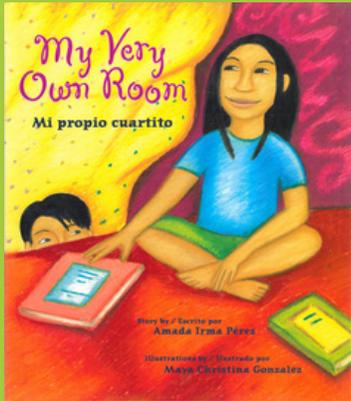


TEACHER'S GUIDE



LEE & LOW BOOKS

My Very Own Room/ Mi propio cuartito

written by Amada Irma Pérez

illustrated by Maya Christina Gonzalez

About the Book

Genre: Biography/Memoir

*Reading Level: Grades 3–4

Interest Level: Grades 2–5

Guided Reading Level: O

Accelerated Reader® Level/
Points: 3.9/0.5

Lexile™ Measure: 700L

*Reading level based on the Spache
Readability Formula

Themes: Family Life (Mothers, Siblings), Growing Up, Sharing and Giving, Identity and Confidence, Overcoming Obstacles, Immigration, Imagination, Home, Dreams and Aspirations, Conflict Resolution, Biography/Memoir, Poverty, Empathy and Compassion, Gratitude, Optimism and Enthusiasm, Collaboration, Latino/Hispanic/Mexican Interest

SYNOPSIS

Aha! This was it! This could be my room. I imagined it with my own bed, table, and lamp—a place where I could read the books I loved, write in my diary, and dream.

Five little brothers, two parents, and a house full of visiting relatives make Amada, a young Mexican American girl feel crowded. She loves her family, but how can she get a little space of her own? Her loving and understanding family works together to turn a small storage space into her very own room.

This delightful memoir of a childhood in El Monte, California, pours from the pen of award-winning author and former bilingual teacher by Amada Irma Pérez with exuberance and wit.

Renowned painter and artist Maya Christina Gonzalez brings the captivating scenes to life with bold colors and whimsical details. *My Very Own Room* gently teaches a valuable lesson about the strength of family and the importance of dreams.

Awards and honors include:

- **2000 Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children's Book Award**, Texas State University College of Education
- **2000 Américas Award Honor**, Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs
- **2000 Outstanding Achievement in Books**, Parent's Guide to Children's Media



BACKGROUND

From the Author: “My Very Own Room is based on my own family story. My parents, like many of the parents of children I now teach (and learn from), wanted to provide us with more space, but could not. However, they taught us strong values, supported our education, and insisted that we become bilingual. They wanted their children to be successful. Today, most of us have been to college. Hector and I have master’s degrees in education and are elementary school teachers. Sergio is an engineer; Raúl is a supervisor in a California Youth Authority facility; Victor is a housing sales agent; and Mario is a manager of a large grocery store. We are all committed to improving the lives of those who are struggling with the realities of poverty or adjusting to a new and different life.”—Amada Irma Pérez

My Very Own Room is the second of three stories by Amada Irma Pérez describing her family’s experience as Mexican immigrants to the United States: *My Diary from Here to There/Mi diario de aqui hasta allá* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/my-diary-from-here-to-there-mi-diario-de-aqui-hasta-alla>) and *Nana’s Big Surprise/Nana, ¡Qué Sorpresa!* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/nana-s-big-surprise-nana-que-sorpresa>)

Immigration from Mexico: More than 16 million Mexicans migrated to the U.S. between 1965 and 2015. The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act allowed more non-European immigrants to enter the U.S. than under the previous quota system. (See this Pew Research report for more information: <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2015/09/28/modern-immigration-wave-brings-59-million-to-u-s-driving-population-growth-and-change-through-2065/>.) Mexican immigrants coming to the United States must cross the Mexican-American border; California and Texas are the most common states for Mexican immigrants to settle and seek work. Many Mexican people choose to come to the United States to seek higher-paying jobs, education and better living conditions. Many also come to reunite with family members who migrated previously. Find more information about the factors affecting Mexican migration here: <https://geographyas.info/population/mexico-to-usa-migration/>. The Library of Congress provides extensive resources for discussing immigration with students here: <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/immigration/mexican.html>. Teachers

of older students may find this collection of photos and interviews with Mexican immigrants helpful (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/raul-roman/side-of-mexican-immigration-that-you-need-to-see_b_8361908.html).

Blue Chip stamps: These stamps were given out in the 1960s and 1970s to people who spent money at gas stations, grocery stores, etc. Customers could save them and redeem them for household items at redemption centers. These stamps are no longer distributed but people can still redeem existing stamps by mail. See more at http://articles.latimes.com/1993-08-19/news/vw-25199_1_blue-chip-stamps.



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

factory, flour sacks, storage closet, tarp, magenta, yarn, crocheted, wooden crate, ballerina, ceramic, ruffles

Academic

crowded, jabbing, relatives, separate, storing, determination, bulging, overflowing, swirl, measure, ease, dainty

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:

1. How would you define a big family? Is your family big? What is it like (or might it be like) to live with a big family?
2. Have you ever shared a bedroom with someone else? What can be fun about sharing a room? What can be hard?

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)

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?

Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, title page, author and illustrators' dedications, author's note, photographs and captions, bilingual text, and illustrations. Talk about how the book is based on the author's childhood.

Point out that this book is bilingual. Ask students why a book might be written this way. Why does it matter what language an author uses? How does a language change how a story is told or who hears it?

Setting a Purpose for Reading

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

Have students read to find out about:

- what life is like for the narrator, living in a large family
- why she wants her own room and what she and her family do about it

Encourage students to consider why the author, Amada Irma Pérez, 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 it like for the girl to sleep with all her brothers? How does she feel about it? What does she want more than anything?
2. Who lives in the girl's house? What is her house like?
3. Where does the girl go to be alone? What does she think about in the tree?
4. What does she find as she tiptoes around the house? What does she imagine?
5. What does her mother say when she first asks about using the storage closet as a bedroom? What does she say next? What do they decide to do?
6. What does the family have to do to clear out the storage area?
7. What does the girl do with the paint?
8. What do the girl and her mother do with the yellow yarn?
9. What else does the girl add to her new room after she gets a bed? How does the girl get her lamp? Describe why she likes it.
10. What's the last thing the girl adds to her room? Where does she get the books?
11. What happens on the girl's first night in her new room? How does she feel as she falls asleep?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)
(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

1. Why is it hard to find personal space in the girl's house?
2. Does wanting her own room mean the girl doesn't care about her brothers?
3. What do you think it is about the storage closet that makes the girl think it's a good place for a bedroom?
4. Why do you think the girl's mother reconsidered the girl's request after first saying no?
5. Why does the girl say the family was like a "mighty team of ants?"
6. What could the girl have said when she realized there wasn't enough in any of the paint cans to paint her new room? What does her response show about her as a character?
7. Why does she say the yellow yarn is magical? Describe how the girl gets a bed for her new room. What does this scenario show about her family?
8. Why don't the girl's parents just buy her a set of new furniture for her room?
9. Why do you think the girl considers books the "most important thing" in her new room?
10. Why do you think the girl wants her brothers to read stories in her new room even though it is supposed to be her own space?
11. The girl's new room is a simple space with a painted wall, a bed, a table and a lamp. What makes her room so much more special than it might look?

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**



“A deserving purchase for bilingual and larger picture book collections.”

–*School Library Journal*

“An excellent choice for libraries in Hispanic and migrant communities, this book will resonate with all young ones growing up with limited space and resources.”

–*Booklist*

“This inspiring tale will resonate with anyone who’s ever wished for a room of one’s own or worked hard to achieve an important goal.”

–*Publishers Weekly*

discussion. You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. Make a list of information about the girl in the story. What do you know about her and her family? What words describe her as a person? What’s important to her?
2. Give examples from the text that explain how the girl feels about her brothers and her busy house. How can she love her family *and* want her own space? Write about a time when you wanted to have your own space or be alone.
3. How is this a story about being resourceful? Write about a time that you or someone in your family was resourceful.
4. Imagine this story was told from the point of view of the girl’s mother. What might she have been thinking and feeling? Give several examples based on the decisions she made during the story.
5. Imagine this story was told from the point of view of one of the girl’s brothers. What might they have been thinking and feeling? Give examples based on several different events in the story.
6. How is this a story about working hard to achieve your dreams? Write about a time when someone helped you achieve a dream.

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 their families, their homes or a special place where they like to be alone.
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.

- Use the Spanish text in this book if it would be helpful to your students

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 and Details, Strands 1-3 and Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strand 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types and Purposes, Strands 1-3)

- Discuss the concept of pro and con lists. Have students create pro and con lists related to the story (e.g., pros and cons of having a big family, pros and cons of sharing a room)
- Read Amada Irma Pérez's other books, *My Diary from Here to There* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2799>) and *Nana's Big Surprise* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/nana-s-big-surprise-nana-que-sorpresa>). Discuss why the author may have chosen these aspects of her life about which to write. (The author's note in each book will have some helpful insight, as does this short video interview with the author: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=163&v=ztBvmCEqLSA.) What personal connections do students make to each story? What themes are reflected across the three stories? If Pérez were to write another book, what aspect of her life would students be interested in reading about next?

- Choose one of the family values demonstrated in this story (e.g., resourcefulness, helpfulness, caring, respect) and ask students to write their own stories about a time their own families demonstrated this value.
- Check out the lesson plan (<http://www.inclusiveclassrooms.org/inquiries/my-very-own-room>) for *My Very Own Room* by New York City educator Mary Tomac as part of "Choosing and Using Culturally Responsive Texts" (<http://www.inclusiveclassrooms.org/inquiries/choosing-and-using-culturally-responsive-texts>) created by the Teachers College Inclusive Classrooms Project (TCICP) (<http://www.inclusiveclassrooms.org/>).

Math

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strand 1 and Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strand 6)

- Give each student pretend "Blue Chip stamps" or set up a system for them to earn them in various easy. Create a pretend "redemption center." Have students put price tags on different items and play the roles of employee and customer. Talk about whether customers have enough stamps to afford a certain item or about different combinations of items they can afford.
- Use strings or yarn to measure objects and spaces the way the girl and her mother measured the bed to see if it would fit in the storage area. Ask students to figure out whether items would fit in certain places in your classroom (e.g., Would four chairs fit along this side of the table? Would this bookshelf fit in this corner? Would a poster fit in this spot on the wall?)

Art

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

- Have students draw, paint, or use collage materials to depict their own spaces to be alone, either real or imagined. Have them add labels and/or describe their work orally to the class or a partner.
- Examine the cover illustration of the book. Discuss how the illustration wraps around to the back. Have students experiment with this technique when they



create covers for their own stories.

- If you have almost-empty paint bottles available, have students experiment with mixing the colors as the girl in the book did. Have them name the colors they create and use them to create artwork that brightens a space in your school.

Social Studies

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1-3)
(Writing Standards, Research to Build and Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9)

- Make connections between the family's problem-solving strategies and classroom problem solving. Make a chart listing their various strategies and brainstorm ways you could make use of similar strategies in your classroom and school community.
- Help students discuss the challenges immigrants face as they start their lives in a new country. The author's note describing the jobs she and her brothers now hold could provide a helpful structure for your list. Research organizations that help immigrants in your community and, if possible, plan a way to support one of these organizations as a class.

School-Home Connection

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strand 1)

- Have students interview an adult family member about their living situation as a child. Brainstorm questions at school such as, "Where did you live? Who lived with you? Did you have your own room? What challenges did your family face?" etc. Share responses at school and make connections to the text.
- Ask immigrant family members or other adults from the community to share their stories with your class.

Additional titles to teach about overcoming obstacles:

A House by the River written by William Miller, illustrated by Ying-Hwa Hu, Cornelius Van Wright
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/a-house-by-the-river>

A Place Where Sunflowers Grow written by Amy Lee-Tai and illustrated by Felicia Hoshino
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/a-place-where-sunflowers-grow>

Baseball Saved Us written by Ken Mochizuki, illustrated by Dom Lee
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/baseball-saved-us>

Brothers in Hope: The Story of the Lost Boys of Sudan written by Mary Williams, illustrated by R. Gregory Christie
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/brothers-in-hope>

Bird written by Zetta Elliott, illustrated by Shadra Strickland
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/bird>

Calling the Water Drum written by LaTisha Redding and illustrated by Aaron Boyd
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/calling-the-water-drum>

Flowers From Mariko written by Rick Noguchi, Deneen Jenks and illustrated by Michelle Reiko Kumata
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/flowers-from-mariko>

Gettin' Through Thursday written by Melrose Cooper and illustrated by Nneka Bennett
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/gettin-through-thursday>



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Amada Irma Pérez is a former classroom teacher and a leading advocate of programs encouraging multicultural understanding. She was a teacher for 25 years before she wrote her first book. Like many of her students, Amada Irma was born in Mexico and came to the United States with her family as a young child. Her books are based on her own family stories. An author, speaker, and leading advocate of programs encouraging multicultural understanding, Amada Irma has been honored with various awards for her children's books. She lives with her family in Ventura, California. Find her online at <http://www.amadairmaperez.com>.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Maya Christina Gonzalez is a widely exhibited and celebrated artist renowned for her vivid imagery of strong women and girls. Her exquisite artwork has been praised by reviewers as "lively," "innovative," and "so bountiful it feels as if it's spilling off the pages." She has illustrated more than twenty children's books, and her artwork has appeared on the cover of *Contemporary Chicano/a Art. My Colors, My World* was the first book Maya both wrote and illustrated. Books that Maya illustrated include *Laughing Tomatoes*, *From the Bellybutton of the Moon*, and *Angels Ride Bikes*. Find her online at <http://www.mayagonzalez.com/childrensbooks/>.

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.

ORDERING INFORMATION

On the Web:

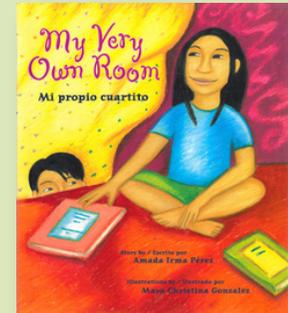
www.leeandlow.com/contact/ordering (general order information)
<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/my-very-own-room-mi-propio-cuartito> (secure online ordering)

By Phone: 212-779-4400 ext. 25

By Fax: 212-683-1894

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

Book Information for My Very Own Room



\$9.95, PAPERBACK

978-0-89239-223-0

32 pages, 8-3/4 x 10-1/4

*Reading Level: Grades 3–4

*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

Interest Level: Grades 2–5

Guided Reading Level: O

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points: 3.9/0.5

Lexile™ Measure: 700L

THEMES: Family Life (Mothers, Siblings), Growing Up, Sharing and Giving, Identity and Confidence, Overcoming Obstacles, Immigration, Imagination, Home, Dreams and Aspirations, Conflict Resolution, Biography/Memoir, Poverty, Empathy and Compassion, Gratitude, Optimism and Enthusiasm, Collaboration, Latino/Hispanic/Mexican Interest

RESOURCES ON THE WEB:

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/my-very-own-room-mi-propio-cuartito>

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