

Dreamers

 written and illustrated by Yuyi Morales

Identities & Themes

- Latinx/e/o/a (Mexican)
- Immigration/Migration
- EL/Language barrier
- Family structure: Single parent
- Identity affirmation

Teacher Reflection Questions

1. Reflect on a time when you had to adjust to a new place or situation. Where did you find strength?
2. Reflect on a place or a time in which you felt you belonged. What and who created belonging for you?
3. What stereotypes or negative messages did you receive from home, school, society, and/or media about immigrants from Mexico? How does this book offer a different perspective?

Background Information for Teacher

For many immigrants or refugees, their lives are dominated by difference and the unknown. It is important to understand and acknowledge the stress and challenges some immigrant families face. This empathy and knowledge helps reduce bias and prejudice, and, for immigrant children in particular, it eases their transition into a new environment. It is also important to show the hopes, dreams, and resiliency that immigrants bring with them to make a new place their home.

Read the section “**My Story**” at the end of the book to students. The author mentions how she and her son were Dreamers of a different sense, so you may need to explain what a Dreamer is in the modern sense as well as what being undocumented means. See also the **Immigration/Migration Primer** in this guide.

Be sure to discuss the illustrations with students throughout the book, as they are full of symbolism. For example, nearly every page has a monarch butterfly on it. Monarchs migrate to and from Mexico each year. They often symbolize a path, transition, or journey, and they return to Mexico near Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead), symbolizing that loved ones will be reunited in Mexico and a reminder that life is a cycle.

Vocabulary

- **amor:** love
- **resplendent:** shining brilliantly; extraordinary or impressive
- **adios:** goodbye
- **corazon:** heart
- **migrantes:** migrants
- **Caminantes:** hikers
- **lucha:** fight
- **soñadores:** dreamers
- **awe:** a feeling of respect, fear or wonder
- **immigrants:** people who come to live permanently in a foreign country
- **ancestor:** a relative typically more remote than a grandparent

Anti-Bias Education Tenets

- Empathy & Understanding
- Healthy Complex Identities
- Respect Across Differences
- Notice, Name, & Reject Bias
- Responsiveness & Action

Social-Emotional Learning Competencies

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Management
- Social Awareness
- Responsible Decision Making
- Relationship Skills

Read this to the students before reading the book:

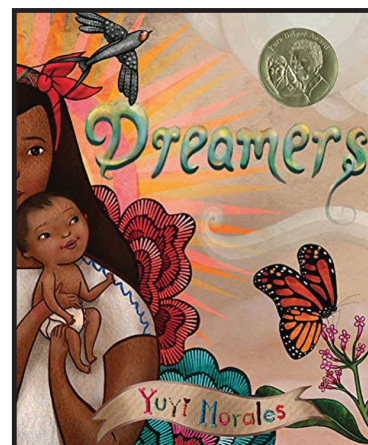
In this book, a woman and her baby come to the U.S. from Mexico. Feeling alone and unable to speak English, yet hopeful and filled with dreams, they find comfort and belonging through books at the library. What other things do they discover about themselves through reading books?

Discussion Questions (essential questions bolded)

1. **Look at the picture of the backpack of what the woman and her son brought with them on the third page. What do you think all the items in the backpack mean or stand for?**
2. On the next page, it says, “Adios corazon (Goodbye heart).” What do you think that means?
3. **As newcomers, what was hard for the woman and her son?**
 - On pages 7-8, the phrases, “Say something. Speak English. What?” are written backwards in smoke. What might this mean?
 - On the page that says, “We made lots of mistakes,” they are in the fountain.
4. What would you do/think if you were the officer who found them?
5. How do you think the woman felt?
6. **In the story, it says, “Books became our language. Books became our home. Books became our lives.” What do you learn from the books you read or have read to you?**
7. What helps you when you’re learning something new?
8. When have you felt “unable to understand and afraid to speak?” What did you do?
9. **Why is the title, *Dreamers*, important?**
10. **What are your dreams?**

Journal Prompts & Extension Activities

1. At the end of the author’s note, she says, “Now I have told you my story. What’s yours?” Draw or write your story. End your story with as many “We are” statements as you can like the author does in hers.
2. Draw or write what your dreams are for your future.
3. **Symbolism:** Discuss symbolism, and refer back to the first discussion question about the items in the backpack. Have students draw (or give them an outline of) an open backpack. Ask them to draw the things they would put in a backpack that symbolize, or stand for, important parts of themselves and their families - the things that make them who they are. This could also be made into a display in which the whole class contributes.
4. **Understanding prefixes:** Discuss the meaning of the prefix *un-* and how it changes the meaning of the word *believable*. Discuss the meaning of *im-* and how it changes the meaning of the word *probable*. Have students make a t-chart of things that are unbelievable and believable. If time permits, have students make another t-chart using the words *improbable* and *probable*.



Literacy Connections

- Personal narrative
- Identify details in the text
- Compare and contrast events
- Identify theme or main message
- Describe setting
- Use illustrations/pictures/photos to gain information
- Make predictions
- Make inferences
- Make text connections (to self, text, the world)
- Vocabulary in context
- Figurative language
- Rhythm and rhyming
- Repetition