

TEACHER'S GUIDE



LEE & LOW BOOKS

Soledad Sigh-Sighs / Soledad suspiros

written by Rigoberto González

illustrated by Rosa Ibarra

Reading Level

*Reading Level: Grade 2–3

Interest Level: Grades 2–4

Guided Reading Level/Spanish

Guided Reading Level: O/N

Accelerated Reader® Level/

Points: 2.9/0.5

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Themes: Childhood Experiences and Memories, Families, Friendship, Loneliness, Home, Imagination, Immigration, Collaboration, Conflict resolution, Empathy and Compassion, Identity and Self Esteem, Kindness and Caring, Neighbors, New York, Optimism and Enthusiasm, Overcoming Obstacles, Poverty, Responsibility, Latino/Hispanic/Mexican Interest

Synopsis

Eight-year-old Soledad dreads coming home to her lonely house every day after school. She invents an imaginary sister to keep her company at first, but a much better solution emerges from the imagination and curiosity of two good friends from the neighborhood.

Prize-winning poet and writer Rigoberto González has crafted a delicate and touching tale about a latchkey child's loneliness and her friends' lively ingenuity in dealing with this all too common concern. Artist Rosa Ibarra's lovely, thoughtful illustrations bring a New York neighborhood to life in warm pastel tones.



BACKGROUND

Afterschool Care for Children and “Latchkey Kids”: Many families are faced with the challenge of how to care for children after school when they have to work. The Afterschool Alliance reports that in the U.S., one in five children are alone and unsupervised from 3 PM to 6 PM. They estimate that 19 million children in the U.S. are waiting for a place in an afterschool program. See <http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/This-is-Afterschool-National-One-Pager.pdf> for more information.

Guidelines and laws about children being home alone vary by state. Some states have a minimum age requirement, ranging from age 6 to 11, but many do not specify. The *Washington Post* provides a summary here: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/apps/g/page/local/latchkey-children-age-restrictions-by-state/1555/>.

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, 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 is a “sigh?” Why might someone sigh?
- What does being lonely feel like? What might help someone who’s lonely?

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)

1. Talk about the title of the book. Then 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?
2. Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, title page, author’s note, author and illustrators’ dedications, and illustrations.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

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

Have students read to find out:

- what it’s like for Soledad to be alone after school
- how Soledad’s experiences and feelings change during the story

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

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)

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

1. What’s Soledad’s apartment like when she gets home from school? Where are her family members?
2. Who checks on Soledad? What does she say?
3. How long is Soledad home alone? What does she do during that time?
4. What happens in the morning before school?
5. What does Soledad do on the way to school?
6. What happens at the swings after school? How does Soledad explain her behavior? What do Jahniza and Nedelys say and do?
7. What do Jahniza and Nedelys notice in Soledad’s apartment? What do the girls do together?
8. What do they find in the treasure box?
9. Why does Nedelys tell Soledad she’s “pretty lucky?”
10. Why does Jahniza say the girls are “more like sisters now?”



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.

Content Specific

gandules (pigeon peas), apartment, laundry, price tag sensor, microwave, rice and beans, litter, braids, *piraguas* (a Puerto Rican shaved ice dessert), skipping, *bodega*, “schoolteacher voice”, *mambo*, *merengue*, “put in order”, skyscraper, *bizchoco* (biscuit), *chinas* (oranges), Hawaii, Puerto Rico, treasure box, crate, *bonita bandera* (beautiful flag)

Academic

sigh, warn, invisible, confused, giggle, lonely, pretend, guest

11. When Mami comes home early, what does she see?

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. How do you think Soledad feels about coming home to an empty apartment? What makes you think that?
2. How do you think Soledad's family feels about her having to be alone after school? What makes you think that?
3. How does Soledad feel as she leaves for school? How do you know?
4. Why does Soledad make up an imaginary sister? How does imagining having a sister change her mood?
5. What do you think made Nedelys and Jahniza decide to go over to Soledad's apartment?
6. What do you think, “The apartment doesn't look so big with people in it” means?
7. What might Nedelys's “school teacher voice” sound like? What does she teach Soledad?
8. How does Soledad feel when it's time for her friends to leave? How does Nedelys help?
9. What might Mami be thinking when she walks in and sees Soledad's friends there?
10. How are Soledad's sighs different at the end of the story than they were at the beginning? What change does this show?
11. What do you think after school will be like for Soledad from now on? Why do you think that?
12. Read the author's note. Why do you think it was important to Rigoberto Gonzalez to write this story?

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. Do you like to be alone? Why or why not? Make a Venn diagram that lists things that are fun to do to alone, things that are fun to do with others, and things that are fun both ways.



2. Make a list of things Nedely and Jahniza teach Soledad in this story. Choose one of them and write about how you could use that idea in your own life.
3. Why do you think Nedely and Jahniza decided to go home with Soledad? How did their decision affect Soledad? Write about an example of how one decision in your own life had (or could have) a lasting impact on another person's happiness.
4. *Mindset* is how one thinks about oneself and one's ability to handle a situation. How can your mindset impact a challenging situation? Give examples from the book and your own life.
5. Pretend you are a community leader. Write about what you would do to help make sure all kids have a safe and fun place to spend time after school.

ELL 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. Give students a list of activities and tasks. Ask them to talk about whether they like to do each one alone or with others and why.
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.

Social and Emotional Learning

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

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

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 *Soledad Sigh-Sighs/Soledad suspiros*:

1. Have students chart Soledad's emotions over the course of the story. How does she feel when she's interacting with each character in the story? Use the illustrations as a visual reference and way to tap into students' visual literacy skills.
2. What Social and Emotional Learning skills does Soledad exhibit over the course of the book? (some examples include problem-solving, grit and perseverance, and perspective taking) How do they influence her character? Why was it important for her to demonstrate those skills?
3. Encourage students to think about Social and Emotional Learning skills they have used to achieve something that they are passionate about. How does it relate to how Soledad accomplished her goal?
4. Have students in an essay argue whether Soledad is a role model for young people or not. What evidence can students find in the text that demonstrates Soledad's character and whether the author encourages young people to emulate her or draw caution from her.



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.

English/Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3 and Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strand 9)

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

1. Discuss how a sigh can convey many different feelings. Act out simple skits or puppet shows in which a character sighs, beginning with examples from the story. Talk together about the emotions behind each sigh.
2. Compare this title to other realistic books about kindness and including others such as *David's Drawings* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/david-s-drawings>) or *The Buddy Bench* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/buddy-bench>). What challenges do the characters experience? What or who helps them? What ideas can students apply to their own lives?
3. Use this text as a mentor text when working on narrative writing. List and study example of craft moves such rich descriptions, sensory details, dialogue, internal monologue, and comparisons. Encourage students to incorporate these techniques in their own writing.

Art

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strand 7)

1. Study the illustrations that show Soledad's imaginary sister. Invite students to draw or paint pictures that depict something imaginary (but realistic) that they wish to be true.

Social Studies

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

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Research to Build and Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9)

1. Use this story as inspiration for a “Ways to Be Kind” list. For a full lesson using *Soledad Sigh-Sighs/ Soledad suspiros* on this topic, see https://www.leeandlow.com/uploads/loaded_document/329/Building_Classroom_Community_in_First_Grade_Lesson_6.pdf.
2. If students are unfamiliar with them, find out more about the references to Puerto Rican foods and music in this story. Read other titles that feature Puerto Rican children such as *Get Set! Swim!* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/get-set-swim>) or *When This World Was New* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/when-this-world-was-new>). Talk about why it's important both for children to see themselves represented in stories and to read stories about children from a variety of backgrounds.
3. Soledad and her friends do not watch TV or play video games after school. Make a list of simple screen-free activities for out of school time, starting with ideas from the book. Have students share ones they try and add new ideas over time.

School-Home Connection

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3)

1. Compose interview questions as a class and ask each student to interview an older person about what they did after school as kids. Use events from the story for ideas, such as, “How did you get home from school?” “Did you play any imaginary games?” or “Did you spend time alone? What did you do?” Share and compare responses at school.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rigoberto González was born in Bakersfield, California, and raised in Michoacán, Mexico. The son and grandson of migrant farmworkers, he is an award-winning poet and writer. Since completing his third university degree, he has worked mostly in New York and primarily with children and young adults as a dance instructor, daycare provider, literacy specialist, and creative writing teacher. Visit his website at <http://www.rigobertogonzalez.com/bio.html>.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Rosa Ibarra is a painter whose work is exhibited and collected internationally. Born and raised in Puerto Rico and schooled in Paris, she studied painting at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, where she graduated with Honors. She went on to apprentice in Paris with her father, the painter, Alfonso Arana. She has four children, Klara, Nina, Kristina and Gabriel, and lives in Northampton, Massachusetts. Her website is <http://www.rosaibarra.com/>

ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

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On the Web:

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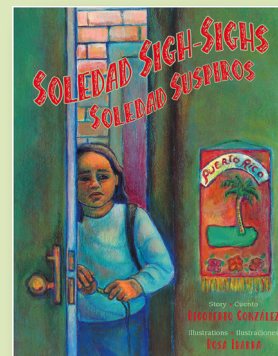
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/soledad-sigh-sighs-soledad-suspiros>
(secure online ordering)

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Book Information for

*Soledad Sigh-Sighs /
Soledad suspiros*



\$8.95, PAPERBACK

9780892393091

32 pages, 8-1/2 x 11

*Reading Level: Grades 2–3

Interest Level: Grades 2–4

Guided Reading Level/Spanish
Guided Reading Level: O/N

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:
2.9/0.5

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

THEMES: Childhood Experiences and Memories, Families, Friendship, Loneliness, Home, Imagination, Immigration, Collaboration, Conflict resolution, Empathy and Compassion, Identity and Self Esteem, Kindness and Caring, Neighbors, New York, Optimism and Enthusiasm, Overcoming Obstacles, Poverty, Responsibility, Latino/Hispanic/Mexican Interest

RESOURCES ON THE

WEB:

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/soledad-sigh-sighs-soledad-suspiros>

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