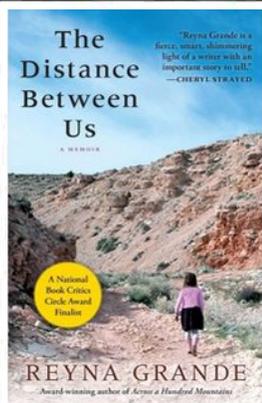


Proposed Core Literature Titles

The following summary is provided by the California Department of Education's "Recommended Literature List", and the top three Google searches of the book title and author name (e.g. The Distance Between Us by Reyna Grande) that produced a description of the title.

The Distance Between Us

Proposed Grade Level: 9



Title: The Distance Between Us
Author: Reyna Grande
First Published: 2012
Proposed Grade Level: 9
Lexile Measurement: 740-1010L

California Department of Education, Recommended Literature List:

Descriptions From Top 3 Google Searches:

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/13260227-the-distance-between-us>

From beloved, award-winning Reyna Grande. In her memoir, *The Distance Between Us* (Atria, 2012) Reyna recounts her experiences as a child left behind in Mexico when her parents emigrated to the U.S. in search of work, and her own journey to the U.S. as an undocumented immigrant at the age of nine.

This is a memoir based on the author's childhood. She was left behind with her two siblings first by her father, and then two years later by her mother. The children were left behind with their paternal grandmother who treated them badly, and despite getting money from their parents on a regular basis (remittances), she fed them

poorly. Eventually the children go to live with their maternal grandmother who is extremely poor. But this grandmother is loving. The book tells the story of the author Reyna's longing to be reunited with her parents. When eventually the children are brought to the U.S., they live with their father and his second wife. Their father is an abusive drunk, and the children suffer greatly at his hands.

Despite the difficult themes, there is happiness in Reyna's life. She is a survivor. She comes through it all although in the end, she feels she has lost Mexico. This is a book for those who want to understand the impact of family separation and the plight of immigrant children including educators, and other service providers. It is not a difficult read and would be appropriate for teen readers as well.

<https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-distance-between-us>

Reyna Grande grew up in poverty in Iguala for the first eight years of her life. Her parents went to the United States to pursue greater financial opportunities, leaving her and her siblings in the care of an abusive grandmother. When she was eight years old, her father brought her and her siblings Mago and Carlos to live with him in Los Angeles, subjecting them to a harrowing and illegal border crossing.

In Los Angeles, Reyna and her siblings adjusted to life in America, all the while fearing their controlling, alcoholic father's punishments for the slightest transgression. Reyna found creative writing as an outlet both for self-expression and as a means of proving to her father that she was taking advantage of the precious opportunity of a life in America. Reyna went on to attain degrees from Pasadena City College, UC Santa Cruz,

and Antioch College. The author of two novels and two memoirs, Grande is the winner of an American Book Award and an International Book Award, and she currently teaches creative writing at UCLA and several writing conferences around the country.

The events of *The Distance Between Us* span the entirety of Reyna's childhood and adolescence in Mexico and the United States, covering a period of about 20 years, from 1980—when Reyna was four—to 1999, when she graduated from college at UC Santa Cruz. Reyna's family's struggles with poverty, disease, and abuse are exacerbated by financial turmoil and recession in Mexico, combined with tense and tenuous border politics

that prevent them from legally coming to the United States. After illegally crossing the border with their father, it takes Reyna and her siblings years to get their green cards—all the while, their mother and father face the same struggle, and are eventually beneficiaries of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, which legalized undocumented immigrants who entered the United States before January 1st, 1982, but also required

employers to know and attest to their employees' immigration status and made it illegal to knowingly hire illegal immigrants. The act granted amnesty to many immigrants, but also caused an increase in racial profiling and discrimination against workers across the United States. The debilitating, dangerous poverty in which Reyna and her siblings—not to mention their parents and grandparents—were raised persists throughout Mexico and South and Central America, and remains a catalyst for many immigrants' journeys to "El Otro Lado." To this day, an increasingly violent, corrupt, and insensitive atmosphere at the U.S.-Mexico Border, fueled by racism and prejudice, keeps border reform as contentious an issue as ever.

<https://www.amazon.com/Distance-Between-Us-Memoir/dp/1451661789>

In this inspirational and unflinchingly honest memoir, acclaimed author Reyna Grande describes her childhood torn between the United States and Mexico, and shines a light on the experiences, fears, and hopes of those who choose to make the harrowing journey across the border.

Reyna Grande vividly brings to life her tumultuous early years in this "compelling...unvarnished, resonant" (BookPage) story of a childhood spent torn between two parents and two countries. As her parents make the dangerous trek across the Mexican border to "El Otro Lado" (The Other Side) in pursuit of the American dream, Reyna and her siblings are forced into the already overburdened household of their stern grandmother. When their mother at last returns, Reyna prepares for her own journey to "El Otro Lado" to live with the man who has haunted her imagination for years, her long-absent father.

Funny, heartbreaking, and lyrical, *The Distance Between Us* poignantly captures the confusion and contradictions of childhood, reminding us that the joys and sorrows we experience are imprinted on the heart forever, calling out to us of those places we first called home.

Also available in Spanish as *La distancia entre nosotros*.