

TEACHER'S GUIDE



LEE & LOW BOOKS

Mamá the Alien/Mamá la extraterrestre

written by René Colato Laínez

illustrated by Laura Lacámara

About the Book

Genre: Realistic Fiction, Humor

***Reading Level:** Grades 2–3

Interest Level: Grades 1–4

Guided Reading Level: L

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points: N/A

Lexile™ Measure: AD560L

*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

Themes: Childhood Experiences and Memories, Conflict Resolution, Cultural Diversity, Dreams and Aspirations, Education, Families (Mothers), Home, Imagination, Immigration, Overcoming Obstacles, Latino/Hispanic/Mexican Interest

SYNOPSIS

Sofía has discovered a BIG secret. Mamá is an alien—*una extraterrestre!* When Mamá's purse falls on the floor, Sofía gets a peek at Mamá's old Resident Alien card and comes to the conclusion that Mamá might be an alien from outer space. But Papá doesn't have an alien card. Does that mean Sofía is half alien?

Sofía heads to the library to do some research and learn more about aliens. She finds out that some aliens are small and some are tall. Some have four fingers on each hand and some have large, round eyes. Their skin can be gray or blue or green. But Mamá looks like human mother! Could she really be an alien from another planet?

Sofía is still puzzling out this mystery when she sees an alien-looking Mamá one night. It turns out Mamá is doing a beauty treatment so she will look her best for her citizenship ceremony. That's when Sofía realizes that in English, an alien can be someone from another planet, and it can also be a person from another country. Just like Mamá!

Filled with imagination and humor, *Mamá the Alien/Mamá la extraterrestre* is a sweet and timely immigration story, and a tender celebration of family, no matter which country (or planet) you come from.



BACKGROUND

Citizenship: A citizen is a participatory member of a political community and citizenship is gained by meeting the legal requirements of a national, state, or local government. A person may become a United States citizen either at birth or after birth (<http://www.uscis.gov/us-citizenship>). There are various paths (<http://www.uscis.gov/us-citizenship/citizenship-through-naturalization/path-us-citizenship>) to obtaining US citizenship after birth, the most common being naturalization (<http://www.uscis.gov/us-citizenship/citizenship-through-naturalization>), the process by which United States citizenship is granted to a foreign born person after he or she fulfills the requirements established by Congress in the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). Explore 10 Steps to Naturalization to better understand the process of becoming a United States citizen (<http://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/files/M-1051.pdf>).

Immigration: Immigration is the act of entering and permanently residing in a different country from the one in which a person was born. There are many reasons why people immigrate from one country to another: to escape persecution, conflict, poverty, or violence; to find refuge after being displaced due to environmental factors; to seek better education, healthcare, or job opportunities; or for personal reasons (<http://education.nationalgeographic.com/topics/immigration/>).

Immigrant: An immigrant is someone who has been granted the right by United States Citizenship and Immigrations Services (USCIS) to reside permanently in the United States and to work without restrictions in the US (<http://www.irs.gov/Individuals/International-Taxpayers/Immigration-Terms-and-Definitions-Involving-Aliens>). Such a person is also known as a Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR). Eventually all immigrants are issued a Green Card, which is the evidence of his or her LPR status.

Immigration Papers: A Green Card holder is a permanent resident who has been granted permission to live and work in the United States (<http://www.uscis.gov/greencard>). Proof of this status is a Permanent Resident Card, also known as a Green Card, which must be renewed every ten years. Permanent Residents are allowed to live and work in the United States on a permanent basis, but are not allowed to vote in

elections limited to US citizens (<https://www.uscis.gov/tools/glossary/permanent-resident-alien>).

Homophone, Homograph, Homonym: Homophones are words that sound the same but have different meanings and are not necessarily spelled the same. For example: tier (n.) and tear (n.). Homographs are words that are spelled the same but have different meanings and do not necessarily sound the same. For example: dove (n.) and dove (v.). Homonyms are words that sound the same and are spelled the same but have different meanings. Homophones and homographs are both homonyms. Example: tie (race, n.) and tie (clothing, n.).

From the Author's Note: When I arrived in the United States from El Salvador in 1985, I became an immigrant, and my dream was to have a card that allowed me to live and work here. That card was called a green card because when it was introduced in 1946 as the Alien Registration Receipt, it was actually green. In 1977 the card was renamed the Resident Alien card.

The first person in my family to receive a Resident Alien card was my mother. In 1995 I received my card. But the card was no longer green. It was pink. In 2002, when I became a United States citizen, I exchanged my card for a Citizenship Certificate.

Since 1997 the card has been called a Permanent Resident card. It is mostly white, with a green band across the top. The card has to be renewed every ten years.

The term *alien* is used in the US media to refer to a resident who was born in another country. Every year thousands of people from other countries come to live in the United States. In many cases one or more members of a family may be immigrants, while other members are natural-born citizens or naturalized citizens.

In this story I introduce the concepts of immigration and citizenship. I want readers to know that immigrants may be referred to as aliens, but this only means they come from other countries. We are all citizens of planet Earth.



VOCABULARY

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below. Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

Content Specific

Alien/alien, Mamá's Twin, two peas in a pod, outer space, antennas, flying saucer, belly button, curlers, cucumber, beauty treatment, Resident Alien card, Permanent Resident card

Academic

discovered, bounced, spilled, believe, dropped, wonderful, headed, careful, exactly, alike, pretend, wondered, favorite, shoot, research, round, hiding, granted, permission, instead, transformed, strange, borrow, hidden, ceremony, transformation, recognize, sleepy, tiptoed, stretched, long, thin, bumps, deep, trembling, courage, switch, screamed, renewed, shouted, celebrate, special, library, country, government, citizen, planet, Pledge of Allegiance

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strands 4–5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

1. Take a look at the front and back covers. Take a picture walk. Ask students to make a prediction. Do you think this book will be fiction or nonfiction? What makes you think so? What clues do the author and illustrator give to help you know whether this book will be fiction or nonfiction?
2. What do you know about immigration?
3. Was anyone in your family who is now living in the United States born in another country? Do you know anyone who has immigrated to the United States? When did he or she come to this country? What are some reasons why you think people immigrate to the US?
4. What do you think of when you hear the word *alien*? What images come to mind? Where are aliens from? Where might you find an alien? How would you feel if you met an alien?
5. Can you think of any words that are spelled the same and sound the same but have different meanings? What are they? How are these words similar? How are they different?
6. As a hook for students, consider showing them the book trailer created by author René Colato Laínez posted on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DAnIHUrwLqQ>.

Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1, Craft & Structure, Strand 5, and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Read and talk about the title of the book. Ask students what they think the title *Mamá the Alien/Mamá la extraterrestre* means. Then ask them what they think this book will most likely be about. What situations might be talked about in the text? What do you think might happen? What information do you think you might learn? What makes you think that?

Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, title page, Spanish glossary, dedications, illustrations, English and Spanish text, author's note, and author's and illustrator's bios on the back flap of the jacket.



Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out about:

- the “big secret” Sofía learns about her mother
- how Sofía solves the puzzle about her mother
- what a Resident Alien and Permanent Resident card are
- what the word alien means

Encourage students to consider why the author, René Colato Laínez, would want to share this story with young people. Have students consider why he wrote the text in both Spanish and English.

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses.

To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite evidence with their answers.

Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3 and Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strand 4)

- From whose point of view or perspective is the story told?
- What is the “BIG” secret Sofía discovers? What does she find? How does she find it?
- How does Sofía react when she learns Mamá’s secret?
- What was Mamá’s dream when she first came to the United States?
- Why does Mamá keep the card in her purse?
- What is Sofía’s dream?
- Why doesn’t Papá have a card? Why doesn’t Sofía have a card?
- Why does Papá call Sofía “Mamá’s Twin”? What does this make Sofía think?
- How does Sofía like to play pretend?
- What languages does Sofía think Mamá knows?
- Why does Sofía go to the library?
- What does Sofía learn about aliens through her research? How does she describe them? What do they look like?
- What does Sofía infer about Mamá’s human looks? Why does she look like a normal human mother?
- According to Sofía, what happens to Mamá at night?
- Why does Sofía want to keep her basketball in her room?
- Why does Sofía believe she is half alien? How does she come to this conclusion?
- Why does Sofía go into the kitchen at night? What does she hear?
- What is Mamá referring to when she says “I need to get something from the kitchen to help me prepare for my transformation. You will not recognize me on my big day!”? What does Sofía think she means? To what transformation is Mamá referring?
- Look at the illustration of Sofía entering the kitchen at night. What does Mamá’s shadow look like?
- Why does Sofía scream when she turns on the kitchen light? What does she think she sees? Why?
- Why does Mamá have a cucumber in her hand? What is she doing and why?
- What country is Mamá from? How do you know?
- What does the word *alien* mean? What are the different definitions for this word?
- What is a Resident Alien card? What is a Permanent Resident card?



★“A delightful, original, clever, purposeful, multicultural alien tale.”

–**Kirkus Reviews, starred review**

“[T]he portrayal of a family member on a journey toward U.S. citizenship is a crucial story, especially for readers whose citizenship has never been called into question.”

–**Publishers Weekly**

“This heartfelt and humorous story is perfect for primary-school readers, as well as a useful way for parents or educators to introduce the topic of immigration.”

–**Booklist**

25. Why doesn't Mamá need her Permanent Resident card anymore?
26. What is the special present that Sofía gives Mamá?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3, Craft & Structure, Strands 4–6, and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

1. Why do you think Sofía thinks she has discovered a “big secret” when she finds the card that falls from Mamá's purse?
2. What does Sofía's decision to tell her parents about finding the card say about her character? What does it say about her relationship with her parents?
3. Is Mamá's reaction when Sofía confronts her about the card typical of someone whose secret has been revealed? Is Mamá's card actually a secret? Why or why not?
4. Why was Mamá happy when she first received her Resident Alien card? What does it allow her to do?
5. Is a Permanent Resident card different from a Resident Alien card? Why or why not?
6. How do you think Mamá felt when she first came to the United States? Why?
7. Why do you think Mamá thinks the card brings her good luck?
8. What does the phrase “like two peas in a pod” mean? How does it relate to Sofía being Mamá's Twin? What are some other common phrases with similar meanings?
9. How does Sofía's imagination add to her belief that Mamá is an alien? How does Sofía's research in the library further support this?
10. How does Sofía learning about her family's background help her learn more about herself?
11. How does the illustrator, Laura Lacámara, differentiate between what Sofía imagines and reality?
12. Why is Sofía only half alien? What would make her a full alien?
13. How do you think Sofía feels about the possibility of being half alien? About Mamá being an alien?
14. What are the differences between the human Mamá and the alien Mamá? Does the alien Mamá act any different than the human Mamá?
15. Who would be considered alien if humans visited another planet?
16. Why does Sofía think Mamá is an alien when she sees her in the kitchen? What does she hear and see that makes her think this?
17. How do shadows affect or distort what we see? How do shadows affect size, shape, and color of objects? What causes or makes a shadow?
18. How do you think Sofía feels when she realizes Mamá is not an alien from outer space?



19. Do you think Sofía would feel differently about Mamá if she really was an alien? Why or why not?
20. How do you think Mamá feels when she becomes a citizen of the United States? Why?
21. Why don't Sofía and Papá participate in the citizenship ceremony with Mamá?
22. Why do you think the government changed the name of the card from Resident Alien card to Permanent Resident card? What do you think motivated the change?
23. What is a homonym? What words in the text are homonyms? What other homonyms can you think of?
24. Do you think the word *alien* is an appropriate word to describe an immigrant? Why or why not? What does the word *alien* emphasize about immigrants?
25. In a Venn diagram, compare and contrast the two definitions for the word alien used in the story. What is similar? What is different?
26. Do you agree or disagree (and why) with this statement: Sofía's Mamá is an alien.
27. Why do you think the story is told in both English and Spanish? Think about the way the English text and Spanish text are laid out in the book. Why do you think the text is presented this way? Are there places where Spanish and English words are used together? Why do you think the author, René Colato Laínez, chose to do this?
28. What is the overall theme or message of the story?

Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1 and 2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strand 1 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. **Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion.** You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. Sofía's dream is to be a basketball player. What dreams do you have? What do you aspire to be? Why? What will you need to do to achieve your dreams? Who is someone that motivates and inspires you to achieve your dreams? Why is it helpful to study people who have worked hard to achieve their dreams? What can their stories teach us? How can they inspire us?
2. Immigrating to a new country can be exciting but also challenging and scary. Think about how you felt when you moved to a new town, changed schools, or started a new grade, or when you met someone who had just moved or was new to your school. How did you or the other person feel? Did you feel welcomed in your new town or school? What was exciting about the experience? What was difficult?
3. Sofía is not sure what aliens look like, what language they speak, or what they like to do for fun. Do you know or have you ever met someone from another country and culture that you didn't know a lot about? How did you find out more about the person's country and culture? What did you learn? What surprised you? What similarities and differences between cultures did you notice? Are there benefits to understanding different cultures? Why do you think so?
4. If aliens from space were real, what do you think they would think of us (humans) if we visited their planet(s)? What might they think of the way we look, act, or the language we speak? Who would be considered "alien"? Do you think they would be scared or afraid of us? Why or why not?
5. Sofía goes to the library to research aliens. How do you research information on a topic with which you are unfamiliar? What different types of resources should you use? If you were to select a topic to research, what would it be? Why?
6. Sofía is curious when she learns that Mamá might be an alien. How would you feel if you found out that your parent, guardian, or someone close to you was from another planet? How do you think you would react? Why? Would how you treat the person change? Why or why not?



ELL/ESL Teaching Activities

(*Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6*)
(*Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6*)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
 - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
 - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about a time that they faced and overcame their fear.
5. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.
6. **NOTE:** In addition to the Spanish version of the story, there are a few Spanish words in the English text. If an English translation does not immediately follow of a Spanish word, use this as an opportunity for students to practice strategies around using

context clues to determine the meanings of the words. For reference, the book also provides a Spanish glossary with pronunciations of these words at the beginning of the. If your class has Spanish-speaking students, encourage them to volunteer to translate the words for the class. In doing so, these students will feel proud of sharing the role of teacher to their peers.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(*Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably*)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

Social Studies/Geography

(*Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7*)
(*Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1 and 2, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9*)
(*Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4–6*)

1. Have students work in teams to research what immigrant groups live in or near their community. Find these peoples' countries on a world map. Then provide students with a chart graphic organizer and ask them to list important facts and information about each country: location, geography, capital, size, climate, population, language, and so on. Using this research, have the teams create an informational poster about the countries that includes maps, pictures, diagrams, and other nonfiction text features. Have students present their posters to the class.
2. Ask students to work in groups to create a two-column list citing 1) some of the reasons why people immigrate to the United States, and 2) the challenges and risks immigrants face coming to the United States. Do the reasons for immigrating



outweigh the challenges and risks? Why do you think so?

3. Have students use a graphic organizer chart to research United States citizenship. Who is considered a citizen? What are the different ways a person may become a citizen? Who is eligible for citizenship and what are the criteria? What does it mean to be a citizen of the United States? What rights and privileges does a citizen have that a non-citizen does not? Have students answer sample questions from the government's naturalization test that people seeking US citizenship must answer correctly to pass (<http://constitutioncenter.org/constitution-day/constitution-day-resources/naturalization-test>).
4. Ask students to explore the privileges and rights Mamá had as a permanent resident of the United States compared to those she now has as a citizen and record the information on a graphic organizer T-chart. What rights do permanent residents have? What rights do US citizens have? What rights do US citizens have that permanent residents do not? Why? What does a permanent resident card guarantee or allow?
5. Ask students to find a current events article about US immigration policy or reform to bring in for classroom discussion. Provide students with critical thinking questions to answer about their articles and bring to their discussion groups.
6. Encourage students to participate in a debate on immigration with the Immigration Debate lesson plan from PBS (http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/newamericans/foreducators_lesson_plan_02.html).
7. Ask students to break down myths and stereotypes about immigration with the Immigration Myths lesson plan from Teaching Tolerance (<http://www.tolerance.org/lesson/immigration-myths>).
8. Have students explore what it is like to be an outsider in another country with the You Have to Live in Somebody Else's Country to Understand lesson plan from PBS (http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/newamericans/foreducators_lesson_plan_01.html).

Science

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1 and 2, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)

1. Organize students into small groups and have them experiment with shadows and light. Ask students to investigate what causes shadows and how shadows change. Provide students with flashlights and different objects (opaque and transparent) and have them record their observations about what happens when they shine a light on each object. Which objects cast shadows? Where does the shadow appear? Which objects, if any, do not cast shadows? Why? What is creating the shadow? Why do shadows show some things and not others? Then have students observe and record what happens when the flashlight is brought closer to the object and then further away from the object. How does the shadow change? What is causing this change and why?
2. Provide pairs of students with chalk and a safe concrete area outside. Then ask students to trace the shadow of their partners onto the concrete in the early morning, noon, and later in the afternoon, and record their initials and time in the shadow space. Have students observe and record their findings. Are all of a person's shadows the same size and shape? Are the shadows drawn in the same direction? What is similar and different about them? What time of the day was the shadow biggest? Smallest? Why do you think this happens?

English Language Arts/Writing

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9)

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9)

1. Write several homonym and homograph examples on the board: *address, close, wave, present, tie, tear, dove, fast, fair*. Without reading the words aloud, ask students to write a sentence for each word. Have students read their sentences aloud to illustrate the multiple meanings of each homonym



or homograph. How do context clues help you determine the meaning of the word? Why are some homographs pronounced differently? What is the relationship between pronunciation and part of speech (noun vs. verb)? Challenge students to write their own riddles and puns using homonyms (homographs or homophones).

- Ask students to write a descriptive essay describing what they think aliens from outer space would be like and why. What does your alien look and sound like? What language does it speak? Where does your alien live? What does your alien eat? What interests does your alien have? What does your alien like to do for fun? Students may include a sketch or drawing to accompany their compositions.
- Organize students into pairs and assign one student the role of the human from Earth and the other the alien from space. Then ask each pair of students to imagine they are pen pals and write friendly letters to each other describing what life is like where they live (Earth or another planet). In their letters, have students describe their home planet, such as where it is located in space, who lives there, and what life is like, and also include information about their interests, hobbies, friends, and family.
- Have students write a journal entry from Mamá's perspective about her experiences when she first immigrated to the United States. How did she feel? What was new and exciting for her? What challenges or obstacles did she face?
- Ask students to use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the definitions of the word *alien* and the word *immigrant*. Then have students write a persuasive essay for or against using the word *alien* to describe immigrants and noncitizens of the United States. Are the terms *alien* and *illegal alien* offensive or neutral to immigrants? Why or why not? What does each term emphasize? What impact or effect does the term have on a person? What are alternative words or terms that could be used?
- Have students read *From North to South/Del Norte al Sur* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2838>) and *Home at Last* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2405>). As students reflect upon each story, ask them to compare and contrast what each

book teaches about adjusting to a new place and problem solving. What is the central idea of each book? How does each book compare to *Mamá the Alien/Mamá la extraterrestre*? Check out the Lee & Low blog post, “How to Compare and Contrast With the Common Core in Second Grade,” for more ideas (<http://blog.leeandlow.com/2014/01/20/how-to-compare-and-contrast-with-the-common-core-in-second-grade/>).

- Ask students to imagine that they are going to interview author René Colato Laínez and illustrator Laura Lacámara. Have students write a list of interview questions they would like to ask. What thoughts and questions about the story, themes, or inspiration for writing or illustrating *Mamá the Alien/Mamá la extraterrestre* do students have? What do students want to know about the author's writing process? About the illustrating process?

Art/Media

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)
 (Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strand 2, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9)
 (Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3, and Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–5)

- Ask students to create and design a family heritage poster using pictures, images, drawings, and maps to represent their family and cultural heritages. Have students include information about their parents or guardians, siblings, and grandparents, including where their parents or guardians were born, where their ancestors are from, the languages their family speaks, the holidays their family celebrates, and the special traditions their family has. Then have students share and present their family heritage posters to the class.
- Provide students with paper and decorating materials and have students draw and create the alien they described in English Language Arts/ Writing activity number two. Encourage students to use markers, crayons, stickers, decorating material, and other mixed media. Then ask students to compare and contrast their aliens to the alien Sofía describes in the story. What is similar? What is different?



3. Have students fold a piece of paper in half and draw picture examples of homonyms (homographs or homophones) from English Language Arts/Writing activity number one. Ask students to draw one picture on the left and one picture on the right for each homonym definition. Collect students' pictures and create a class homonym book.
4. Encourage students to make their own alien headbands like Sofía made for Mamá at the end of the story. Provide each student with a plastic headband, two pipe cleaners, and two foam balls. Then have students wrap the end of each pipe cleaner around the headband, spacing the two pipe cleaners apart. Then stick the foam balls into the top of each pipe cleaner.
5. Give each student a 4" x 4" square of cardstock. Have each student draw something that represents his or her family, culture, or heritage on the square. Have students present their squares to the class, explaining how their creations represent their family, culture, or heritage. Punch holes around each square and use string to link students' squares together to create a classroom heritage quilt.

School-Home Connection

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2 and Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6) (Writing Standards, Text Types and Purposes, Strands 1 and 2 and Research to Build and Present Knowledge, Strand 7)

1. Ask students to interview someone who has immigrated to the United States. When did the person come to the US? How long has the person lived here? Why did she or he come? How did the person travel to the US? What was the journey like? What were the person's first impressions when he or she arrived? What challenges did the person face? How is the person's homeland different from and similar to the United States?
2. Have students bring in and share a recipe that is special to their families or their cultural heritage. For what occasion do they make the dish? What is the story or history behind the dish? Does the dish have any special cultural, religious, or holiday significance? Is it a dish they make often? Have students write and illustrate their recipes' ingredients and steps. Include each student's recipe

in a class cookbook and make copies of the book for students to take home. If time and resources allow, have a classroom potluck meal with dishes made from the recipes in their book.

3. Ask students to interview a family member about her or his cultural heritage. From what country did the person's family come? When did the person's ancestors first arrive in the United States? How did they travel to the United States? Why did they come to this country? Where did they settle and what was life like once they were settled? Have students bring in one or two items (clothing, recipe, photo, postcard, etc.) for a classroom cultural share. For additional activity and lesson ideas, check out the Family Ties and Fabric Tales lesson plan from Teaching Tolerance (<http://www.tolerance.org/supplement/family-ties-and-fabric-tales-elementary-grades>).

Additional titles to teach about immigration:

From North to South / Del Norte al Sur written by René Colato Laínez, illustrated by Joe Cepeda
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2838>

My Diary from Here to There / Mi diario de aquí hasta allá written by Amada Irma Pérez, illustrated by Maya Christina Gonzalez
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2799>

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<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2785>

Xochitl and the Flowers/Xóchitl, la Niña de las Flores written by Jorge Argueta, illustrated by Carl Angel
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2829>



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

René Colato Laínez is the author of more than a dozen books for young readers. A native of El Salvador, his goal is to write bilingual stories in which children of color are portrayed positively, with hopes and dreams for the future. Laínez was inspired to write this story by the fact that many children of immigrants have made the same assumptions as Sofía in this story after seeing their relatives' Resident Alien cards. When not writing or presenting at conferences or workshops, Colato Laínez teaches in a bilingual elementary school. He lives in Arleta, California, and you can visit him online at reocolatolainez.com.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Laura Lacámara is both an author and illustrator of children's books. She is a popular presenter at schools, book festivals, libraries, and conferences, and an active member of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. Born in Cuba, Lacámara was delighted and inspired to illustrate this story because it is clever, funny, and meaningful, especially since she was the same age as Sofía in the story when her own mamá became a United States citizen. You can find her online at lauralacamara.com.

ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

LEE & LOW BOOKS is the largest children's book publisher specializing in diversity and multiculturalism. Our motto, "about everyone, for everyone," is as urgent today as it was when we started in 1991. It is the company's goal to meet the need for stories that children of color can identify with and that all children can enjoy. The right book can foster empathy, dispel stereotypes, prompt discussion about race and ethnicity, and inspire children to imagine not only a world that includes them, but also a world where they are the heroes of their own stories. Discover more at leeandlow.com.

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www.leeandlow.com/books/mama-the-alien-mama-la-extraterrestre
 (secure online ordering)

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By Fax: 212-683-1894

By Mail: Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

Book Information for Mamá the Alien



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32 pages, 8-3/4 x 10-3/4

*Reading Level: Grades 2–3

*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

Interest Level: Grades 1–4

Guided Reading Level: L

Accelerated Reader® Level/
Points: N/A

Lexile™ Measure: AD560L

THEMES: Childhood Experiences and Memories, Conflict Resolution, Cultural Diversity, Dreams and Aspirations, Education, Families (Mothers), Home, Imagination, Immigration, Overcoming Obstacles, Latino/Hispanic/Mexican Interest

RESOURCES ON THE WEB:

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/mama-the-alien-mama-la-extraterrestre>

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.