

BECOMING NAOMI LEÓN

Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Award Nominee 2007 Grades 6-8

Submitted by Vickie Hardin, Reference Librarian, Bossier Central Library (Bossier City, LA) and Graduate Student, School of Library & Information Science, LSU
(Professor: Dr. Margie Thomas)

Becoming Naomi León by Pam Muñoz Ryan. Scholastic, 2004. 240 p.

Summary

Eleven-year old Naomi Soledad Leon Outlaw lives in a California trailer park with her tough, loving great-grandmother and her younger brother Owen, who is very bright but physically disabled. Gram encourages Naomi to think positively. Although Naomi does not feel like she fits in at school, she is happy living with Gram and Owen, and she enjoys soap carving. Her life is peaceful until her alcoholic mother reappears after seven years absence. Skyla, Naomi's mother, wants to take Naomi with her, but she does not want Owen. Naomi realizes that Skyla does not truly care for either of them. The turmoil that this creates compels Naomi to go to Mexico to search for her father. During her fascinating journey to Oaxaca City, she learns about the tradition of carving and visits the exciting festival called the Night of the Radishes. She finds her father and comes to an understanding of her cultural roots.

Awards

ALA Notable Books for Children 2005
ALA Schneider Award
Americas Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature
2006 Pura Belpre Honor Book
Book Sense Book of the Year Honor 2005
2004 Parents' Choice Silver Honor

Author's Biography

Pam Muñoz Ryan, has written over twenty-five books for young people including the novel, *Esperanza Rising*, winner of the Pura Belpre Medal. She is also the author of *Amelia and Eleanor Go for a Ride* and *When Marian Sang*, both former Louisiana Young Readers' Choice nominees. She was born and raised in California's San Joaquin Valley and worked as a teacher and an administrator before becoming an author. She can be contacted by email at her official web site.

<http://www.pammunozryan.com/index.html>

Other Titles Pam Muñoz Ryan

Esperanza Rising
Riding Freedom
When Marian Sang
Amelia and Eleanor Go for a Ride
Hello Ocean
Mice and Beans (Scholastic Bookshelf Series)
Nacho and Lolita

Related Titles

Pillars of Gold and Silver by Beatriz de la Garza.

Sweet Fifteen by Diane Ganzales Bertrand.

Classroom Connections

See Scholastic's Author and Books Online Activities.

<http://books.scholastic.com/teachers/authorsandbooks/teachingwithbooks/producthome.jsp?productID=12576&collateralID=11008&displayName=Discussion%25252BGuide>

This site includes all of Ryan's books together. You must scroll down to find *Becoming Naomi Leon*.

Connections by Elizabeth Dumas, Good Hope Middle School, West Monroe

Grade 6

ELA Unit 2: Fiction-Realistic Fiction

Activity 1: Characteristics of Fiction and Realistic Fiction. Excerpts from this novel can be read to illustrate some of the real-life issues found in realistic fiction.

Activity 3: Presentation of Stories with One Prominent Area (Plot, Setting, Character). This book can be used to illustrate the dominant presence of character through the story of Naomi, a young girl who learns to deal with her alcoholic mother and longs to understand her father and her cultural roots.

Art: Soap Carving

- Have the students learn to carve soap. See web sites below.

Social Studies and Geography

- Naomi goes to Oaxaca City in Mexico to find her father. She goes to the festival "The Night of the Radishes." Show the students the slide show on the web site listed below.
- Have the students research Oaxaca and other areas in Mexico and report on the culture and art.
- Have the students research festivals around the world and compare them.
- Naomi learns about her cultural heritage. Have the students research their own cultural heritage.
- Naomi's name is very important to her. Have students research the meaning and background of their names.

Web Links

Kidsreads.com – Becoming Naomi Leon

<http://www.kidsreads.com/reviews/0439269695.asp>

Site contains a book review.

Nancy Keane's Booktalks

http://www.nancykeane.com/booktalks/ryan_becoming.htm

This site includes a booktalk of the book.

Pam Muñoz Ryan

<http://www.pammunozryan.com/index.html>

Author site includes a list of all her books and related sites for each. Also included on the site are the author's biography and a section for questions and answers. Reading guides

for her novels are available in the “Books” section of the web site. Click on the individual book and scroll until you see the link “Discussion Guide”. The discussion guide includes questions and themes for *Esperanza Rising*, *Riding Freedom*, and *Becoming Naomi León*.

Reading Rockets: A Video Interview with Pam Muñoz Ryan

<http://www.readingrockets.org/books/interviews/ryan>

This video interview contains a chat with the author about many different subjects.

Scholastic.com – Authors and Books: Pam Muñoz Ryan

http://teacher.scholastic.com/authorsandbooks/events/ryan/teachers_guide.htm

This Scholastic site has a teacher’s guide for teaching Pam Muñoz Ryan’s books. A biography, booklist, interview transcripts, and children’s reviews are included.

Soap Carving

Ivory Fun

<http://www.ivory.com/fun.htm>

Instructions on soap carving.

Marshall M. Fredericks Sculpture Museum

<http://www.svsu.edu/mfsm/educational/tourprogramSC.html>

This site includes an excellent lesson plan for soap carving.

Oaxaca and Night of the Radishes

Planeta.com: Global Journal of Practical Ecotourism

<http://www.planeta.com/oaxaca.html>

This site has detailed information and photographs about Oaxaca.

Radish Night

<http://www.planeta.com/ecotravel/mexico/oaxaca/rabanos.html>

This site includes a wonderful slide show of the radish sculptures and the festival.