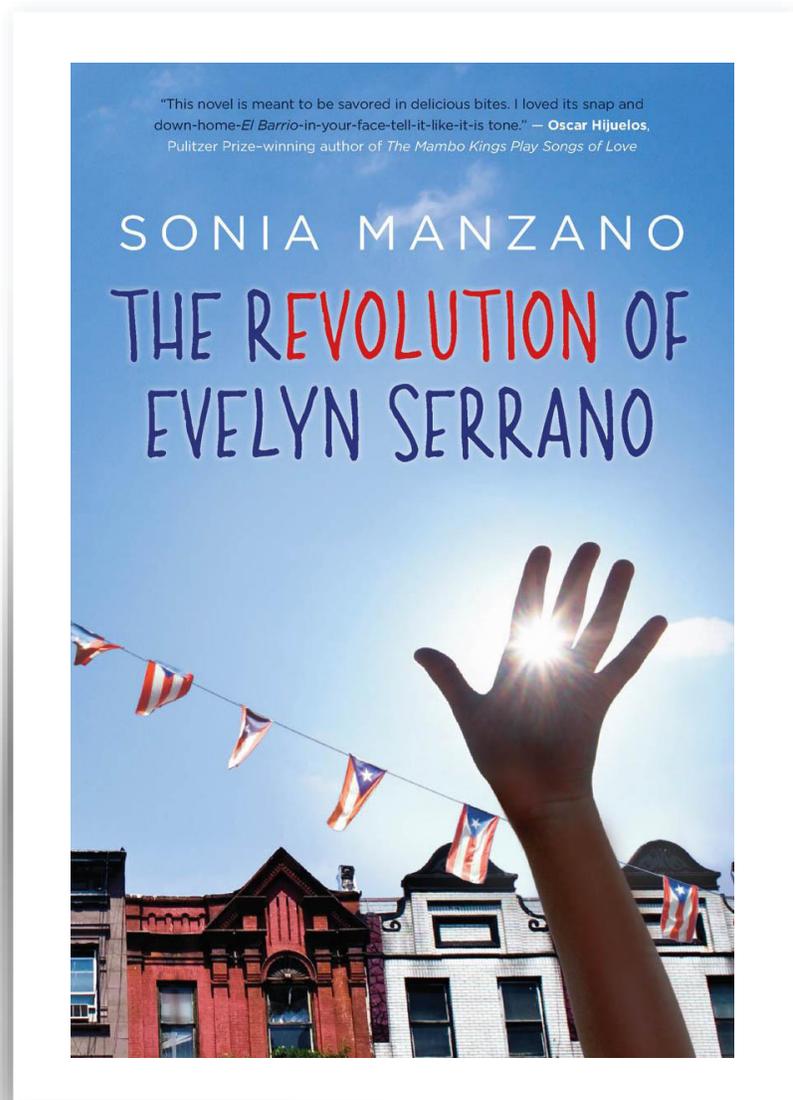


VAMOS A LEER

teaching latin america through literacy



"This novel is meant to be savored in delicious bites. I loved its snap and down-home-*El Barrio*-in-your-face-tell-it-like-it-is tone." — Oscar Hijuelos, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love*

SONIA MANZANO
THE REVOLUTION OF
EVELYN SERRANO



VAMOS A LEER

Educator's Guide

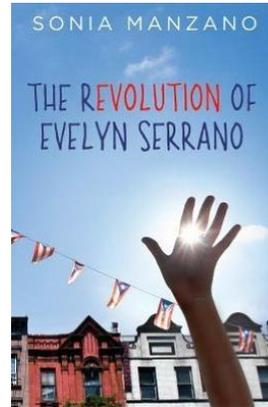
The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano

Written by Sonia Manzano

Published by Scholastic Press, 2012

ISBN: 9780545325059

Age Level: Grades 5 and Up



BOOK SUMMARY

There are two secrets Evelyn Serrano is keeping from her Mami and stepfather. Her true feelings about growing up in her Spanish Harlem neighborhood, and her attitude about Abuela, her sassy grandmother who's come from Puerto Rico to live with them.

Then, like an urgent ticking clock, events erupt that change everything. The Young Lords, a Puerto Rican activist group, dump garbage in the street and set it on fire, igniting a powerful protest.

When Abuela steps in to take charge, Evelyn is thrust into the action. Tempers flare, loyalties are tested. Through it all, Evelyn learns important truths about her Latino heritage and the history makers who shaped a nation.

Infused with actual news accounts from the time period, Sonia Manzano has crafted a gripping work of fiction based on her own life growing up during a fiery, unforgettable time in America, when young Latinos took control of their destinies.

AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS:

- 2013 Pura Belpré Honor Book
- 2013 Américas Award Book

AUTHOR'S CORNER

About Sonia Manzano in her own words:

Sonia Manzano is a first-generation-on-the-mainland Puerto Rican who has affected the lives of millions of parents and children since the early 1970s, when she began to play "Maria" on Sesame Street.



Manzano was raised in the South Bronx. She attended the High School of Performing Arts. A scholarship took her to Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, and in her junior year, she came to New York to star in the original production of the off-Broadway show *Godspell*. Within a year, Manzano joined the production of *Sesame Street*, where she eventually began writing scripts for the series.

Manzano has performed on the New York stage in the critically acclaimed theater pieces *Vagina Monologues*, *The Exonerated* and *Love Loss and What I Wore*. Movies include *Deathwish*, *Follow That Bird* and *Elmo in Grouchland*.

Manzano received The Congressional Hispanic Caucus Award in Washington, D.C., and the Hispanic Heritage Award for Education in 2003. She received an honorary doctorate in fine arts from Notre Dame University in 2005. Closer to home, she is proud to have been inducted into the Bronx Hall of Fame in 2004. Manzano has 15 Emmy Awards as a writer for *Sesame Street*.

Project Sunshine voted Manzano Volunteer of The Year in 2009. She, along with Al Roker, has been a Learning Leader reader for their annual event at Lincoln Center. She has served on the Peabody Foundation and Symphony Space Boards, and continues to be active with the Bronx River Alliance and The Bronx Children's Museum.

She is most happy to continue to be on *Sesame Street*.

Check out [Sonia Manzano's website](#) for more information about the author.

USING THE REVOLUTION OF EVELYN SERRANO IN THE CLASSROOM

This book accomplishes something that no other young adult book I know about does: it tells the story of the Puerto Rican civil rights movement during the late 1960s in New York City, while contextualizing it within Puerto Rico's own tumultuous history. The majority of the time when we teach about the Civil Rights Movement, it's limited to a few famous African-Americans. While this certainly doesn't do justice to the widespread social activism of the African-American community and its supporters, it also leaves out Latino/a involvement in this same social movement.

The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano is a quick, easy read for younger readers (Grades 5 and up; I'd say even earlier if used as a read aloud) that teaches a piece of the Civil Rights Movement which is frequently non-existent in our classroom curricula. Often times, if our students do learn about Latino/a activism, it's through a figure like Cesar Chávez, or focused on the on going debates around immigration. How often do our students learn about Puerto Rico? I never remember it being mentioned when I was in school, and, if I'm honest, I left it out of my own curriculum when I was teaching. Manzano's [website](http://therevolutionofevelynserrano.com/clippings.html) includes a section of newspaper articles and photos from 1969, which not only affirm the historical facts behind the book, but also provide students a sense of how the events discussed in the book were portrayed in the media (found at: <http://therevolutionofevelynserrano.com/clippings.html>).

Aside from the educational historical context, it's a beautiful story of 3 generations of mother-daughter relationships. Told from Evelyn's point of view, we see how Evelyn's own political and social consciousness unfolds in tandem with her growing understanding of both her mother and her grandmother. Evelyn's first description of her mother reveals the tension frequently common between teenage daughters and their mothers: "Why did Mami always have to be so beggy? I hated that beggy voice of hers. She sounded like a slave" (p. 1). Then, Abuela shows up to stay at their apartment: "At the kitchen table sat a woman whose eyebrows were drawn on with a black make-up pencil. On her eyelids was a thick spread of eye shadow the same blue as my snow cone. The woman's lips were as pink as the inside of a seashell. And, oh, her hair—it was as orange as Bozo's puffed up and piled on top of her head. . ." (p. 26). Not surprisingly, there's also tension between Mami and Abuela. But, as Evelyn grows closer to Abuela and learns more about her Puerto Rican heritage through Abuela, she also comes to understand more about Mami and why "She was always covering up what she didn't want to see, or putting something pretty on top of something ugly" (p. 5). Just as Evelyn is shaped by the historical context of her own life and the events she experiences, she realizes that the same is true for Mami and Abuela, and she comes to accept and appreciate them both for who they are. In learning about her mother and grandmother, Evelyn begins to understand her own history as a Puerto Rican-American and connects this to her own social activism. As Evelyn becomes more involved with the Young Lords, her world view expands as she learns what it means to be part of a community.

One of my favorite elements of the book is Manzano's descriptions. Like the quotes referred to above, Manzano's words do an excellent job of painting pictures in the reader's mind. Her descriptions of El Barrio really give students a sense of what Evelyn's New York City was like—the smells, the music, the buildings, and the people are described in vivid

detail. At times, the dialogue felt a little stilted, but as an adult reader, I may be looking for something that younger readers probably wouldn't notice. It certainly isn't enough to keep me from recommending the book. I hope it's one of those books that makes it onto our bookshelves and into our classrooms and libraries.

The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano received great recognition as the 2013 Américas Award Winner and a 2013 Pura Belpré Honor Book. I hope you'll consider adding it to your classroom library. Click here to be taken to our Educator's Guide for the book.

If you'd like to read what others have thought about the book, check out the links to other reviews below:

- [CBC Diversity Book Spotlight: A Coming of Age Nuyorican History Lesson](#)
- [Slatebreakers Review](#)
- [Kirkus Review](#)

And to hear more about what the author has to say on the novel, writing, and publishing, check out:

- [Q&A: Sonia Manzano on Identity Politics, the Bronx, Bloomberg, and Raising Kids](#)
- [Latino Writings Address Publishing Challenges](#)
- [Sonia Manzano Reminds East Harlem of the Young Lords Party](#)
- [Sesame Street's Sonia Manzano Gets Political With New Novel](#)

LESSON PLANS & ACTIVITIES

The following lesson plans are comprised of two sections:

- A short section of suggested activities that can be used before, during or after the reading of the novel which are organized thematically by different subject areas
- Guided reading questions organized by parts of the book and extended response writing prompts. These questions have been written to support the types of reading and critical thinking skills required in standardized reading comprehension tests. The following key words and skills are highlighted: analyze, infer, evaluate, describe, support, explain, summarize, compare, contrast and predict.

In addition to the lesson plans and activities included here, check out the resource that Sonia Manzano provides on her website:

- [Newspaper Articles from 1969](#)

For more general information about Puerto Rican history and culture, including the Young Lords Party, check out:

- [Palante! A Brief History of the Young Lords](#)
- [Young Lords Party 12-Point Program and Platform](#) (a digitized version of the Young Lords Party manifesto)
- [Center for Puerto Rican Studies](#) (dedicated to the study of the Puerto Rican experience in the United States, this New York-based research center holds the world's only repository of archival and library materials dedicated exclusively to the Puerto Rican diaspora and has a special section dedicated to "[Teaching U.S. Puerto Rican History](#)").
- [Puerto Rico and the American Dream](#) (includes oral histories, timelines, and a photo gallery)
- [Puerto Rico History Timeline](#)
- [PBS' Puerto Rico – A Timeline](#)

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.

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.

Language Arts and Social Studies

- 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

Pedro Pietri:

In the novel, the poet Pedro Pietri visits the church during the Young Lords' occupation and reads from his own poetry. Pietri is not a fictional character, but a real poet who was very involved in the civil rights movement of Puerto Ricans. One of his more famous poems is "Puerto Rican Obituary." The poem can be found [here](https://www.msu.edu/~sullivan/PietriPoemObit.html) at <https://www.msu.edu/~sullivan/PietriPoemObit.html>. Or watch a YouTube video with Pietri reciting his poem [here](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XCD0IsZ4HLL) at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XCD0IsZ4HLL>. Make connections between what he describes and what happens in Manzano's novel. What do you think Pietri is saying about the life of a Puerto Rican? Based on his poem, why do you think he would have been involved in the Young Lords movement?

The Young Lords:

An important part of The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano is the work of the Young Lords in standing up for the rights of Puerto Ricans. Using the following resources listed below, research more about the Young Lords. Find out what they accomplished, how they organized, what their purpose was and who was involved in the group. Working as individuals or in small groups, create a poster or paper to share your findings.

- ¡PALANTE, SIEMPRE PALANTE! The Young Lords by Iris Morales is a documentary about the Young Lords movement. More information about the documentary and how to rent or purchase along with a trailer to the video can be found at <http://palante.org/Documentary.htm>
- [We Took the Streets: Fighting for Latino Rights with the Young Lords by Miguel Melendez](#) is a book documenting the work of the Young Lords
- [Palante: Young Lords Party by Young Lords Party \(Author\), Michael Abramson \(Photographer\), and Iris Morales \(Introduction\)](#) This book features political essays by members, oral histories of their lives leading into the party, and more than seventy-five photos of their vibrant membership and actions.

Chapter One:

Guided Reading Questions

1. At the beginning of the chapter what is causing the conflict between Evelyn and her mother? (p. 1-4)
2. After reading the beginning of the book, think about the title of the first chapter “My Mother the Slave.” Infer: Why does Evelyn think her mother is a slave? Do you agree? Explain.
3. In what year does this story take place? (p. 2)
4. Why does Rosa Maria Evelyn del Carmen Serrano shorten her name to just Evelyn? (p. 7)

Chapter Two:

1. How does Evelyn’s first day at work go? Summarize her day. (p. 9-23)
2. Make an inference: Why do you think Señor Santiago is so sad? (p. 23)
3. Why do you think Evelyn tells Lydia that she doesn’t speak Spanish? Why do you think that makes Lydia sad? (p. 22-23)

Chapter Three:

1. Who does Evelyn find in her kitchen when she returns from work? (p. 26-27)
2. Describe what Abuela looks like. (p. 26-27)
3. How does Mami feel about her mother? How can you tell? (p. 28-29)

Chapter Four:

1. Why is Evelyn embarrassed of her Abuela? How would you feel if you were Evelyn? (p. 36-38)

Chapter Five:

1. Does Evelyn decide to make the key for Wilfredo? What would you have done in her situation? Why? (p. 42-44)

Chapter Six:

1. What does Evelyn find in the back of the photo album? Predict: where do you think these photos are from? What do you think they mean? (p. 48-49)

Chapter Seven:

1. What do Evelyn and her mom see on their way back to the bodega after church? How do the people in the bodega react to this? (p. 52-53)
2. What does Pops get so upset about—what is he afraid of concerning Evelyn? (p. 53-54)
3. What does Evelyn do to calm herself down when she’s upset? (p. 55-56)

Chapter Eight:

1. How is Dolores’ neighborhood different from Evelyn’s? (p. 56)
2. What do the Young Lord’s want according to their flyer? What do you think it means—“freedom for Puerto Rico” and “Enough exploitation of the poor”? (p. 57)

Chapter Nine:

1. What does Evelyn see happen between Señor Santiago and Angel? (p. 63)
2. What do you think of Abuela and Don Juan’s reaction to Señor Santiago’s actions? Would you respond the same way? (p. 64)

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3. At the end of the chapter Evelyn describes the music they hear as they return to their barrio. Do you hear music in your neighborhood? What kind of music? (p. 66)

Chapter Ten:

1. What are the college students doing this Sunday? (p. 67)
2. Who does Mami think the college students are? Does she think they are good people? Why do you think she's so skeptical? (p. 68-69)
3. What do they do with the garbage that's been swept up? (p. 71-72)

Chapter Eleven:

1. What does the newspaper say about the Young Lords and Sunday's protest? What did the Young Lords who were quoted say about the purpose of their protest? (p. 75-76)
2. What does Abuela tell Evelyn about the old newspaper pictures? (p. 76-80)
3. What does it mean to be a Nationalist? (p. 78)
4. How does Abuela compare the events in El Barrio with the events in Puerto Rico? (p. 78-79)
5. Why do you think that Abuela doesn't want to talk about the photos with Mami? Explain. (p. 80)

Chapter Twelve:

1. What does it mean to say "He threw me a flower? (p. 82-83)
2. How does the march change Abuela? (p. 89)
3. Why do you think Mami is upset that Abuela is talking about grandfather? (p. 90)

Chapter Thirteen:

1. When Abuela accuses Mami of "Tapando el cielo con la mano como siempre" what does she mean? Re-read page 4 for help with translating the Spanish statement. (p. 92)
2. Who do you think robbed the bodega? Do you think it was Wilfredo? Why or why not? (p. 94-95)

Chapter Fourteen:

1. Mami accuses Abuela of having a part in the robbery, why does she think this? (p. 97)
2. How does Mami deal with the conflict with her mother? Why do you think she does this? (p. 99)
3. How would you feel if you were Evelyn caught in between Mami and Abuela? How would you deal with the situation? How does Evelyn deal with it? (p. 99-100)

Chapter Fifteen:

1. Why does Evelyn walk back and forth in front of the Young Lord's office? What is she curious about? (p. 101-102)
2. Cleaning up garbage and feeding children breakfast don't seem like negative or threatening things, so why do you think so many community members fear the Young Lords? (p. 102-103)
3. Where do the Young Lords want to hold their free breakfast program? (p. 102)
4. Why does Mami fear the Young Lords? How does she interpret their efforts? (p. 104)

Chapter Sixteen:

1. Where is Abuela living now? (p. 107)

2. How did Abuela meet don Juan? (p. 108)
3. Why did don Juan keep his belt so tight as a child? (p. 109)

Chapter Seventeen:

1. What happens during the church service? (p. 114-115)
2. What do you think the Young Lord means when he says, "Something is wrong here! This is not a community!" (p. 114)
3. What is Mami worried about when the police start charging the Young Lords? What is Abuela worried about? (p. 114-116) How does this represent other differences between the two women? Explain.

Chapter Eighteen:

1. What is the mood at the march? (p. 121)
2. Who does Evelyn see that surprises her? (p. 122)
3. How does the newspaper portray Sunday's events? Do you think it was accurate? (p. 124)

Chapter Nineteen:

1. What are pasteles? How do you make them? Why does Mami make them every year? (p. 126-127)
2. How would you describe Mami's and Abuela's relationship? What was Mami's childhood like? (p. 129-130)
3. What is the outcome of the Young Lord leader's meeting with the pastor? Do you think the Young Lords will give up? (p. 134)

Chapter Twenty:

1. What happens in the church on December 28th? (p. 125)
2. What transpires between Mami, Abuela and Evelyn? (p. 136-139)
3. Do the three women stay in the church or leave? (p. 139)

Chapter Twenty-One:

1. Summarize the plot of the movie *The Enchanted Cottage* (p. 140-141). Why do you think this film appeals to Evelyn? How does it connect to what is going on in the church? Explain.
2. How does Mami respond when Evelyn asks if they can donate food? (p. 145)

Chapter Twenty-Two:

1. Why do you think Mami wants to go with Evelyn to the church? (p. 147)
2. What do Evelyn and her mother find when they get to the church? (p. 149-150)

Chapter Twenty-Three:

1. What has the Young Lords' program done for Angel? How is Angel doing now? (p. 151-153)
2. Who is teaching the Puerto Rican history class? (p. 155)
3. How does Evelyn compare her mother and her grandmother? (p. 155)

Chapter Twenty-Four:

1. What are the poet's poems about? How does the audience respond? Does everyone respond the same way? (p. 160-163)

Chapter Twenty-Five:

1. What does Evelyn find in the bottom of one of the clothes boxes that surprises her? (p. 168)
2. How do Migdalia, Angel and Evelyn respond to the movie they

**Reflective
Writing
Questions**

watch at the church? (p. 171-173)

Chapter Twenty-Six:

1. What donation do the Young Lords receive? How is it connected to Evelyn and her family? What does Mami tell them to do with it? (p. 178-179)

Chapter Twenty-Seven:

1. How do Evelyn and her family celebrate Christmas? (p. 180)
2. What does Mami do on New Year's Eve that surprises everyone? How has Mami changed since the day she and Evelyn fought over donating food to the Young Lords? (p. 184)

Chapter Twenty-Eight:

1. What happens when Mami, Evelyn and Abuela go to wait outside in front of the church to support the Young Lords? Who gets hurt? How does Mami respond? (p. 193-195)
2. What does Evelyn realize about Abuela from this experience? What does Mami have to explain to her? (p. 196-197)

Chapter Twenty-Nine:

1. How are the events at the church portrayed in the newspaper? How does it make Abuela feel? (p. 201-203)
2. How has Evelyn's relationship with Mami changed over the course of the novel? How has her relationship with Abuela changed? What has she learned about the two women? (p. 198-205)
1. Do you think that Evelyn is comfortable with her Puerto Rican heritage at the beginning of the book? How can you tell? Do you think her feelings change over the course of the story? How does she feel at the end of the book? Support your answers using examples from the text.
2. Mami and Abuela are two important female characters in the novel. Compare and contrast the two women—how are they alike and how are they different? What is Evelyn's relationship with each of the women like? What does Evelyn realize about Mami and Abuela by the end of the novel? How does her relationship with Mami develop and change throughout the book? Support your answers using examples from the text.
3. During a conversation with Evelyn about the Young Lords Abuela says "I just want to do mi parte" (p. 75). What do you think that means for Abuela? What does she dedicate her life to? As community members what is our responsibility? Do you think we should all have to do 'our part'? Explain your answer.
4. Think about how Evelyn describes her neighborhood: the smells, colors, music, people, shops, etc. Draw a picture of what you visualize as her neighborhood. Then, describe your own neighborhood—How does it look? Is there music playing? What kinds of shops? How is your neighborhood alike and/or different from Evelyn's?

ABOUT US & THIS GUIDE

The Latin American & Iberian Institute (LAI) receives resources from the U.S. Department of Education to support K-12 teaching about Latin America. Our goal is to provide a supportive environment for teaching across grade levels and subject areas so educators can bring regional and linguistic knowledge of Latin America into their classrooms. For more information and materials that support teaching about Latin America in the classroom, visit our website at <http://laii.unm.edu/outreach>

Written by staff at the LAI, **Vamos a Leer Educator's 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. This guide was prepared May, 2013 by Katrina Dillon, LAI Project Assistant.

To complement this guide, the LAI oversees the **Vamos a Leer blog**, which 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 shares relevant resources and curriculum materials. Visit the blog at the following address: <http://bit.ly/vamosaleer>.