy Neruda Called Me Policarpo: A Memoir by Poli Delano, Manuel Monroy and Sean Higgins](#)—A children’s book
- [Pablo \(Cuando los Grandes Eran Pequeños\) by Georgina Lazaro \(Author\), Marcela Donoso \(Illustrator\)](#)—A children’s book
- [Pablo Neruda](#)—An article from Nobelprize.org
- [The Book of Questions](#) by Pablo Neruda

The geography lesson below could also be used as a pre-reading activity, or an on-going activity as you read through the book.

The Dreamer takes place in Temuco, Chile where the poet Pablo Neruda grew up. Present a world map to your students and point out Chile. Compare the location of Chile to the location of your school. You could even mark Chile and your state to give students a visual connection to where the story takes place. Once students know where Chile is in global terms, present a map of Chile that includes as many of the locations mentioned in the story as possible—especially Temuco where Pablo Neruda was raised. As you read through the novel, point out or mark different locations such as: The Andes Mountains, the Pacific Ocean, or any other locations mentioned in the book. If time allows, have students research significant information about Chile and specifically Temuco. Have them compare and contrast Temuco with their own city.

Below are links to different maps of Chile.

- [Lonely Planet map of Chile](#)
- [Lonely Planet photo gallery of Chile](#)
- [National Geographic Guide to Chile](#)
- [National Geographic Interactive Map of Chile](#) with zoom features
- [Google Earth Map of Chile](#)

Literary Interpretation: Guided Reading Questions, Activities, and Writing Prompts

Common Core Standards Addressed:

K-12

Reading

Key Ideas and Details

- Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
- Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Craft and Structure

- Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
- Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter,

scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

- Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

- Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Rain

Pages 1-24

1. On the first page, Neftalí describes Chile as an arm of a tall *guitarrista*. What is a *guitarrista*? Look back at your map of Chile—do you agree? Do you think it looks like the arm of a guitarist?
2. Re-read the section where Neftalí describes what the numbers are doing as he tries to complete his math homework. Draw a picture of what the numbers are doing.
3. When Neftalí describes the footsteps he hears outside his room, on the page the word “clump” gets bigger and bigger—what does this communicate to the reader? (p. 4)
4. Look at the picture on page 11. What do you think this picture communicates about how Neftalí feels about his father? Why?
5. What do you think it feels like to be Neftalí? How would you describe him at the end of the first chapter?
6. When Neftalí speaks, the writer always repeats the first letters of some of the words. Then, on page 21 Neftalí says, “In his mind, it did not get stuck. He heard the word as if he had said it out loud—perfectly.” What does this tell the reader about how Neftalí talks?

Wind

Pages 25-40

1. What does Father think of Rodolfo’s singing? Why does he want Rodolfo to focus on business or medicine instead of music? (p. 27-30)
2. Why does Neftalí struggle to get to school on time? What does he do the way there? (p. 31-36)
3. What does Neftalí imagine that his mittens are doing? (p. 38)

Mud

Pages 41-78

7. Create a chart to compare and contrast the adults in the book—how would you describe Father, Mamadre, and Uncle Orlando? (p. 52)
8. At dinner the topic of the Mapuche Indians comes up. What do you think about this conversation? Do you agree with what is said? (p. 66-68)
9. Father is always telling Neftalí that he is absent-minded, that he spends too much time in idle thought and not enough time in the real world. But, think about Neftalí’s collections—what do they represent? Are they objects of someone who doesn’t think about the real world? (p. 72-73)

Forest

Pages 79-106

10. What do you think happened to Rudolfo during his trip to the forest with Father? Why do you think this? Did the author give you any clues?
11. Did Neftalí really ride on the beetle? What do you think really happened here? (p. 101)
12. Father always tells everyone what Neftalí will be when he grows up—but do you think Father really knows what Neftalí will be?
13. Do you think Neftalí would be happy as a doctor or a dentist?

Tree

Pages 107-120

14. What does the pinecone that Neftalí finds look like? How did he describe it? (p. 108)
15. Who does Neftalí hope to he will get to share with about the eagle and the pinecone? Do you think he'll get to? (p. 110)
16. What is the significance of the chucao bird that Neftalí hears in the forest? (p. 111-112) Click here to see a picture of this bird: www.arthurgrosset.com/sabirds/chucaotapaculo.html
17. What does Neftalí wish for? Would you wish for those things? (p. 112-113)
18. Why do the men laugh at Neftalí when he returns to the train? (p. 114-115)

Pinecone

Pages 121-138

19. What begins to happen to Neftalí in terms of his relationship to his father after his visit to the forest? (p. 122)
20. Who do you think the mystery giver is? Why? (p. 129-130)
21. Why do you think the sheep comes to be Neftalí's devoted companion or his best friend? (p. 134)
22. Do you think Neftalí is right to doubt his Father's intentions for the beach? What do you think is going to happen when the family goes to the beach for the summer? (p. 135)
23. What does the metaphor "pried a tiny splinter of doubt from his mind mean"? (p. 135)

River

Pages 139-178

24. Have you ever seen the ocean? How would you describe it? Do you think Neftalí's descriptions are good? Note: if any of your students have never been to the ocean, find a clip from the internet or a video so that they have a frame of reference. (p. 144)
25. What change inside of Neftalí continues to happen after his first day at the beach with his father? Hint: think about how he is interacting with his Father. (p. 175)
26. Why do you think that Mamadre never tells Father to stop the swim lessons?

Lagoon

Pages 179-240

27. Who do you think Neftalí identifies with more—his uncle or his father? Why? Think about his experience on the boat en route to the beach (p. 151) and what he says about Buffalo Bill to the librarian (p. 183-184).
28. What does conscientious mean? Think about the context that it is used in (p. 184).
29. What is *un escondite*? How do you know? (p.188)
30. Why doesn't Neftalí let Laurita come with him to the cottage? He obviously cares about her—he takes care of her in the ocean and he feels guilty about hurting her feelings, but he still won't take her with him. What is he afraid she'll do? (p. 196-198)
31. Who does Neftalí talk to at the cottage? Why do you think he does this? (p. 198-199). Have you ever had a pet that you were close to?
32. What does Neftalí find when he returns to the cottage? What has happened to the swans? (p. 205-206)
33. What happens to Neftalí's swan? Why do you think Neftalí is so upset? What did the swan represent to Neftalí? (p. 228)
34. Why does Neftalí love and hate the ocean? (p. 230)
35. What does Neftalí decide during his last swim of the summer? (p. 233)

Love

Pages 241-268

36. What does Guillermo want from Neftalí? Do you think Neftalí should do it? Why is Neftalí so upset about writing a letter to Blanca for Guillermo? (p. 243-246)
37. What does Neftalí's father say about the letter he writes for Mamadre? How do you think this makes Neftalí feel? (p. 251)
38. How does Blanca know that Guillermo didn't write the letter? (p. 256)
39. Does Neftalí have the courage to give Blanca the heart stone himself when she leaves Tumeco? (p. 264)

Passion

Pages 269-314

40. How many years have passed since the first trip to the ocean now? How do we know? (p. 270)
41. What advice does Augusto give Neftalí? Do you agree? (p. 273)
42. What does Neftalí want to do as a career? Do you think this would be a good job for him? Why? (p. 275)
43. Why do you think Rudolfo sticks up for Neftalí at the dinner? Think about what Rudolfo always wanted to do—did he get to do it? (p. 286-289)
44. What is the difference between the people who come to Neftalí's house and the ones who come to Uncle Orlando's protest meeting? (p. 296)
45. What word "eats" all of the other words that describe Neftalí's

- feelings about the Mapuche and the protest? What do you think this means? (p. 300)
46. What happens to the newspaper office? Why do you think Father doesn't try to help? (301-304)
 47. What does Uncle Orlando mean "many whispers can make a loud noise"? (p. 307)
 48. Think about what Neftalí sees in his uncle at the end of the chapter. How does this relate to the chapter title "Passion"? (p. 308)

Fire

Pages 315-353

49. Does Neftalí manage to stay out of trouble for a few months? What happens?
50. How does Neftalí Reyes become Pablo Neruda? Why does he change his name?
51. Knowing how the story ends, do you think Neftalí was influenced more by his Uncle Orlando or his Father? Why?

Reflective Writing Questions:

1. Have you ever had someone else tell you what you should be—like Father does with Neftalí and Rudolfo? What did they say you should be? How did it make you feel? Was it something that you wanted to do?
2. Why do you think it was so important for Muñoz Ryan to write with such imagery throughout the novel? Think about who Pablo Neruda was and what we learn through the novel about his childhood.
3. On page 118, Neftalí imagines the stories creatures would tell about his treasures. Pick your favorite treasure and write its story.
4. Neftalí has a perfect day in the woods exploring and finding treasures. What would your perfect day be? Would you collect the same treasures? What would you collect?
5. Think of all the things that Neftalí's father calls him—idiot, scatterbrain, fanatic. Do you think these are appropriate descriptions of Neftalí? How do you think it made Neftalí feel when his father said these things? Have you ever been called a name like that? How did it make you feel? Have you ever called someone else one of those names? Why? How did it make you feel?
6. Throughout the novel, Muñoz Ryan inserts illustrations with thought provoking questions or pieces of poetry (See pages 9, 16-17, 39, 75, 76-77, 92-93, 102-103, 119, 150-151 for examples). Which is your favorite? Why? How would you answer it? Note: I've scanned in a few of my favorites and placed them at the end of this guide. You may need to project these (digitally or by overhead copies) and analyze one as a class.

Writing Activities:

HISTORY and SOCIAL STUDIES

1. Write a letter to someone that you love, following the same process that Neftalí does. Neftalí starts with his mother. He writes all of the words that remind him of her, and then uses that to write a beautiful letter to her about how much he loves her. Think of someone that you love, then write all the words that remind you of that person. Use all those words to write a letter like Neftalí's.
2. Muñoz Ryan uses a great deal of onomatopoeia in *The Dreamer*. Look at examples on pages 6-7, 41, 111, 163, and 291-292. Then, watch the following [video from youtube](#). Based on what you've seen how would you define the word onomatopoeia? Now, look up the word and see how close your definition was. Create an illustrated page of your own onomatopoeia words. Share with the class

Common Core Standards Addressed:

K-12

Reading

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

- Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Writing

Text Types and Purposes

- Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Production and Distribution of Writing

- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

- Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.
- Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

The Mapuche

The Mapuche play an important role in the story, and in how Neftalí ultimately stands up to his father. Using appropriate online and print resources, research the history of the Mapuche. Answer the following questions: Who are the Mapuche? Where do they live? When and where was the Mapuche’s first encounter with Europeans? What are they known for or famous for? Describe and explain interesting and important facts about their culture.

- [The Mapuche Indians of Chile: Politics, Resistance, and Tradition](#)—An article by Laura Ann Moylan
- [Mapuche Indians in Chile Struggle to Take Back Forests](#)—by Larry Rohter, The New York Times - August 11, 2004
- [Being Indigenous, Chile Native Peoples](#)—website
- [The Mapuche People](#)—website

RESOURCES

Vamos A Leer blog

<http://teachinglatinamericathroughliterature.wordpress.com/>

The online accompaniment to the LAII’s Vamos a Leer teacher-oriented book group, this blog provides a space for exploring how to use literature to teach about Latin America, the Caribbean, and Latinos in the United States. In addition to promoting discussion, the blog also shares relevant resources and curriculum materials.

Latin American & Iberian Institute

<http://laji.unm.edu/outreach>

The Latin American & Iberian Institute (LAI) receives resources from the U.S. Department of Education to support K-12 teachers teaching about Latin America. Our goal is to provide a supportive environment for teachers across grade levels and subject areas so they can bring regional and linguistic knowledge of Latin America into their classrooms. As such as we provide curriculum materials, professional development works, and many more resources - nearly all of which are available on our website.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE



Written by staff at the UNM Latin American & Iberian Institute (LAI), **Vamos a Leer Educators Guides** provide an excellent way to teach about Latin America through literacy. Each guide is based upon a book featured in the Vamos a Leer book group. For more on Vamos a Leer, visit our blog at bit.ly/vamosaleer. For more materials that support teaching about Latin America in the classroom, visit the LAII online at <http://laji.unm.edu/outreach>. This guide was prepared 9/2012 by Katrina Dillon, LAII Project Assistant.