

written by Benjamin Alire Sáenz illustrated by Esau Andrade Valencia

# **About the Book**

**Genre:** Fiction

Format: Paperback, 32 pages

ISBN: 9781933693620

**Reading Level:** Grade 3-4

Interest Level: Grades 2-8

**Guided Reading Level:** P

**Spanish Guided Reading:** 0

**English Accelerated Reader® Level/** 

**Points:** 4.2/0.5

**Spanish Accelerated Reader® Level/** 

**Points:** 4.6/0.5

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

\*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

**Themes:** Animals, Childhood Experiences and Memories, Dreams and Aspirations, Empathy and Compassion, Environment and Nature, Families, Grandparents, Imagination, Fantasy, Magical Realism, Kindness and Caring, Mexico, Texas, Latino/ Hispanic/Mexican Interest

**Resources on the web:** leeandlow. com/books/a-perfect-season-for-dreaming-un-tiempo-perfecto-para-sonar

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

# **SYNOPSIS**

Seventy-eight year-old Octavio Rivera is a beautiful dreamer. And lately he has been visited by some very interesting dreams—dreams about piñatas that spill their treasures before him, revealing kissing turtles, winged pigs, hitchhiking armadillos, and many more fantastic things! He longs to tell someone about his dreams, but who else in his life would understand their full beauty? And then he remembers his young granddaughter Regina, because she too appreciates beautiful and fantastic things. Once he tells her, his heart at rest, Octavio prepares for his siesta, hoping to be blessed with one long, last, lovely dream.

With gorgeous folk art-inspired illustrations and the humor and depth of all Benjamin Alire Sáenz's work, *A Perfect Season for Dreaming* unfolds the sweet possibilities in relationships between the very old and the very young. *A Perfect Season for Dreaming* is a commended title 2009 for the Américas Award.

Octavio Rivera, de setenta y ocho años, es un bello soñador. Y últimamente ha sido visitado por algunos sueños muy interesantes: sueños sobre piñatas que derraman sus tesoros ante él, revelando tortugas besándose, cerdos alados, armadillos pidiendo aventones a un festival literario, jy muchas más cosas fantásticas! Anhela contarle a alguien sobre sus sueños, pero ¿quién más en su vida entendería toda su belleza? Y luego recuerda a su joven nieta Regina, porque ella también aprecia las cosas bellas y fantásticas. Una vez que él le dice, con el corazón en paz, Octavio se prepara para su siesta, con la esperanza de ser bendecido con un largo, último y hermoso sueño.

Con magníficas ilustraciones inspiradas en el arte popular y el humor y la profundidad de toda la obra de Benjamin Alire Sáenz, *Un tiempo perfecto para soñar* despliega las dulces posibilidades en las relaciones entre los muy viejos y los muy jóvenes.

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# **BACKGROUND**

#### **Sleep and Dreams**

Psychologist Sigmund Freud is famous for calling attention to the importance of studying people's dreams in the 1800s. Throughout history, neuroscientists and psychologists have studied how and why people dream (https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-science-behind-dreaming/).

According to the Sleep Foundation (https://www.sleepfoundation.org/dreams), dreams are "images, thoughts, or feelings that occur during sleep." Dreams can involve all the senses. Since more brain activity occurs during the REM (rapid eye movement) phases of sleep, and these are concentrated later in the sleep cycle, people dream more in the time closer to waking up, after they've been sleeping for a while.

While there isn't a consensus about why people dream, some ideas are that dreams help build memories, process feelings or life events, mentally "clean up" the brain by sorting through needed and unneeded information, or that dreams are just part of sleep with no purpose or meaning. The "Why Do We Dream" Ted-Ed talk (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2W85Dwxx218) dives into more theories about why we dream, and could be interesting context for teachers and/or older students.

# **BEFORE READING**

#### **Prereading Focus Questions**

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7) (Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

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

- What are the different meanings of the word "dreams?" What are the sleep kind of dreams?
   What do you think you know about dreams while sleeping? What do you wonder? (Note: You may wish to make a concept map about the word "dreams.")
- Have you ever wanted to tell someone about something, but you weren't sure who to tell,
  or how others would react to your news? Share an example if you have one. Whether you've
  experienced this or not, how might it feel? What thoughts might someone in this situation
  have? How might it feel when you finally find the right person to talk to?
- Why is bilingualism important? If you are bilingual (or speak more than two languages), what does it mean to you? If you are not bilingual, why do you think those languages are significant to that person?

You may want to chart student responses questions so that you can refer back to them during or after reading. You could also have students journal their responses to these questions or pose the final question as a KWL discussion and chart so that you can refer back to it throughout and after the reading of the book to further their thinking on the topic(s).



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#### **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)

Book Title Exploration: Talk about the title of the book, *A Perfect Season for Dreaming/Un tiempo perfecto para soñar*. Ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?

Book Walk: Display the book and analyze the cover. What do students notice in the illustration? Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, title page, bilingual text, and dedication, and illustrations. When you browse the first illustration, notice the main character napping in a hammock and confirm students know what a piñata is.

Read Author and Illustrator's Biographies: See the inside book cover or end of this guide. What do you think the process is like to write a book for young readers? Why do you think he wrote this book for young readers?

Encourage students to stop and jot in their reading notebooks during the reading when they: learn new information, have an emotional reaction or an idea, have a question, or see new words.

Have students write feeling(s) in their notebook during reading. After reading, ask students why they wrote that feeling down and have them write a journal entry about it. Have students complete one journal entry per each reading session.

# **Setting a Purpose for Reading**

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

Have students read to find out:

- What does the title mean "A Perfect Season for Dreaming?"
- What does the main character dream in this story? How do his dreams impact his life?

Encourage students to consider why the author would want to share this story with young people.

# **VOCABULARY**

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

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

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

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.



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#### **Content Specific**

cloudless, Spanish guitar, piñata, turtles, flame, Italian pears, desert cacti, Iowa, Chicago, coyotes, mariachi, Denver, tractor, daughter-in-law, armadillos, Lubbock, hitchhiking, Tucson, poems, literary festival, indigestion, gorditas, chorizo, El Paso, Juárez, granddaughter, siesta, hummingbirds, choir

#### **Academic**

gently, fantastic, ripe, bursting, bloom, urge, foolish, contained, console, lonely, detail, "at peace"

# **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 textual evidence with their answers.** 

#### **Literal Comprehension**

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

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

- 1. Who is the main character? What details does the author share about him?
- **2.** What does Octavio Rivera dream about on the first afternoon of summer? What does he do when he wakes up?
- 3. What does Octavio dream about on the second, third, and fourth days?
- **4.** How do Octavio's feelings about his dreams start to change on the fourth day?
- 5. What does Octavio dream about on the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth days?
- **6.** How do Octavio's feelings about his dreams continue to change?
- **7.** Who does Octavio consider telling about his dreams? For each person he decides not to tell, why doesn't he?
- **8.** Who does Octavio finally tell about his dreams? Why does he choose her? How does she react?
- **9.** How does Octavio feel after telling Regina about his dreams?
- **10.** What does Octavio wish on the ninth afternoon? What does he dream?

# **Extension/Higher Level Thinking**

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

- (Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)
  - **1.** Now that you've read the story, what do you think the title A Perfect Season for Dreaming/Un tiempo perfecto para sonar means?
  - **2.** What did you notice about the illustrations? How did the illustrations help you understand and enjoy the story? Give a specific example.
  - 3. What did you enjoy imagining about Octavio's dreams? How did the words and illustrations



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help you imagine?

- **4.** Why do you think Octavio had the dreams he did? Give examples of what details from his dreams made you think.
- **5.** Do you agree with Octavio's choice to tell Regina about his dreams and no one else? Why or why not?
- **6.** Why do you think the author chose to make Octavio Rivera's character an old man? How might the story have been different if he was a different age?
- **7.** If Octavio told you about his dreams, how would you have reacted? Why?
- **8.** Why do you think the author ended the book the way he did? If the story had continued, what do you think would have happened after Octavio's hummingbird dream?
- **9.** Why do you think the author wanted to share this story with young people?

#### **Reader's Response**

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

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.** What do you think the author's message to the reader is? What do you think he wanted to convey to young readers? Why do you think he chose this story to tell?
- **2.** Have students make a text-to-self connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to your own life? What is your role in your own family?
- **3.** Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books while you read *A Perfect Season for Dreaming/Un tiempo perfecto para soñar* Why did you make those connections?
- **4.** Have students make a text-to-world connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to what you have seen in the world or on the news? Why did *A Perfect Season for Dreaming/Un tiempo perfecto para soñar* make you think of that?
- **5.** What is one big thought that you have after reading this book? Think about different character changes, the setting, and the relationships. What did you learn from reading A Perfect Season for Dreaming/Un tiempo perfecto para sonar?
- **6.** What different type of conflicts are presented in Don't Say a Word, Mamá / No digas nada, Mamá? Discuss Octavio's conflicts within himself, his family and friends, and conflicts in the world. Compare and contrast the different conflicts within the text.
- **7.** Write about an "a-ha moment" that Octavio had in this story. Include details about the experience that changed his thinking or made him decide to take a certain action, and what happened as a result.
- **8.** Re-read the author's dedication now that you've read the story. What do you think the dedica-

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tion means?

- **9.** If you were able to have a conversation with Octavio Rivera, what would you ask him? Why would you choose those questions?
- **10.** What advice would you give someone who has something they really wish they could tell someone about? Include an example from the book and from your own experience.
- **11.** Think about how dreaming can be helpful and how it can be challenging. Make a two column list of your ideas about dreaming. Include examples from the text and your own life or background knowledge.

#### **Multilingual Learner 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 Learners and multilingual learners.

- 1. Assign ML 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 one of their dreams.
- **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 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.** The book is both in English and in Spanish. Have students read both texts, and compare both. Have students highlight any unknown words in the text, and then record them separately. Have students look up their definitions and share their knowledge about these words, if applicable.
- **7.** Have students identify true cognates throughout the book. Students can begin with one to two pages and gradually increase to a chapter(s) where students highlight true cognates and determine the meaning to the word if they do not already know it. This can also be a great op-



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portunity to also discuss false cognates with students. If time allows, have students reflect on the cognates that they found. Did they know the word in English? Did they know the word in Spanish? If it was an unknown word in English, did the identification of the Spanish cognate help them define the word? Consult ¡Colorin Colorado! for more ideas on how to use cognates in the classroom with MLs: https://www.colorincolorado.org/using-cognates-ells.

**8.** Additional resources to support multilingual students is: <a href="https://www.multilinguallearning-toolkit.org/">https://www.multilinguallearning-toolkit.org/</a>.

# Actividades en Español Para Apoyo en Programas Bilingües y de Inmersion Dual

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

For the CCSS in Spanish, please check out https://commoncore-espanol.sdcoe.net/CCSS-en-Espanol/SLA-Literacy

- 1. Asigne el libro A Perfect Season for Dreaming/Un tiempo perfecto para sonar. Coloque dos estudiantes juntos para leer el libro en voz alta. Compare las palabras en inglés y en español. ¿Cómo se comparan las palabras? Los estudiantes pueden practicar las palabras que tengan dificultad en pronunciar. Estudiantes pueden tener un cuaderno con las palabras difíciles para hacer referencia en el futuro.
- **2.** Durante el tiempo de cuentacuentos, haga preguntas de comprensión a los estudiantes en inglés y en español para medir el nivel de comprensión en los dos idiomas. Preguntas pueden incluir: ¿de qué se trata el cuento? ¿Conectaste con uno de los personajes en el cuento? ¿Por qué sí o no? ¿Qué parte te gusta más en el cuento?
- **3.** Elija palabras de vocabulario. Los libros ilustrados bilingües son una excelente manera para que sus estudiantes aprendan nuevas palabras de vocabulario porque el idioma se presenta en contexto. Mire a través del libro y asigne las palabras de vocabulario a las ilustraciones del libro. Si es posible, haga fotocopias de las páginas. Estudiantes pueden usar subrayadores en un color para inglés y un color para español para las palabras nuevas. También, puede recordar las palabras en un póster para referencia. Reflexione con sus estudiantes sobre cual palabras ya sabían y cuales palabras aprendieron.
- **4.** En casa los estudiantes pueden pre-leer el libro con sus familias y puede sugerir que lean el libro juntos. Esto ayuda a practicar en leer y en el aprendizaje del vocabulario de los dos idiomas, inglés y español.
- **5.** El uso de cognados puede ser útil en libros bilingües, en español y en inglés. En esta actividad estudiantes pueden buscar cognados en el libro. Los estudiantes pueden trabajar en parejas para identificar y formar una lista si las palabras son cognados verdaderos o falsos. Al final de la actividad es importante distinguir cómo clase la lista de los cognados verdaderos o falsos.

Estas actividades solo son sugerencias. Puede encontrar más recursos para apoyar las clases de inmersión dual y bilingües. Puede leer mas en (https://blog.leeandlow.com/2013/11/04/using-du-al-language-and-bilingual-books-in-third-and-fourth-grade/)



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#### **Social and Emotional Learning**

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4-6)
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)
(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of this book.

- 1. What Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) skills do the characters exhibit over the course of the book? Some examples of SEL skills include problem-solving, grit and perseverance, self-regulation, and perspective taking. How do they demonstrate these skills?
- 2. Have students go on a Social and Emotional Learning scavenger hunt in the text, looking for evidence in the details from the book. Assign students to relevant Social and Emotional Learning themes, such as: empathy, problem-solving, perspective taking, perseverance, and recognizing and managing emotions.
- **3.** Have students choose an emotion that interests them: happiness, sadness, fear, anxiety, frustration, hope, perseverance, regret, peacefulness, and so on. Illustrate or act out what that emotion looks like in *A Perfect Season for Dreaming/Un tiempo perfecto para sonar*.
- **4.** Do you think the author wants Octavio Rivera to be a role model for young people or an example of caution? Why or why not?

# 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.

# **Writing and ELA**

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

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

- As a group, summarize this story in a chart. List the day numbers, what Octavio dreamed about, and how he felt.
- Use sticky notes to add characters' thought bubbles to key scenes in the text. Talk about using evidence from the text to generate the content of the thought bubbles.
- **Have small groups act out key scenes from the text.** Use both the dialogue in the text and the illustrations to help them decide on characters' lines, expressions, gestures, and



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actions.

- Read other stories that include dreams, such as *El cuarto turquesa/The Turquoise Room* (https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-turquoise-room-el-cuarto-turquesa.) Make connections between texts, especially about the significance of the characters' dreams and the impact they have on their lives and emotions.
- Compare other books by author Benjamin Alire Sáenz for young readers, including: A Gift from Papá Diego (https://www.leeandlow.com/books/a-gift-from-papadiego) and The Dog Who Loved Tortillas (https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-dog-wholoved-tortillas).

#### **Social Studies**

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

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

- Have students find the locations mentioned in the book on a map. What do they
  notice about the locations of those places? Why might these places be significant to Octavio
  Rivera?
- **Learn more about the tradition of afternoon siesta.** Generate a list of questions and have students work in small groups to learn more and report back on their findings.
- Invite students to research the symbolism of hummingbirds in Mexican culture. Based on their findings, discuss as a class why the author may have chosen for Octavio's final dream to feature hummingbirds.

#### Art

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

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

 The paintings of illustrator Esau Andrade Valencia could be compared to those of notable Mexican artists Diego Rivera and Rufino Tamayo. Look at paintings by these artists. Make connections to the book illustrations. Invite students to try drawing or painting a portrait of themselves sleeping and dreaming in a similar style.

#### Science

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)
(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

 Help students learn more about scientists' theories about why people dream, starting with the resources in this guide. Connect that information back to the story by encouraging students to share theories about why certain details may have made their way into Octavio Rivera's dreams.



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#### **School-Home Connection**

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

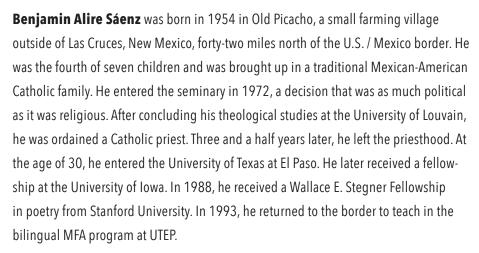
(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

• Develop interview questions as a class for students to ask an adult at home about their dreams. For instance, "How many nights per week do you remember your dreams?" "What's one person, place, or thing you dream about often?" Share and compare responses at school and come up with plans for representing some of the data collected.

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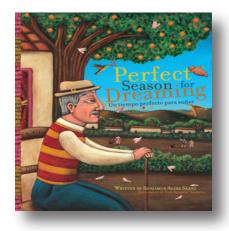
Sáenz is the author of a previous book of poetry, *Calendar of Dust*, which won an American Book Award. Cinco Puntos published two of his other books of poetry called *Elegies in Blue* and the now out of print, *Dark and Perfect Angels*. His most recent book of poetry, *The Book of What Remains*, was published by Copper Canyon Press in 2010. He is the author of numerous novels, books for children and young adults as well as a previous collection of short stories. His award winning young adult novels are *Sammy & Juliana in Hollywood*, *He Forgot to Say Goodbye*, and *Last Night I Sang to the Monster*. His adult novels include *Carry Me Like Water*, *The House of Forgetting*, *In Perfect Light*, and *Names on a Map*.

## **ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR**

**Esau Andrade Valencia** comes from a family of Mexican folk artists. His paintings are included in the collection of the Museum of Latin American Art as well as in the Downey Museum of Art in California. His books for Cinco Puntos Press include *A Perfect Season for Dreaming / Un tiempo perfecto para soñar* and *Don't Say a Word, Mamá / No digas nada, Mamá*.

# **ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS**

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