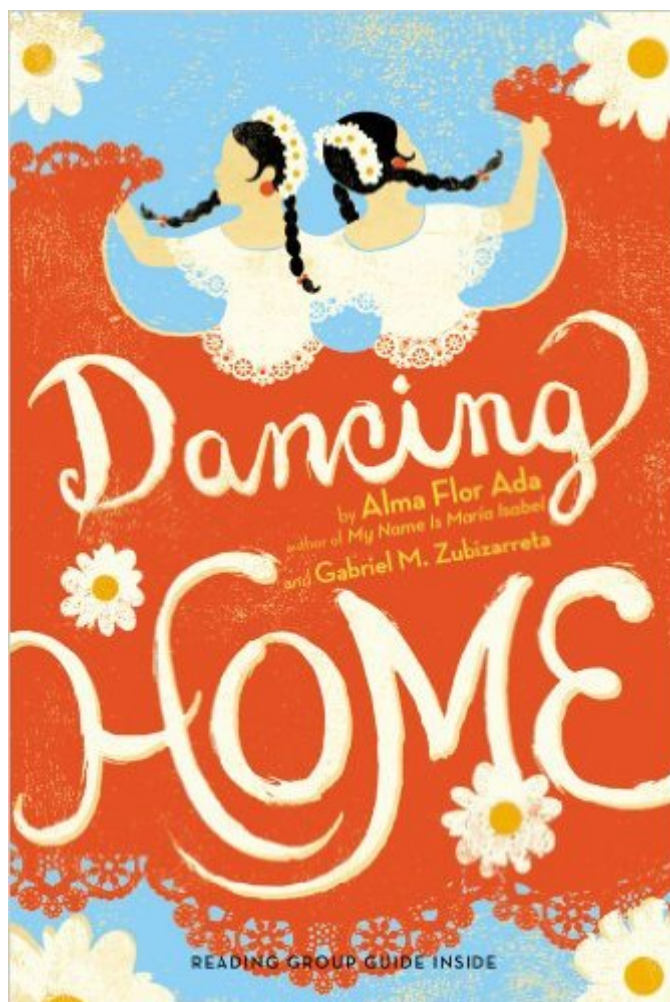


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# Dancing Home



## Synopsis

>A year of discoveries culminates in a performance full of surprises, as two girls find their own way to belong. Mexico may be her parents' home, but it's certainly not Margie's. She has finally convinced the other kids at school she is one-hundred percent American "just like them. But when her Mexican cousin Lupe visits, the image she's created for herself crumbles. Things aren't easy for Lupe, either. Mexico hadn't felt like home since her father went North to find work. Lupe's hope of seeing him in the United States comforts her some, but learning a new language in a new school is tough. Lupe, as much as Margie, is in need of a friend. Little by little, the girls' individual steps find the rhythm of one shared dance, and they learn what "home" really means. In the tradition of *My Name is Maria Isabel* and simultaneously published in English and in Spanish "Alma Flor Ada and her son Gabriel M. Zubizarreta offer an honest story of family, friendship, and the classic immigrant experience: becoming part of something new, while straying true to who you are.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 960 (What's this?)

Paperback: 176 pages

Publisher: Atheneum Books for Young Readers; Reprint edition (February 5, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1442481757

ISBN-13: 978-1442481756

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.5 x 7.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (20 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #54,115 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #12 in [Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Mexico](#) #59 in [Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Multicultural Stories > Hispanic & Latino](#) #149 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Fiction](#)

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Acclaimed children's writer Alma Flor Ada and her son Gabriel Zubizarreta have teamed up for the very first time to bring us a compelling chapter book for children dealing with a timely topic-- the

problem of assimilation from a child's point of view. In *Dancing Home*, ten-year-old Margie Ceballos, a talented young California girl wants to get away from her cousin Lupe who has just arrived from Mexico. When her cousin Lupe comes to live with her family, Margie does not accept her. She is embarrassed by her cousin's frilly clothes, her inability to speak English, and to make matters worse, Lupe is placed in her class and Margie is put in charge of her. Margie, who doesn't speak Spanish well, is forced to translate the teacher's lessons. This is Margie's worst nightmare. It has taken her a few years to fit in and now her cousin Lupe, newly arrived from Mexico, reminds everyone at school of her ties to Mexico. Just when Margie thought she'd buried her roots, her classmates again begin to tease her--Margarita! Margarita! Margie's ambition to hide her Hispanic heritage, by changing her name, to avoid being perceived as different evaporates in one day. Lupe has allies in Margie's parents who speak to her in Spanish and reminisce about their childhoods. Because of their upbringing in Mexico, it seems that Margie's parents have more in common with Lupe than they do with their own daughter who was brought up in America. Margie realizes this and it stings. She feels herself drifting away from the family as they pay increasing attention to Lupe. *Dancing Home* is also about an aunt's love for her niece. Aunt Consuelo, whom Lupe had never met before, comes in like a saving angel and rescues her from the drudgery in Mexico where Lupe is forced to take on adult responsibilities. Lupe is a casualty of the marriage between her parents who have separated and started other families. Consuelo sees Lupe as the only link to her estranged brother and wants to provide a stable home for her. She brings Lupe to America on a student VISA like a foreign exchange student. Providing Lupe with the opportunity of a lifetime--the chance to get an American education. Although life is much easier in California, Lupe has many obstacles to overcome, including mastering the English language. In Mexico she was a star student but now with the language barrier, she feels frustrated and left out. Lupe feels like Alice in Wonderland, that she's gone into a topsy turvy world. She misses her family back in Mexico and sometimes becomes nostalgic. As a new immigrant, Lupe helps the Ceballos family rediscover their forgotten Mexican heritage. It is partially because of Lupe's influence that Margie lets go of the stereotypes she has about people from Mexico. Lupe's contribution to the Ceballos family cannot be over estimated. This charismatic ten-year-old has breathed new life into what has become her new family. She causes Margie to review and assess her cultural values. *Dancing Home* is about what it means to be an American. In her long and prolific writing career, Alma Flor Ada has published books in many different genres. *Dancing Home* is heartwarming. It will make a great stocking stuffer for all the children I know this Christmas. My nieces will be proud to put it on their bookshelves alongside other children's literature of substance like *Little Women*, *Tuck Everlasting*, *A Little Princess*, *Little*

House on the Prairie, Heidi, and Charlotte's Web. Among Alma Flor Ada's books for 8 to 12 year old readers, are the award-winning autobiographical books Under the Royal Palms (Pura Belpre Medal) and Where the Flame Trees Bloom. The collection of folktales Tales Our Abuelitas Told (Notable Book for a Global Society) and the picture book The Gold Coin (Christopher Award Medal). Dancing Home is Gabriel Zubizarreta's debut as a children's author.

Lupe moves from Mexico to United States to live with family. Lupe will be in the same grade, (fifth) as her cousin Margarita who goes by Margie. The story alternates between the cousins. Margie does everything she can to fit in and not be teased for being Mexican. Lupe is trying very hard to learn English and adjust to life in the United States. Lupe and Margie's voices blend very well together making for smooth transitions. At one point Margie is reading How Tia Lola Came to (Visit) Stay for class, which I thought was a very sweet nod to Julia Alvarez. I loved the beginning it says so much as to why Margie does everything she can to distance herself from her Mexican roots. "Margie felt nervous having to wait outside the principal's office. She kept her eyes fixed on the huge map that covered the entire wall. Mrs. Donaldson seemed to be a pleasant woman, but Margie had never had to address the principal all by herself before. The map's colors were vivid and bold showing Canada, the United States, and part of Mexico. Alaska and the rest of the United States were a strong green; Canada was a bright yellow. The remainder of the map, however, showed only a small part of Mexico in a drab sandlike color Margie could not name. "The author created two realistic characters in Lupe and Margie. They both made Dancing Home a very nice story and a pleasure to read.

Margie has been making every effort to embrace her now American heritage. When her cousin Lupe comes to live with them from Mexico, Margie finds that she is having to help Lupe adapt. It isn't easy since Lupe doesn't speak English very well and is having trouble keeping up. Margie is having to back track to the Mexican heritage she has been running away from. As Margie lends herself to family traditions and getting acquainted with Lupe, by sharing American experiences and embracing her culture through the eyes of Lupe she begins to better understand her heritage and its importance. Ada and Zubizarreta have done an excellent job of presenting the Mexican culture through the eyes of a child. The emotions felt through Margie and Lupe will keep young readers turning the pages to see how these two girls cope with change and the challenges it brings. Young readers will learn Spanish terms and their meaning. Parents, teachers and homeschoolers will love sharing this wonderful culture and the true meaning of family and tradition.

Many of our students are drawn to realistic fiction because they see a slice of themselves or their friends in the stories they read. I'm really looking forward to sharing "Dancing Home" with students. Alma Flor Ada and her son Gabriel Zubizarreta tell the story of two cousins, one raised in the U.S. and the other in Mexico, and how their lives begin to intertwine. Kids will appreciate how hard it is to make changes, to adapt and fit into a new environment, and to figure out your own identity. At times, I wished that the authors showed more of the character's interactions, rather than relying on telling us about their feelings. But I don't think children who enjoy realistic fiction will be bothered by this. The strength of this story is sharing these girls' story, giving us people we care about who are struggling with situations we can relate to.

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