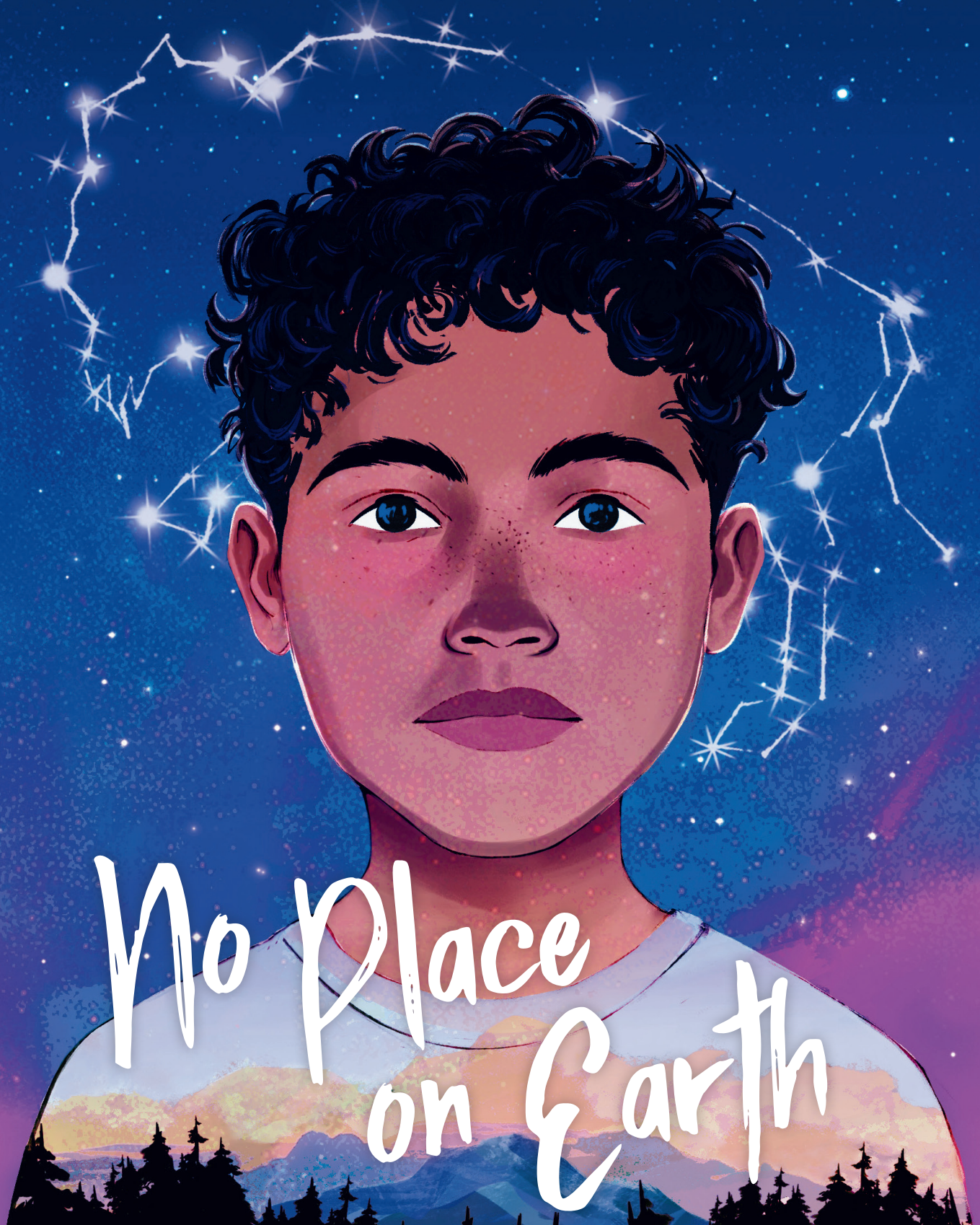


ANDREA BEATRIZ ARANGO

Newbery Honor winner for *Iveliz Explains It All*



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EDUCATORS' GUIDE

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ABOUT THE BOOK

Since moving to Yellowstone National Park for his mom's job, Gus Santos Costa has had a lot on his mind.

- For instance: bison stampedes. Did you know that bison can run three times faster than the average person?
- Also: Why do people always stand so close to boiling hot springs?!
- Finally: the bad dreams. Why have they only gotten worse since the move?

And that's all before Gus somehow meets his classmate Kordell inside his dreams. While Gus avoids sleeping (and nightmares) at all costs, Kordell finds that dreams seem to be a welcome escape from his real life . . . until one day, they're no longer enough. The connection between the boys means Gus may be the only person who can help Kordell. But when most things already feel too big to take on, how can Gus find the courage to be there for his friends?

In this powerful novel from the Newbery Honor-winning author of *Iveliz Explains It All*, two boys confront their fears—and their dreams—to save themselves and each other.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrea Beatriz Arango is the author of Newbery Honor Book *Iveliz Explains It All*, the Pura Belpré Honor Book *Something Like Home*, and *It's All or Nothing, Vale*. She was born and raised in Puerto Rico, where she first became a teacher. She then spent a decade in the United States working in public schools and nonprofits. When she's not busy writing about middle schoolers and their families, you can find her hoping to spot manatees at the beach. Andrea lives in Puerto Rico with her family.

OTHER BOOKS BY ANDREA BEATRIZ ARANGO



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THE GUIDES!

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Gustavo, our main character, is Puerto Rican and speaks Spanish with his friends and family. Puerto Rico is a self-governing island located in the Caribbean. It is part of the United States but is a territory, not a state. Throughout his story, Gus shares aphorisms, or sayings, that are rooted in his Puerto Rican culture. Choose one. What does it mean to you? Why did you choose it? Think of and share the aphorisms that are connected to your culture, family, or school life. Which ones have been helpful, and why?
2. National parks in the United States are areas of natural land that are protected by the government for special reasons; for example, because they have unique features (including Yellowstone's geysers) and/or historical importance. People work in national parks as rangers and scientists, and sometimes as educators, as in Gus's story. Either alone or with a trusted adult or peer, investigate how close the nearest national park is to where you live. What is it called, and what is special about it? Why is it important to protect this park?
3. Parents sometimes separate or divorce. While this may be best for the parents, and in some cases the whole family, in the longterm the upheaval it causes in their children's lives can affect their emotions, moods, and sense of security. In this story, a few young people are impacted by the possibility of their parents' separation or divorce. As you read, pay attention to how the characters in this story are impacted. Write a paragraph about one of the characters in the story or someone from your own life that discusses how they felt about their situation and what they did or could do to manage it.
4. Have you ever had a dream that stuck with you or was important or meaningful for any reason? Have you ever had a dream that made you feel something? Ask a trusted adult or a person your age about their dreams. Ask them to describe a dream that has been meaningful to them. What do you learn?
5. This story has elements that may be considered magical in your culture. What do you, your family, and your cultures believe about dreams and about communicating with animals? How are others' beliefs different from yours your peers, your teachers, people in your family? As you read, pay attention to what Gus and Kordell believe about dreams and communicating with animals. How are their beliefs similar to or different from your own?

READING AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In the first three pages of the book, Gus shares several of his fears. What are they? In these opening pages, what do we learn about Gus's personality, friendships, and family life? Use evidence from the text. Finally, make a prediction: Where do you imagine the story is going, and why?
2. Throughout the story, but especially at the beginning, you will notice that Gus, his friends, and his family speak both English and Spanish. If you speak Spanish, what is it like to see these phrases in the book? Are there phrases that are new to you? If you don't speak Spanish, use context clues and English explanations to make informed guesses about what the phrases mean. Make a list of your phrases!
3. Gus says, "It's the way Pa talks about the *chapines* that I don't like. No sé. It's hard to explain. The way he jokes about it isn't funny. At least I don't think it is. But every time I say something, ask him or my uncles to stop messing around, it just makes everything worse. They say I'm too sensitive. That I need to learn to take a joke" (p. 6). How would you describe the tension in Gus's relationship with his father? What do you imagine Gus feels, and what do you imagine Gus's father intends Gus to feel? Have you ever experienced a similar situation—either being told you need to learn how to take a joke or telling someone else they should learn to take a joke? What happened?
4. In Gus, Diego, and Javi's group chat (p. 8), Gus says everything is good even though we can see his true thoughts. Why didn't Gus share his feelings and thoughts with his friends? Reflect on a situation when you chose not to share your feelings or thoughts with someone, even though they asked directly. What stopped you, or what made it feel uncomfortable for you to do so? Imagine that instead of writing "Yeah," Gus had written one of the things he'd really been thinking and feeling? "No sé. I'm really nervous about the move" or "What if I hate it there? What if they break up permanently?" or "What if I never come back?" What would you have texted back if you were Javi or Diego, and why?
5. Gus builds new relationships with Kordell and Ranger Rob that help fill the void created by the friends and father in Puerto Rico. Gus says, "It's like [Ranger Rob] and Kordell are video game NPCs whose backstories I haven't quite figured out yet. A little different. A little mysterious. Pero maybe worth getting to know?" (p. 116) Pick one of these two relationships. What does this person give Gus, and how do they help him? What do you imagine that Gus contributes to their life (for Kordell) or their work (for Ranger Rob)? Use evidence from the story to support your thinking.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CONT.)

6. Kordell writes poems about his dreamscapes. What do you notice about Kordell's poetry? Why do you think Kordell describes his dreamscapes in poetry rather than prose? In either poetry or prose, create a dreamscape while you are awake for yourself. Who and what is in it? What's the mood? What natural elements—plants, animals, parts of the world—are included, and why?
7. Throughout the story, Gus learns to face his fears and develops tools to help him with his anxiety. Choose one major fear Gus describes having at Yellowstone and track it throughout the story. How does it change? Why does it change? What steps does Gus take, and what support does he receive? Reflect on a fear or anxiety you have had that has changed over time. What caused the shift?
8. Gus writes, "I've never had a friend I needed to be this careful with. To be honest, it's a little bit frustrating, but I try to remind myself how Kordell must be feeling." (p. 179) Using evidence from the story, describe in more detail what exactly you think is frustrating Gus? How is empathizing with Kordell helpful? What kind of care do you imagine Kordell needs, and why? What kind of care do you imagine Gus needs, and why? Choose one of the boys and write a scene in which they receive the care that they need.
9. In his journal, Kordell writes: "Yeah, his *chapines* are always with us now / but so is my bison calf. / And more importantly / we're with us." If the chapulines represent Gus's anxiety, what does Kordell's bison calf represent? Now apply this representation to other examples. Go back to the scene where the bison are guarding Kordell as he is unconscious. What do you imagine that these bison represent? Go back to the scene when Gus realizes perhaps the bison doesn't want to let Kordell go. What does this mean? Imagine one of your feelings is an animal that moves at your side or in your body. What is the feeling, and what is the animal that represents it and why?
10. Before he leaves Puerto Rico, Gus's aunt describes Gus's great-grandmother as "sensitive" (p. 11) and says Gus shares that quality. In that moment, Gus "shifts uncomfortably" and cuts the conversation short. Later, Gus texts his aunt, who defines "sensitive" as "in tune with the world" and "connected" (p. 158). Using evidence from the story, describe who and what helped Gus embrace his sensitivity. Are you sensitive? How? Why? Write, share, or illustrate one true story from your own life of being in tune with or connected to the world.

This guide was created by Christina Olivares, a longtime educator and author of the poetry books *No Map of the Earth Includes Stars* (2015) and *Future Botanic* (2023).



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