Roberto Nol Bernardino

Book talk project

Mexican Whiteboy

1. Author biography:



Matt De la Pena is a born San Diego native who grew up in the Latino community which would later influence his writing over the decade. He attended University of the pacific on a basketball scholarship. After graduating he would attend San Diego State university and received an MFA in creative writing. In 2008 he wrote Mexican Whiteboy which drew from his passion for sports. His novel was banned from the classroom until 2017 due to its addressing. He won the Newberry medal and is currently teaching creative writing at San Diego State University.

Photos from: <https://mattdelapena.com/bio/>

1. Mexican Whiteboy:

The novel follows the protagonist Danny, a Mexican American, and Uno, his best friend who is also biracial as they try to find their place in their respective communities. Danny uses baseball as a way to relieve himself from all of his worries and is really good at this and Uno encourages him to make it to the major leagues and even convinces him to try to get scouted. When finally given the opportunity however, Danny chokes and ends up losing the money that Uno had put down on him. After this Danny receives a superficial call from his mother who is currently living in San Francisco with her fiancé. At first, she talks about how great it is but immediately after she begins to cry and says she hates it. After this call Danny is told he will be picked up at the end of the week but is given two tickets to a game and while he is there, he sees the scout who is actually a hotdog slinger who reveals he was protected by Danny’s father and sent to watch over Danny.

1. 3 Quotes:

* “Nobody payed him any attention anyway…everybody seems to be coming at him” (16). Here we are given a taste of the struggle in Danny’s everyday life. He can clearly see the racism in San Diego and just how badly people of skin are treated by in Danny’s case the white people. Not only that but it also shows the hate towards people of Hispanic origin by the community. In Mexican culture, a person that looks the part but doesn’t speak the language isn’t considered a Mexican and this appears to be true in Danny’s case.
* “Nothing hypes him up…life they run shit.” (77) There is a sense of jealousy towards the white man in the novel. While it is not a direct statement, a lot of the characters seem to always have something to prove to the white man as if obtaining their validation from them will ultimately make them be looked as equals
* “I came here because sometimes I feel like a fake Mexican…I wanna be real” (188). This a very common idea amongst immigrants, including myself. Many of us wonder where we will fit in when moving to a new country or whether we will fit in. The lack of fitting into a culture is also another common theme in either multicultural communities or immigrant communities due to them leaving everything behind to start a new life and be a part of a new culture.

1. For future teaching:

* I would use this novel to begin to create a safe space for people of all cultures. Since my goal is to teach second language learners, this book will show them that there are many people who struggle with identity issues as they try to navigate both of their cultures. This book also addresses racism to a degree where a child can begin to understand what the concept of it is without being triggered by the topic.

1. For those not planning on Teaching:

for the author’s writing style:

“Author Study - Matt De La Peña.” *Picture Book Summit*, 20 July 2018, picturebooksummit.com/author-study-matt-de-la-pena/.

la, Posted by de, and Related Posts. “Writing for Young Readers.” *Author, Speaker*, mattdelapena.com/writing-for-young-readers/.

* Chapter 4: The book presents the reader with several family issues. Danny has to navigate the world without the guidance of his father and has to deal with strained family relationships as well as dealing with his lost sense of identity.
* With this in mind the novel should be introduced to teenagers in order to soothe the anxieties that they tend to have trying to figure out their place in the world.
* Chapter 6: This book also presents the reader with a true black sheep scenario. Danny feels like he is to white to be Mexican but too dark to be a white person and constantly has to deal with the discrimination that comes with the complexity of belonging to more than one race.

1. Text Complexity

Dale-Chall readability test:

Raw score: 1.8394

Adjusted score: 3.6365+1.8394

Final score: 5.5

Readability Grade level: 5-6th grade

* Lexile Range Test

Lexile range: 610L-800L

Overall, I think that 6th grade would be an appropriate age to show kids this book. The sentence structures were not complicated at all and the vocabulary wasn’t too advanced. I think it should be presented maybe in the later phases due to the concepts that the novel presents and it is a possibility that some children may miss out on the lessons brought forth by the novel.