GROW YOUR FAMILY'S READING LIFE!

AN INTERGENERATIONAL AUTHOR STUDY FEATURING

MEG MEDINA

Co-Created with Kass Minor in partnership with The Author Village
# AN INTERGENERATIONAL AUTHOR STUDY FEATURING MEG MEDINA
Co-created with Kass Minor in partnership with The Author Village

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Meg Medina, Age 10,  
Spending time at a park in Queens, New York
Reading is a collective experience. It is conversational, connective, and intergenerational.

Our lives are immersed in reading and writing. It is all around us. When we work to grow our knowledge and literacy, our understanding of the world is deepened. But the literacies within our families and communities aren't limited to reading books. They include activities such as story-building, joke-telling, and recipe-making that keep everyone from Auntie to Abuela to Popo to the Wakanjeja in our families connected with deep empathy and powerful relationships.

When it comes to reading, kids are often told to write traditional book reports, complete ready-made worksheets, update reading response logs, and read in quiet corners.

This summer -- and in all future schooling moving forward -- we have the opportunity to change how kids feel, understand, and interact with the books they read. The adults who care for them can be a vital part of that change.

Let's start here. Together. Let's begin with THIS author study. Let's build the kind of reading experiences that bring joy to children, deepen their connections with the people they love, and help them better understand themselves in our changed world.

Meg Medina and Kass Minor
An author study is a reading experience, a reading experience for readers young and old. It's a reading experience for entire families.

An author study helps readers understand how an author’s personhood is connected to the stories he/she/they write. At the same time, it helps readers find ways to connect and reconnect with their own family and friends' personhoods and stories.

This author study guide showcases one of the most beloved and celebrated authors of this or any generation, Newbery Medal-winner Meg Medina. The guide contains summaries of some of her most popular titles and accompanying activities designed to evoke joy and creativity.

This guide is for everyone!

Often times, when we think about the word family, we think about it in biological terms. We think about the blood relatives within our family trees -- siblings, cousins, parents, and abuelas. But that's only one definition of the word family.

Families exist beyond our named relatives. These are our chosen families or our found families.

These are the people in our lives who are "related" to us or who have become "family" through the relationships we've cultivated.

These are the people who have entered our lives and become our family through friendship, warmth, spirit, and love.

We encourage you to define family in the ways that feel most inclusive and important to you. With the activities and chats in this guide, you’ll find lots of different ways to include anyone and everyone!
This guide is organized in three sections:

I. Meet the Author
In this first section, families will have the opportunity to get to know author Meg Medina’s reading life as well as some of her own family experiences. Then, families will work together to create space to share and listen to stories about their own literacy and reading lives.

II. Review and Read the Books
Five books authored by Meg Medina are summarized in this guide. Depending on age and reading development, kids can choose to read 2-3 titles. All of Meg Medina’s books are available at your local library, bookstore, and online.

III. Family Literacy Activities
Instructions for and examples of family literacy activities for the selected texts are provided. Families and kids will have the opportunity to create, discuss, and connect lessons learned from reading the books to fun experiences in real life.

Meg Medina reading on her back patio with her daughter, Cristina
This author study guide was based on reading and research, which tells us that young children should read books to:

**EXPERIENCE JOY**  
**LEARN LIFE LESSONS**  
**BUILD EMPATHY**  
**SUSTAIN AND DEVELOP READING PROFICIENCY**

It was also written with the understanding that humanity has been through a lot lately, and that children and grown-ups learn best when they are joyful and curious. This requires safety, security, and predictably. It’s important to consider those needs as families and children choose their reading experiences and matched activities.

Activities within this guide support the reinsertion of joy and curiosity. When paired with the stories provided by Meg Medina, there are many opportunities for new discussions, shared knowledge-making, and greater empathy within families and beyond.

Finally, one of the greatest indicators of sustained reading growth is reading volume. The more any one person reads, the more proficient they become. By reading any one or two or five of the books within this guide, kids may be inspired to read more books that are connected to or inspired by the characters, storylines, cultures, and activities within this author study.
Families are encouraged to let young people choose the books they’d like to explore. Research shows that when children are given choice and agency in their reading selections, both their comprehension and their love for reading grows. Of course, some content is more appropriate for older readers. Certainly feel free to gauge your child’s readiness for middle grade and YA books. For example, in "Merci Suarez Changes Gears," the Suarez family is navigating the character Lolo’s Alzheimer’s diagnosis. That might be a lot for a first grader to handle!

However, if you have a child who is ready for such content but still has a hard time navigating the print, know that listening to audiobooks (“reading with your ears”) is just as powerful in building literacy skills as reading a book independently. Reading books out loud together is also beneficial. And finally, older readers may wish to re-engage with picture books. Although their literacy-navigation may be sophisticated, the content and themes introduced within the picture books in this guide lend themselves to deep interpretation and meaning-making...you are never too old for picture books!

Meg, Kass, and all those at The Author Village would love for you to share the joy you experience with your family by participating in this author study. We invite you to share moments, stories, and artifacts from your experience on social media using the hashtag #TAVauthorstudy! Tag Meg, Kass, and The Author Village on your posts!

Did you know you can check out audio books, ebooks, and more from your local library using the Libby App?! Go to lippyapp.com for more info! It’s free!
As a child, who were you as a reader (i.e. favorite reading spots, memorable books you read or that were read to you, stand-out school reading experience)?

I didn’t have the luxury of many “reading spots.” We lived in a small one-bedroom apartment, so I think my best reading times were probably at school. We had something called sustained silent reading for about 30 minutes after lunch. I have memories of reading the whole Nancy Drew series. Judy Blume’s Are You There God, It’s Me Margaret, and of course, Charlotte’s Web.

I remember, too, loving Greek myths, which my friend Raquel and I often acted out or discussed. I always looked forward to the Troll book form, mostly because I got to choose what I wanted. There were no rules about what was allowed. It felt exciting to receive my shipment a month later, with everything that I had asked for inside that plastic bag.

Who are you as a reader in a parent/caregiver role?

I have grown children, so for this answer, I have to go back in time. I read a lot to my children, and I made sure that we had lots and lots of books in our home. Each one of my kids, including my oldest who has intellectual disabilities and learning challenges, had bookcases in their rooms with their favorite titles, mostly in paperback for affordability. We read together quite a bit. I loved to dramatize the stories as I read to them, and I was always on the lookout for books that helped my kids with the things they were struggling with. For example, we read Leo the Late Bloomer and Chrysanthemum. My children are all grown now, so I have the delight of buying picture books for my cousins’ children. I try to find the titles that they might not easily find online or in a big box store. I try to curate a list of really excellent books that they’ll keep forever, I hope.
Who are you as a reader as a friend?

I read every single day for pleasure, mostly at night in bed. I spend too much on books, but it is an obsession that I have no interest in curing. About 75% of what I read are children’s books, so as a friend, I am usually advising on what to read with kids or increasingly, with grandkids. But when I do read adult titles, I make sure to share the book. I lend titles out with abandon and talk about books that are exciting. And I love to post pictures of myself on social media with books that have particularly moved me.

What are you reading now? When do you find yourself thinking about what you’ve read?

I am reading "Gold Diggers," an adult title and "Amber and Clay," a middle grade novel based on Greek mythology. I think about what I’m reading in lots of different spaces, but I think of my reading diet most when I am composing. All those works are mentor texts, in a way. I keep in mind the strategies that I liked and the ones that felt forced or ineffective.

I keep in mind the storylines and themes that have been written about a lot, trying to find spaces that feel uncharted in some way. I also think a lot about courage. I keep in mind those writers who put bold things on paper. Their work reminds me that I am not here for pleasantries necessarily. I am here to write the story of childhood and to write the stories that help us thrive in childhood.

BOOKS FEATURED ON MEG’S STOOP

Thunder Boy Jr by Sherman Alexie, Illustrated by Yuyi Morales
Viva Frida by Yuyi Morales, photographed by Tim O’Meara
Just In Case: A Trickster Tale and Spanish Alphabet Book by Yuyi Morales
Los Gatos Black on Halloween by Marisa Montes, Illustrated by Yuyi Morales
Dreamers by Yuyi Morales
Niño Wrestles the World by Yuyi Morales
Ladder to the Moon by Maya Soetoro-Ng, Illustrated by Yuyi Morales
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<td>Young Readers Ages 4-10</td>
<td><strong>Mango, Abuela, and Me</strong></td>
<td>Mia doesn’t speak Spanish. Abuela doesn’t speak English. How can they get to know each other if they can’t communicate? It’s a spunky parrot named Mango to the rescue.</td>
<td>Family, Language, Communication</td>
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<td>Young Readers Ages 4-10</td>
<td><strong>Evelyn Del Rey Is Moving Away</strong></td>
<td>Evelyn Del Rey is Daniela’s best friend. They do everything together and even live across the street from each other in apartments that are almost the same: Daniela with her mommy and her hamster, and Evelyn with her mommy, her daddy and her cat. But not after today - not after Evelyn moved out of her house. Meanwhile, the girls play among the moving boxes until it is time to say goodbye, and they promise to keep in touch, knowing that their friendship will always be special. This is a loving story about friendship and life changes, beautifully written by Meg Medina, enhanced by Sonia Sánchez’s colorful and vibrant illustrations depicting the girls’ urban neighborhood.</td>
<td>Friendship, Change, Urban life</td>
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## MEET THE BOOKS

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| **Young Readers**  
Ages 4-10 | **Tía Isa wants a car** | Tía Isa wants a car. A shiny green car the same color as the ocean, with wings like a swooping bird. A car to take the whole family to the beach. But saving is hard when everything goes into two piles – one for here and one for Helping Money, so that family members who live far away might join them someday. While Tía Isa saves, her niece does odd jobs for neighbors so she can add her earnings to the stack. But even with her help, will they ever have enough? Meg Medina’s simple, genuine story about keeping in mind those who are far away is written in lovely, lyrical prose and brought to life through Claudio Muñoz’s charming characters. | Perseverance  
Immigration  
Family Dreams |
| **Young Readers**  
Ages 10-14 | **Merci Suárez changes gears** | Merci Suárez knew that sixth grade would be different, but she had no idea just how different. For starters, she’s not exactly like the other kids at Seaward Pines because she and her older brother, Roli, are scholarship students. At home, Merci’s most trusted ally, Lolo, has been acting strangely and no one in her family will tell her anything about what’s going on with her grandfather. In a coming of age story that features family, friends, frenemies – and ripped off eyebrows – we look at the confusion and constant | Transition to Middle School  
Relationships with Elders/Grandparents  
Coming of Age  
Memory |
**MEET THE BOOKS**

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<td><strong>Young Readers</strong></td>
<td><strong>Merci Suárez Can’t Dance</strong></td>
<td>Seventh grade is going to be a real trial for Merci Suárez. For science she’s got no-nonsense Mr. Ellis, who expects her to be a smart as her brother, Roli. She’s been assigned to co-manage the tiny school store with Wilson Bellevue, a boy she barely knows, but whom she might actually like. And she’s tangling again with classmate Edna Santos, who is bossier and more obnoxious than ever now that she is in charge of the annual Heart Ball. One thing is for sure, though: Merci Suárez can’t dance—not at the Heart Ball or anywhere else. Dancing makes her almost as queasy as love does, especially now that Tía Inés, her merengue-teaching aunt, has a new man in her life. Unfortunately, Merci can’t seem to avoid love or dance for very long. She used to talk about everything with her grandfather, Lolo, but with his Alzheimer’s getting worse each day, whom can she trust to help her make sense of all the new things happening in her life? The Suárez family is back in a touching, funny story about growing up and discovering love’s many forms, including how we learn to love and believe in ourselves.</td>
<td><strong>Navigating Friendship in Middle School</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Family</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Coming of Age</strong></td>
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These activities are designed with multi-age, multi-generational groups in mind. Have both a kindergartner and seventh grader in your family? No problem! This author study enables whole families to engage in activities that are connected thematically, with multiple entry points for each family member, all the while growing important literacy habits both collectively and individually. After kids have read some of the books, they will choose which activities they’d like to participate in with their families. Or they may wish to engage in an activity or experience independently. That’s fine too!

**Make Space for Sharing Stories**

![Mango, Abuela, and Me](image)

**Staying Close Even When We’re Far Away**

![Evelyn Del Rey Is Moving Away](image)

**In the Face of Impossible, Plan Out Dreams Together**

![Tía Isa Wants a Car](image)

**Unpacking Memories: Understanding Each Other as Readers and Knowers**

![Merci Suárez Changes Gears](image)

![Merci Suárez Can’t Dance](image)

**EACH FAMILY LITERACY ACTIVITY INCLUDES:**

- "Family chat" conversation starters, questions, and prompts
- Hands-on experiences such as cooking, art-making, and trips!
- Multicultural learning, including immersion in world languages!
Like Abuela, there are many elders and grandparents who experience significant change when they move from their own homes into their children’s homes. In the home of her son, Abuela finds herself in a crowded neighborhood, surrounded by English speakers and brown and grey animals, quite different from the tropical landscape and bright colors and the hum of Español. Everything is new and unfamiliar, and Abuela finds herself in a period of adjustment.

Luckily, the relationship that blossoms between Abuela and her granddaughter, Mia, supports her transition. Mia and Abuela find themselves creatively navigating communication with one another.

Mia speaks mostly English, and Abuela speaks mostly Spanish, but through pictures, word cards, a little love, and most of all, their new family pet, Mango, they grow together and teach us about:

- **Family** (Intergenerational Relationships) and the unique learning that comes from relationships fostered between elders and young people.
- **Language** and how the beauty and power behind words is constructed and cultivated.
- **Communication** and how our ability to understand and be in relationships goes far beyond language.

While sitting at the dinner table or while going for a walk or even while doing dishes, think or talk together about how any one or all of these themes show up within your own family!
In the beginning of the story, we learn that living alone is no longer ideal for Abuela. She moves from the countryside on a tropical island to her son’s home in a more urban environment. We find Abuela taking great comfort in her granddaughter, Mia, especially because they share a room! Abuela shares pictures of home and small mementos like the red pluma with Mia, but when it’s time to read books together, Mia and Abuela struggle.

Reading collectively is often spotlighted as the most important thing for families to do together to build literacy. But it’s not the only way. Telling stories outside of the context of books is another, and that’s what Abuela and Mia do. The expression, “A picture tells a story of a thousand words” certainly rings true for them.

- What are some ways your family shares stories outside of books?
- What pictures and/or mementos carry meaning, perspective, or even laughter, in your family?

When it comes to communicating with words, at first, Abuela and Mia do not share the same language. Mia’s mother reminds Mia about the language—learning her friend and classmate Kim experienced. Thanks to the post-its with English words plastered all over the house and lots of practice, Abuela’s fluency improves. And then it really improves when Mia and her mother bring home Mango, un loro (parrot)!

Although not every family experiences the same types of communication barriers as Mia and Abuela, the struggle to understand one another is experienced by families everywhere.

- What barriers pop up in your family that make it hard to understand one another?
- What are some of the solutions that have worked for you and your family?

While Mango and Abuela used post-its and a pet to reduce their communication barrier, in the end, their love and relentlessnes increased their ability to communicate.

- In what ways has your family, both past and present, been able to cultivate love and relentlessness to improve communication?
Make Space for Story-Telling Between Generations

The specialness experienced between youth and elders who share stories and experiences is unmatched. Through photos and artifacts, the spirit of memory floods from elders to young people, and has the power to grow familial knowledge that text books and YouTube cannot.

Often times, the most difficult part of cultivating relationships between youth and elders is finding the time and space for them to do so. While some pairs are lucky enough to be like Mia and Abuela, living together, cooking together, and walking to and from school together, many others aren’t so lucky. Work constraints, distance, and other barriers make it hard to maintain and foster relationships.

LITERACY HABIT SPOTLIGHT

When families stretch their ability to understand themselves and one another, and creatively move through a variety of communication styles like story-telling, they are building powerful literacy that goes far beyond print-based literacy. In the following activities, families will build multiple literacy skills such as:

- Self-Awareness
- Linguistic Flexibility
- Communication-both written and oral
- Historical Responsiveness

Steps to Form Story-Telling Relationships between Generations

In this family literacy activity, you will work with your child to develop a story-telling relationship with an elder that includes sharing oral histories, photos, artifacts, and/or favorite places.

1. Brainstorm a list of elders in your life with your child. Keep in mind that it’s important for your child to have some kind of previous sparked interest. If not, a forced communication could cause great discomfort and the possibility of decreased communication. And also keep in mind that elders don’t have to be grandparents!

Some kids will be able to quickly name who’d they’d like to “befriend.” Others may need some thinking prompts. The following questions will help to generate a list of possible partners:

- Who do you know that is 20 years older than you?
- Who tells the best jokes in our family?
- Who is the most mysterious person you know?
- What events have happened a long time ago or in our family’s past that you would like to learn more about?
2. Invite one or more people on the list you generated to share some stories and/or sit down for an interview. Create an invitation with your child that will reach the elders you’d like to share stories with and/or interview.

The invite could take shape in many different forms such as an email, a voicemail, a phone call, an in-person request, a short video, or a hand-written note. Keep in mind, it’s important for your child to have some agency. This means that even if they are only five years old, for instance, and are just developing their ability to hand-write, they can still draw a picture-invite! Grown-ups can support them by labeling the picture or by including a post-it with an important details. The invite can be VERY SIMPLE! For example, a voicemail from a third grader to their Great Aunt might go like this:

Hi Auntie! It’s Mira. We haven’t talked in a long time, but I’m doing a family literacy project, and I was hoping to FaceTime with you to learn more about how you spent your summer as a kid. I also have some other questions to ask! It would be so great if you had some old photos or old stuff to show me! Can you give my mom a text to let me know when we can chat?

3. Lightly prepare for the meet-up. The goal of this special youth-elder pairing is to experience the wonderment that comes with intergenerational love! But don’t over prepare. And don’t over-think about what’s supposed to happen during their meet up. The most important consideration is to make sure there is time and space for a relationship to bloom. A few ways to support shared stories, and/or interviewing are described below, but we also encourage you to take your own spin on our suggestions!

For elders:

- Bring artifacts from the past. Artifacts are always great conversation starters and curiosity builders!
- Bring a few things that your younger partner may not have seen before or that they might be able to interact with. For example, imagine the wonder and delight kids might experience when you show them the rotary phone your family used to call people!
- If you have a specific story in mind that you’d like to share from your life, accompanying photos help kids stay attentive!
- Consider meeting them at a favorite place you frequented in your youth to tell the story of how that place is connected to you.

Imagine the stories an old rotary phone might inspire!
Think about what you would most like to know about your partner. Prepare a few questions. Here are a few ways to think about what questions to ask:

- **Similarities and Differences.** Compare and contrast differences about the topics you are wondering about.
- **Time.** History carries a lot of information. The people who lived it carry the stories!
- **Place.** What parts of the world are meaningful to you? How might your partner be connected to them?
- **Media.** Discuss movies, music, television, magazines, the news. You can even bring a magazine to look at together!
- **Family.** What kind of things are you wondering about your family or your partners’? Most of the time, elders have fresh perspectives!

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In Mango, Abuela, and Me, there is a scene where Mia recreates what she remembers from language learning in her classroom in her family’s living room. Mia and her family notice Abuela’s frustration and work towards supporting her learning English. Mia sticks notes with the English words all over furniture and other household items. At first, it’s a bit of a struggle, but Abuela finds her rhythm and engages in language learning that sticks!

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**Stretch Your Family’s Communication Through Language Learning!**

Many of Meg Medina’s books are also available in Spanish! Additionally, families can explore lots of books in various world languages at their local library! (see the Children’s World Languages book section featured at the Brooklyn Public Library on the far left).
In this family literacy activity, families will work together to stretch their communication skills by new language exposure and non-verbal communication games. It’s important to recognize the power of language and participating in the learning of a new language helps to develop deeper empathy for those close to us.

Reading books, watching various forms of media, and observing the world that surrounds us with an ear tuned into new languages is a great way to expose kids and grown-ups to the multilingual world in which we live.

- If Spanish is not your first language, read Meg Medina’s books in Spanish! All of the books included in this author study are available in Spanish. So are many of the other books Meg has written!

- Visit your local library or book store and find the “books in world languages” section. Usually, these sections are located in the youth wing of a library or children’s books section of a bookstore. Find a few picture books in a new language for your family. Do your best to read the words out loud if you are familiar with that language’s alphabet. If not, use the pictures and do your best to tell the story together! You can also find many books available as audio books. Reading with your ears is reading!

- Listen to music in a new language with your family. There are many ways to find music in different languages from all over the world. Visit youtubemusic.com online, surf your local radio stations, or listen to bilingual artists like Shakira, Bad Bunny, or BTS.

- Play the “quiet game.” See how long you and your family can communicate with one another without using words -- written or spoken -- to communicate. Notice what communication behaviors you rely on to understand one another.
Watch movies or T.V. shows in a new language with English Subtitles! Search for “foreign films” on a variety of viewing platforms and see what pops up. There are many cartoon and family-friendly short films available in a variety of languages with subtitles. While viewing or afterwards, discuss how it felt to read the subtitles and watch the film at the same time in order to understand what was going on.

Observe different types of language that surround you. In any given place, whether in the grocery store, at the beach, or on a road trip, notice the different languages that pop up. What languages do you hear? Can you name them? What language is shown on signs-in the store or on the road? Is it English? Spanish? Another language?

Do some research to figure out the differences between alphabets and syllabaries (google is fine!). What are some different ways languages are written? Try writing words using an alphabet new to you or syllabary you’ve not used before.

Use “bot-translation” to learn words in a new language. Abuela and Mia used post-its to translate their household items, but if you have access to a smartphone, you can say, “Hey Google!” (or Siri or Alexa or whatever your bot’s name is) and ask for a direct language translation for almost any item. For example, when you ask, “Hey Google! How do you say cauliflower in French?” The reply will be, “Chou fleur!” Do your best to document the items you translate on stickies and post them around your house. Practice using the new words in conversation, just like Mia and Abuela!

FAMILY REFLECTION

• How does it feel to make meaning through a new language?
• What non-verbal communication behaviors did your family rely on to understand one another?
• In what ways has your empathy for language-learning grown?
Evelyn Del Rey’s friendship with her neighbor Daniela serves as a powerful reminder of how important and special the relationships between young people are. Grown ups are often faced with numerous challenges the world serves them, and when faced with adversity, the needs of young people can be overlooked, despite parents and caregivers’ best intentions. This duo shows us how children feel about and cope with the inevitable changes life brings them when they are separated by Evelyn’s move.

Evelyn and Daniela pull at the heart strings of both children and adults, and serve as important reminders of how family and friends can show up for each other when people we love move far away.

With their families, Evelyn and Daniela teach us about:

- **Friendship** and what it means for children to maintain a spirit of free-play and imagination in the face of adversity
- **Change** and how it impacts young people’s emotions, and what types of coping mechanisms they might be drawn to when they are separated from people they love
- **Urban Neighborhoods** and the vibrant landscapes they provide for imagination, play, and familial connections

While sitting at the dinner table or while going for a walk or even while doing dishes, think or talk together about how any one or all of these themes show up within your own family!
Older family members, who were the Danielas and Evelyn Del Rey’s in your life when you were growing up?
What kinds of games did you play or experiences did you share with your closest friends?

Younger family members, do you have a Daniela or Evelyn Del Rey in your life now?
What do you like to do when you spend time together?
How are the activities your family described from their youth similar or different to yours?

Evelyn Del Rey and Daniela engage in spirited play and share a kindred friendship that comes from loving each other, and also, from being neighbors.

Older family members, growing up, did you also have neighbors that looked out for one another? Describe the kind of neighborhood you grew up in. Was it more urban or rural? What did it look like? What smells or defining features do you remember?

Younger family members, describe where you live now. How do you see yourself spending time with Daniela and Evelyn del Rey in their neighborhood?

At the beginning of the book, we learn that Evelyn del Rey is moving. While both girls are aware of the imminent change, they make the very best of their last moments together as best friends and neighbors.

Has your family experienced separation from loved ones? In what ways?
How does moving to a different home or place impact those who leave and those who stay?
Take a Walk!
Learn More about the People and Places in Your Neighborhood

Walking through your neighborhood with an intentional eye provides an opportunity to witness what’s beautiful, what’s hard, what’s happening, and what’s not. This activity helps families plan out a walk and learn from it. Together, your family will decide on a focus for the walk. It could be art-focused, or perhaps you’d like to zero in on plants and animals. Maybe your walk is activity based, where you document and discuss the types of celebrations that are happening amongst different groups of people.

LITERACY HABIT SPOTLIGHT

When children learn more about their neighborhoods, towns, or cities, they are exposed to a variety of literacies ranging from learning how to read a compass rose to following directions on a map to discovering how the art and murals on their street is connected to a moment in time. With a little intentionality, these types of literacies can be built through something as simple and mundane as a family walk or maintaining connections with friends from near and far through a pen-pal exchange! By participating in the following activities, your family will build the following literacy skills:

- Geographical Awareness– how to get from point A to point B
- Communication– both written and oral
- Prioritizing
- Artistic Expression
- Place-Based Literacy

Steps for Building Literacy By Going On a Walk!

- Co-planning! Decisions about the walking focus should be done together. This is a great way for kids to show agency and motivation around their learning without having to plan anything complex or acquire extra materials.

- The Process! The guide below is a suggested process for planning a walk with intentionality to build literacy and to connect to the vibrancy in the people and places that surround you and your family. We hope you feel less inclined “to finish the worksheet” and more inclined to use the guide as a tool for growing intention around a short walking trip.

- The Experience! While the walk is meant to be an experience with a central focus that families discuss, learn, and document (and maybe take some beautiful photos!), more than anything, the walk is meant to be a fun activity families experience together. If kids don’t want to go on the walk, chances are, it will not be fun, and learning will not happen. Try to find a time where the walk feels positive for everyone participating.
MY WALKING TOUR
A PLANNING WORKSHEET FOR YOUR WALKING TOUR

I’M GOING TO CREATE A:

☐ Historical Walk
☐ Casual Walk
☐ Art Walk
☐ Other:

PLACES FOR THE WALK:
Make a list of possible streets, neighborhoods, or sights that you might want to include in your walk:

__________________________
__________________________
__________________________
__________________________
__________________________

THE WALKING ELEMENTS
THAT I’LL HIGHLIGHT ARE:
Encircle 4-5 items from the list:

pathways surprises historical facts questions services
place names architecture plants people street art
shapes buildings functions animals activities
contributions events transportation monuments/memorials

HERE’S AN INITIAL SKETCH OF MY WALK:

Draw a set of interconnected points that reflects your walk. How do you want your students to move from point to point?

The “My Walking Tour” page was created by Cathlin Goulding, Ed.D., Co-Director of The YURI Project and is shared with her permission.
Develop a series of 6-7 important places to "pause" during your walking tour. These might be a site with a history you’d like to discuss, features of a building or landscape, or art or objects you’d like to observe.

Write a few sentences explaining your choice of "pauses" on your walk.

The "My Walk" page was created by Cathlin Goulding, Ed.D., Co-Director of The YURI Project and is shared with her permission.
Connect with Friends Through Letter Writing

On the very last page of "Evelyn del Rey is Moving Away," we see Daniela, much older now, reading a page from a box of letters that we can only guess are from her dear friend Evelyn del Rey! Connecting with friends via hand-written letters is almost a lost art, but it's never too late to encourage this kind of writing!

Even if friends haven't moved away, writing letters or exchanging postcards is a beautiful way for young people to stay connected (and practice their writing!) during periods where they don't get to see their friends regularly. If you find your child feeling shy about creating handwritten letters, start off with elderly people you know or their grandparents. Writing notes to older people is an easy, nonjudgemental way to connect to people and practice the art of letter writing that has huge emotional returns for both writer and receiver.

Tips for Initiating Letter-Writing in Your Family

- **Share letters from yesteryear—they're mentor texts!** If you have old letters from yesteryear in your home, share them with your family! Letters from the past are incredibly rich and will also show new writers the basic structure of writing a letter.

- **Embrace multiple forms of letter-writing.** Not everybody is drawn to structured-paragraph letter writing. In fact, the actual structure of the letter isn't the most important thing—the connection between writer and receiver is! Drawing pictures with a few labels or annotations, sending short poems or favorite epigraphs, or creating a photo story through a series of pictures with captions printed out are all powerful forms of both connection and literacy.

- **Provide snazzy writing supplies** for participating family members. Stickers, notecards, and colorful pens are extremely encouraging for both young and older people alike to initiate letter writing. *See a post card print out from the book on the next pages!*

A coloring page Kass sent to her grandmother in 1988!
When I was growing up, I moved to six different states; I was always the Evelyn in the story of "Evelyn Del Rey is Moving Away." I remember feeling so envious of the friendships I observed within my school. As the "new kid," I felt like I had drawn the short end of the stick between those who move and those who stay. Making new friends took so much effort, and the awkward layer of permeating old spaces and people who had known each other for what seemed like forever never really went away.

Fast forward to the present: as a mother of two children who live in Brooklyn, in this place I've stubbornly stayed in and called home for almost twenty years, I've now witnessed my young daughters fulfill the role of the Daniela's, the kids who stay, the kids who continue to live in the small apartment within the city, while their peers move to the suburbs or across oceans for more space, more greenery, and other new ways of life. Through my kids' eyes, I've learned that watching your friends move away can be just as hard as leaving.

Kass's Air-Force Base issued ID card from 1989. Like many other military families, her Dad's role in the armed forces required her family to move around a lot.
AN INTERGENERATIONAL AUTHOR STUDY FEATURING MEG MEDINA
Co-created with Kass Minor in partnership with The Author Village

Use the post card below to send to a friend! For a full pdf print out, access the card on Meg Medina's website at bit.ly/EvelynDelReyCard
FAMILY LITERACY ACTIVITY #3

PLANNING DREAMS TOGETHER WITH “TIA ISA WANTS A CAR”

Tía Isa and her niece are no stranger to hard work, goals, and the daily grind of living that many immigrants experience, especially during their first few years in the United States. As they work towards both simple and robust dreams, they are faced with dismissal and doubt from both friends and family.

Despite what often feels and seems impossible, Tía Isa and her niece teach us about:

- **Perseverance** and what it means to stay committed to a goal and work together on a smart plan

While sitting at the dinner table or while going for a walk or even while doing dishes, think or talk together about how any one or all of these themes show up within your own family!

- **Family Dreams** and how hard work and hope in tough times, and how deep belief in one another can help prove that dreams really do come true

- **Immigration** and what immigrants living in the United States go through in order to both survive and provide for family near and far
FAMILY CHATS

Tía Isa’s niece lives in the city with her and Uncle Andres, while her parents live with her bisabuelos in their home country, a tropical island. The niece takes great comfort in listening to Tía Isa’s stories from back home and reading letters from her parents about island life.

- **Older family members** -- share a few stories about home from long ago. What do you miss? What was special? What are some similarities and differences between back then and how your family lives now?

Throughout the story, Tía Isa’s niece proclaims that “Tía wants a car.” In response, Uncle Andres tells her that she is ridiculous, that “she is not a rich queen!” and that they can walk wherever they need to go. Despite Uncle Andres’ doubt, Tía Isa never stops working towards the car and continues to dream with her niece about all the places the car will take them.

- **Older family members** -- what are some things you dreamed about out loud to your family members when you were young? Do you remember people doubting your dreams?

- **Younger family members** -- what are some things you dream about but have kept quiet from your family until now? What stands in the way of your dreams? How can you work together to overcome those obstacles?

When Tía Isa’s niece learns about the “two piles” of money Tía has -- one pile sent back home to help family, and one pile (very small!) to save for the car, she becomes very resourceful in helping the money pile grow. She helps her neighbors in a variety of tasks, including organizing fruit at a local store, feeding cats, and teaching Spanish!

- **Older family members** -- what are some odd jobs you’ve worked to make a little money? Share a few surprising stories from your past!

- **Younger family members** -- what kinds of odd jobs could you do around your community to make a little extra money? What would you do with the money you made?

Here are a few discussion questions to help surface some of your own family stories that will help your child/children connect to “Tía Isa Wants a Car.” Choose a family literacy activity that connects to a theme you talked about or one that simply feels fun!
Family Planning: Work Together to Dream, Meet Goals, and Envision the Future!

Families empower one another when they work together to set goals, help each other, and stay committed to their dreams.

We learn from Tía Isa and her niece that “dreams” are not always larger than life. Sometimes dreams are the types of things we see on a daily basis that simply make life easier for families and kids. Like owning a car or a bigger apartment. These days, dreams are being able to meet up with multiple friends at the same time without masks or going to an amusement park for the first time.

Envisioning and picturing our goals and dreams are the first steps to reaching them, especially when they feel unattainable or when the people closest to you doubt you. If families and kids don’t begin to imagine what they want out of life, how can hopes and dreams become real? That’s why supporting the imagination is so important. Imagination enables dreams and makes it far more likely that goals will be met. Just like Tía Isa and her niece, families can work together step-by-step, in creative and unexpected ways to ensure their goals are met. These accomplishments nourish the well-being of families and help ease anxiety-ridden changes and transitions that come with the beginning and end of school years.

LITERACY HABIT SPOTLIGHT

When families spend time working together to make goals, strategize for the future, and envision their dreams, they cultivate important critical thinking skills and fuel their children’s imaginations! Multiple literacy habits are built within the following family literacy activities including:

- Oral communication -- talking and speaking
- Anticipating Outcomes
- Prediction
- Goal Setting
- Strategic Planning

Sometimes, when people ask kids what their dreams are, kids feel obligated to say something about joining the NBA or becoming a YouTuber.
CREATE VISION BOARDS TO PLAN FOR SUMMER AND FALL AND/OR TO PREVENT BOREDOM!

There are several easy-to-make vision boards families can build together. Use the following prompts to guide your process and refer to the examples only for clarification. Always remember, there is no one way to create a vision board!

Materials Needed:
- Large paper
- Glue stick
- Scissors
- Markers, pens, and/or colored pencils
- Magazines or other media for cutting up and collaging

If you are hoping to work with your family to plan for upcoming school transitions -- such as the end of school-to-summer or the beginning-of-school-to-fall -- use the following prompts:

- What do you want to happen during the end of the school year?
- What kinds of things do you imagine our family doing this summer? What kinds of things would you like to do with your friends? Where do you see yourself going? What do those places look like?
- Imagine how [insert grade your child is going to in the fall]. What do you expect? How do you imagine it will go? What are some of your goals for ___ grade?

A FAMILY REFLECTION FROM KASS

My first car was an ’89 Buick Skylark. I bought it in the summer of 1997, the summer I turned 15. It was deep burgundy and peppered with rust, and I was so, so proud of it. Not because it was beautiful, but because I worked so earnestly with my family to buy it on my own. Every week that summer, I woke up with my dad and brother to work the 6am shift to take care of the flower beds at the local golf course. I didn’t make much, but my family always supported my efforts to buy my own car, not only because they believed in me but also because it was a necessity. My family didn’t have a lot of discretionary income, so contributing in this way was super fulfilling. I imagine this is what Tía Isa’s niece felt when she showed her aunt that sock full of money she’d been saving!
To prevent summer boredom, consider creating a vision board with your child. Document the kinds of activities they enjoy doing around the house. This can be really helpful for young children who often claim “boredom” when the rest of their family is busy or is not engaging with them directly.

Prompts:
- What are some of your favorite things? Favorite toys? Favorite places?
- What parts of the house are most comfortable?
- What chores are you most proud of?
- What new things have you learned to do on your own?
- What kinds of art supplies are most special to you in our home?

SAVE UP BY HELPING OTHERS!

As a family, think about a shared experience, a big item, or a cause that everyone wants to work towards. Make a fun chart naming the shared goal and showcase it in a prominent spot in your home like on the refrigerator or the back of the front door.

Like Tía Isa’s niece, kids can be creative with how they make money, save up, and help others. For friends and family who are willing to be recipients of help, ask them if they are willing to make a small payment to your child to help them learn the connections between hard work, responsibility, and compensation. If your child is in elementary school, this can be a very small amount of money (think pocket change, literally!). For example, maybe they’re compensated twenty-five cents each time they unload the dishwasher or clean out the cat litter. Older kids who are in middle school could brainstorm more independently. Maybe they’re ready to babysit or take care of pets while people are on vacation.
Once your family has decided on what kinds of jobs they're going to try out, invite each family member to sketch or write out their tasks and anticipated contribution on the chart. Revisit the chart on a weekly basis to help everyone stay on target. Use the following prompts to start a conversation that works towards the types of family bonding and strategic planning that will help you meet your goal!

**Prompts for Family Bonding and Meeting Goals**
- What were the worst and best parts of your job/task?
- Do you need any help? How can I/we support you?
- Were you able to do your job/task this week? Why or why not?
- How does this type of task make you feel? Do you want to keep doing it?
- Do you think we'll be able to meet our goal? What happened? What did we do to make you think that?
- Should we keep our goal the same or change it? Why?
- Do you like working on your task alone or with people?

After holding a few meetings around the shared chart, your family will begin to experience regular conversations about the types of shared work everyone is doing and the challenges and triumphs that come with work, dreams, and goals. Through these experiences, families become closer. Even if the financial goal is not met, there will almost always be an undercurrent of the larger goal -- family bonding through consistent communication that will benefit everyone!

**Sharing simple, every day tasks can help develop strong family bonds!**
Unpacking Memories: Understanding Each Other as Readers and Knowers with “Merci Suarez”

Many families can relate to the relationships and themes within Merci’s stories. Merci and her family teach us about:

- **Memory** and what helps people stay connected
- **Home** and how it is shaped by family elders through their stories, culture, and values
- **Loss** and what we do to comfort one another when times get tough
- **Friendship** and how new can feel weird, strange, and even uncomfortable

While sitting at the dinner table or while going for a walk or even while doing dishes, think or talk together about how any one or all of these themes show up within your own family!
Merci and Lolo, granddaughter and grandfather, have a special relationship that is threatened by Alzheimer's, an illness that causes memory loss. Think about some of the special connections and relationships in your family.

- What types of challenges get in the way of staying close?
- How has your family been able to deal with and cope with these challenges?
- What are some ways your family finds comfort when times get tough?

In Merci’s family, home is shaped by a lot of factors such as the types of food they cook and eat, their ability to speak both English and Spanish, and even the energy of Merci’s twin cousins.

- What factors shape your home?
- How is your household similar to and different from Merci’s?

Now that Merci is in seventh grade, things seem awkward and weird, just like they do to most middle schoolers. Okay, grown-ups, this is the perfect time for you to share some of YOUR awkward middle school memories with your family.

- **Older Family Members**—what were some of your most “awkward” (or memorable!) experiences in middle school?
- **Younger Family Members**—Try to imagine an important adult in their middle school years. What do you think they were like?
- How are the stories you share similar or different when compared to Merci’s 7th grade year?
Making and Sharing Meals

Cooking is part of every culture. How we make food and share it is central to our way of life. While preparing breakfast, lunch, and dinner are ordinary, everyday activities, the way we make our meals and then share them often provides a great sense of comfort and connection. In Merci’s stories, we find her family taking comfort at the counters of El Caribe, the bakery where Tía Inés works. She brings them pastelitos (pastry), tropical batidos (creamy smoothies), and café con leche (hot, sweet coffee). Lolo’s spirits are often lifted by those foods, and Merci finds a sense of familiarity eating her pastelitos beside him and sharing the woes of her middle school friendships.

The meals shared between grandparent and grandchild also carry the stories and memories of home that are best told through their tastes, smells, and textures. For many families who work to maintain connection with their elders, meal-making and meal-sharing is one of the most heartfelt ways for elders and younger family members to celebrate their relationships and culture.

LITERACY HABIT SPOTLIGHT

When families spend time together cooking recipes, making snacks, and sharing meals, believe it or not, powerful reading habits are actually forming. When your family participates in these activities, your reading habits are growing and growing!

- Oral communication -- talking and speaking
- Cultural expression
- Informational reading

- Following sequential order -- following directions
- Numerical proportion -- math skills!
- Attention to details

Make Merci and Lolo’s Favorites Using Meg Medina’s Recipes!

CAFÉ CON LECHE

Café con leche is Merci and Lolo’s breakfast drink. Cuban coffee is basically espresso that is heavily presweetened. To make a proper con leche, brew your espresso in whatever type of machine you use. (Below is my collection.) Meg’s mom used to put 2 – 3 teaspoons of sugar in the percolator; some folks add it to the coffee after it has percolated.

To finish, heat equal parts milk and add it to the coffee.

Tía Isa had a favorite. She called it, simply, “la leche.” Heat a mug of milk, add 2 teaspoons of sugar, and then dissolve 1 tablespoon of instant espresso into the milk.
AN INTERGENERATIONAL AUTHOR STUDY FEATURING MEG MEDINA
Co-created with Kass Minor in partnership with The Author Village

A FAMILY REFLECTION FROM KASS

The library has always been my jam! Growing up, my dad and mom worked a lot, so our Saturday trips to the library were special. I'll always remember this one particular Saturday. I was about nine years old, and there was a special program for kids called, “Taste Your Way Around the World.” The librarian read a selection of books representing different cultures, and then paired the books with little sample snacks that matched the culture! While I don’t remember the titles, to this day, I still remember the food! After a book about Japan, we ate a tiny dish of plain rice. After a book about Mexico, we ate a sample of tortilla chips. Of course, I’d had rice and corn chips before, but there was something so wonderful about eating in the library... and then chatting in a not so quiet way in the place known for the “SHHH” sign! That summer, I read every single title Madeline L’engle wrote, devoured Roald Dahl, and read Judy Blume’s “Just as Long as We’re Together” at least eight times. Yes, I was a reader before those snacks, but there was something about how my family surrounded me with books and reading that were the key ingredients for my reading appetite.

MAKE BATIDOS!

Batidos are smoothies, basically, with a creamy backdrop. While Lolo loved batidos de mamey or batidos de piña, here’s a recipe using strawberries and bananas, which are easier to find.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup strawberries with the tops sliced off
- 1 banana
- 1 Tablespoon sweetened condensed milk
- 1 Tablespoon sugar
- 1 Tablespoon fresh lime juice
- 1 ½ cup crushed ice

Put all the ingredients in a blender and garnish with a cut strawberry. During summer months, you can also mix in watermelon and papaya.

DOCUMENT A SPECIAL FAMILY RECIPE!

Invite a family member to your home or to a video chat, with the goal of documenting a few special family recipes. Ask them to share some of their favorite foods that are attached to special memories and meaning.

The stories they share about those foods may include holiday celebrations, a unique dish inspired by a family member from long ago, or special ingredients that are only grown in other regions. Or maybe the stories about those foods include the reactions from family and friends AFTER they’ve eaten it... because they were so delicious!
What’s your favorite food that our family eats? Who else in our family loves this food? Is there anybody in our family who has a completely different opinion about this food?

Where were you when you first ate this dish?

When is a popular time to eat this food?

Can we talk more about how this food might be connected to a certain holiday? Country? Person? Place?

Who in our family is an expert at making this dish?

Do you know how to make it? Can you help us figure out how to make it? Can we make it together?

What are the ingredients? Where can I find the ingredients?

Once you’ve established some family history about the recipe, make some space and time to try to recreate the dish with people you love.

- Document the recipe in the most user-friendly way.
- Take pictures of each step.
- Do your best to write down all the ingredients, measurements, and steps so it can be easily made and shared with others!
Meg, Kass, and all those at The Author Village would love for you to share the joy you experience with your family by participating in this author study.

We invite you to share moments, stories, and artifacts from your experience on social media using the hashtag #TAVauthorstudy! Tag Meg, Kass, and The Author Village on your posts!

About the Co-Creator: Kass Minor

Kass Minor is an inclusive educator who is deeply involved in local, inquiry-based teacher research and school community development in her role as Executive Director of The Minor Collective. Alongside partnerships with the Teachers College Inclusive Classrooms Project and the New York City Department of Education, since 2005, she has worked as a teacher, staff developer, adjunct professor, speaker, and documentarian.

Kass reads books like other people listen to albums, and the classroom is her concert space. While Kass’s organizing work in school communities is inspired by her NorthStars Myles Horton and Fannie Lou Hamer, her pedagogy is centered in joy from the communities that surround her and motivated by the idea that every adult can teach, and every student can learn. Teacherhood, paired with motherhood, has driven her love of information sharing and redefining who gets to be a knower in the fiery world we live in today.