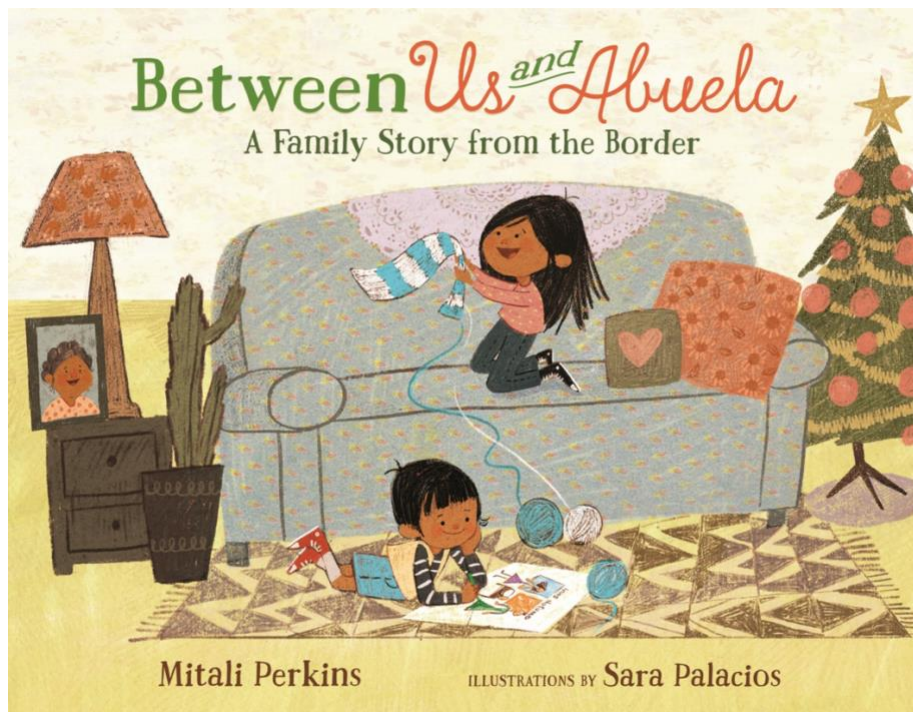# JoLLE@UGA®
JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE & LITERACY EDUCATION

Review of *Between Us and Abuela*
Written by Mitali Perkins & Illustrated by Sara Palacios

Adult/Educator Reviewer: Eliada N. Falcon
The University of Georgia
Student Reviewer: Cristal De La Cruz, 4th Grade

Adult Review: Eliada Falcon

Between us and Abuela is an adorable family story. Maria and her little brother, Juan, are excited because they will see their grandmother after five years. Maria is finishing a scarf with the help of her mother, Sylvia, and Juan has a drawing of Jesus' birth story where Mary and Joseph find no place in the inn. They travel by bus to the U.S.-Mexico border during Las Posadas. They go to Friendship park where people see their loved ones through the great border that separates them.

There's great joy and nostalgia of meeting Grandma again. However, there is a problem. Border officials do not allow the children to deliver their gifts. Juan begins to cry so Maria devises a very creative plan: turning Juan's drawing into a kite that can fly over the fence, just like the seagulls, and giving it to Grandma.

The book caught my attention instantly when I saw the title in English and Spanish. The illustrations are beautiful and closely follow the storyline. The text for each page is short but has some uncommon words. It would be good for educators to study the words or phrases in Spanish to help English speakers. It is a good choice for Spanish-speaking children who are English Language Learners (ELLs) because the familiar words in Spanish and the illustrations allow more reading comprehension without the help of a dictionary. I think many young readers will relate to the drama portrayed in the story of a family separated by the border trying to get together for Christmas. It is a good option for ages 9 to 12 or even adolescents. The story is simple but with themes that engage all ages and foster deeper questions and discussions.

The book covers sensitive topics such as family reunion, immigration, Border Patrol officers, Mexico-U.S. border situation, family separation, and international affairs. The author is careful in describing the conflict of the children not being able to hand the presents to the grandma through the fence with a creative plot that makes the reader feel at ease with different opinions about both sides of the border and other characters (e.g. border officers and the cheering crowd). The reader will understand the children's desire to hand the gift to their grandma as well as the duties of the border officers. However, educators should be prepared to answer children's concerns or questions about these topics and use the book for class discussion and cultural understanding. Although it is a fictional story, it is based on real places and events. The Friends of Friendship Park is located in the San Diego-Tijuana border, and the event *Posada Sin Fronteras* is held annually in December (https://www.friendshippark.org). This park is a place that transcends the international barriers between the U.S. and Mexico and changes the image of violence and crime for a more welcoming and touching scenery depicting family and friend reunions in a peaceful atmosphere.

Student Review: Cristal De La Cruz

I liked the part when Maria makes a kite out the picture.

Yes! I would recommend the book. Why? I don't know I just really liked it. I think most of the people, Spanish people in my school, my teachers, and my friends might enjoy this book.

I liked the part when they went to the border of Mexico to give the gift to the grandma. I liked the whole book. The illustrations are cute.

About Cristal:

Her parents are from the Dominican Republic but migrated to the United States before she was born. At home and church, her family speaks Spanish and English, but she is more fluent in English. She has an older brother and sister, both bilingual. She lives in Orlando, Florida.