***The Distance Between Us* by Reyna Grande**

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Website: <http://reynagrande.com/>

**Biography:**

Reyna Grande was born in Iguala, Mexico. When she was two, her father had moved to the United States to find a job to support the family. A couple years after, her mother had moved to the United States to live with her father, leaving behind Grande and her siblings with family. It was not until she was ten that Grande and her siblings had moved to the United States as undocumented immigrants. Many years later, Grande was the first in her family to graduate from college with a B.A. in creative writing and film & video from the UC Santa Cruz. She later received her M.F.A. in creative writing from Antioch University.

**Book Summary:**

The book is a memoir of Reyna Grande’s life; Reyna and her siblings are left in the care of her grandmother while her mother follows after her father in the US for work. When her mother returns, Reyna learns that her father had left her mother for another woman causing the family emotional chaos. Reyna’s mother starts to become distant and almost abandons them; during this time her father returns and takes Reyna and her siblings to the US. In this time Reyna struggles with her relationship with her father as she tries to pursue a better life for herself by going to college. In the process, she eventually comes to forgive her father for everything that has happened and becomes the first person in her family to graduate from a university.

**Quotes:**

1. “Part of me…And what don’t we know about them” (56-57).

It did not matter how much money or materialistic things a person could receive, what Reyna really wanted was to be reunited with her parents, to have a relationship with them. Because of the distance it causes her parents and her to become strangers to each other.

1. “They won’t come back…to lessen the pain” (64).

This highlights one of the fears that children who are left behind have to face. While they wait for their parents the children are scared of becoming forgotten and abandoned. Their insecurities leave them wanting and missing them more as the days go by.

1. “As I showered…And I didn’t know him” (191).

Even though Reyna now lives with her father, it is no different than living with a stranger. The many years apart has left a gaping hole between them. This scene highlights another one of the struggle that immigrant families struggle with; both parents and children have a hard time understanding each other until they learn to find a middle ground.

**Author’s Bibliography:**

Grande’s style of writing is straightforward in the way she explains how the young version of her felt and thought throughout the book. She even italicizes some of the parts in the book that are important to her, and should be important to the reader. This is not just a story about an immigrant family who moves to America; the text focuses on the relationships between Grande and her family. This book falls into the category about real-life experiences because even in the book Grande mentions that 80% of immigrant children are separated from their parents for some time. This book shed light on the struggles that some immigrants families have with the relationships they have towards family members.

**Text Complexity:**

*The Distance Between Us* has a page count of 322 pages and has an Lexile level of 780L which means that the book is suitable for readers between the ages of 8-12. However, I believe the book is more suitable for students between the ages of 13-16. The book is straightforward and explains clearly why a character feels a certain way. Also some of the sentences that are italicized show they are important to the author, to remind the reader to remember them. Although the book is straightforward there are some words and phrases that are in Spanish which could be confusing to children younger than 13, there is also some sexual content and physical abuse, but I do know there is a young reader’s edition as well that might be more suitable for younger children.

**Why We should give this book to teens:**

1. Show teens how complex relationships with others, even those who are supposed to be close to you (family) can sometimes be difficult.
2. Teaches teens that no matter how hard things are, with perseverance you can reach any goal.
3. Teaches the importance of choice, to think ahead in the future, not just for now.
4. Show the positive possibilities of letting go and moving on; forgiveness.