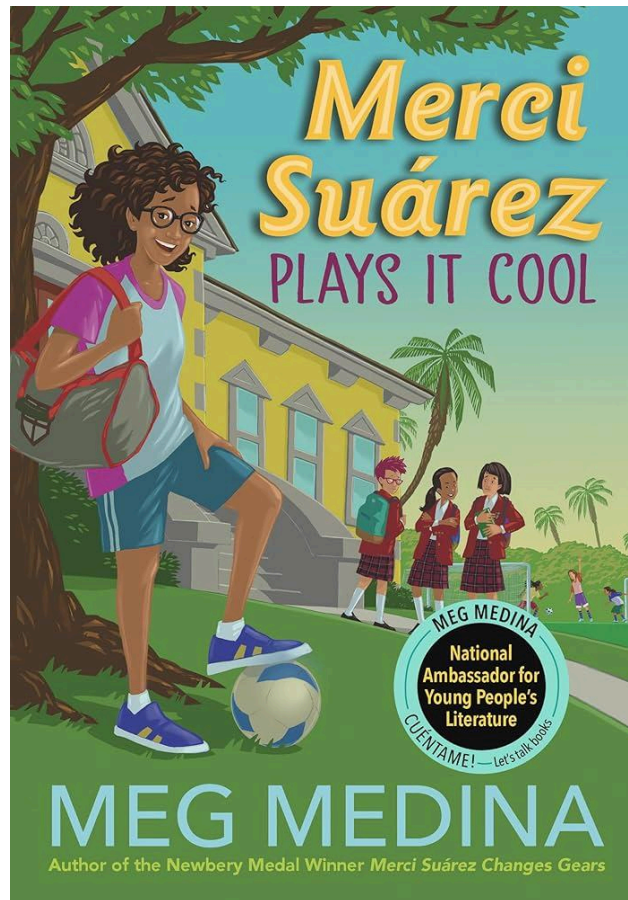


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## Review of *Merci Suarez Plays It Cool* Written by Meg Medina

**Adult/ Educator Reviewer:** Megan Beatty, 6th Grade ELA Teacher  
**Child/ Student Reviewer:** Haydee Vilchiz-Alvear, 12th Grade Student



Medina, M. (2022). *Merci suárez plays it cool*. Candlewick Press.  
ISBN: 9781536233001

### **Adult's Review:**

Merci is a typical middle school girl: excited and nervous for eighth grade. She got a brand new haircut, but the same old friend drama and changing family dynamic reside in the back of her mind. Merci walks along many social bubbles, sometimes feeling like an outcast. She has made friends with a few girls on the soccer team, including the popular Avery Sanders. However, after the season ends those friendships dissolve. She also has a few close friends outside the soccer team: Hannah, Edna, and Lena. Tragedy strikes when Merci does not have any classes with her friends. Merci is torn between two different friend groups and now has to make a choice: popularity or familiarity.

This book is very relatable to many middle school-aged students. Merci navigates the friendship quarrels many middle school students encounter. The only drawback would be the Soccer Coach, who has a very minor role, uses the pronoun "they." Though it is only mentioned once, some parents might not want their children exposed to gender expression at this age.

### **Student's Review:**

In the final book of the Merci Suarez trilogy, she enters eighth grade and begins to see many changes. At school, she must choose between her friends who she knows will be with her no matter what, or her soccer team friends, who happen to be the most popular kids at school and don't seem to have the best intentions. At home, her family is also experiencing many changes. Merci is forced to deal with her brother who has come back home to take a "break" from college, the reentry of the formerly absent father of her younger cousins, and her grandfather's worsening condition of his Alzheimer's. With all these changes, Merci looks forward to her school's weekend-long field trip to be able to get away, just for a couple of days – just enough time for everything to change.

This book targets the middle school audience really well. Merci's character is portrayed as a strong-minded and oftentimes brutally honest person, which makes her very relatable. The book brings up a few aspects of Cuban traditions such as the very strict parenting style that Merci experiences, which is a big part of her appeal especially towards a Hispanic audience, myself included. Throughout the book, there is some Spanish, and it was really refreshing to see that none of the Spanish used was italicized like it is in many other books. As a Spanish-speaker, everything was very easy to follow, and I doubt any non-Spanish-speaker would have trouble understanding the small phrases that weren't translated directly after. It is clear that the target audience is Hispanic or

Spanish-speaking middle school kids, but because of Merci's unique way of looking at the situations she goes through, I believe that many kids would find a great friend in her.