



### **Going Home**

Written by Eve Bunting.  
Illustrated by David Diaz  
Harper Collins, 1996.  
ISBN- 9780060262969

The thrust of this story is Home is where the heart is, which describes the notion of “home” for Jose and Consuelo and their family. This story is layered through the portrayal of where the hearts of Jose and Consuelo lie as they travel with their family to celebrate Christmas in

La Perla, Mexico. Presented against a vibrant rich and colorful background, the story sets a tone of “longing”, a looking forward to an important trip home to celebrate not just Christmas, but a special homecoming after being away. The children, especially Carlos, through whose eyes and perspective the story is told, are unsure about what to make of this journey. Yet, he and his siblings sense their parents’ longing to return to La Perla, even for a short while.

Carlos introduces us to his family of five—Dolores, himself, Nora, and their parents—and subtly sets the context for their life in America and their livelihood as migrant workers. The specifics and challenges of migrant work and the supportive community of families are characterized as they prepare to set out for the journey home to La Perla. As Jose drives through the U.S. border into Mexico, the reader is invited to travel along with the family through small towns and villages. The atmosphere in the car is marked with a quiet, yet pervading mix of excitement and anticipation—excitement marked by passing images full-of-life, brightly colored buildings and houses, flowers hanging from lampposts and streets of shiny stones. The villages bustle with buses passing, dogs chasing the car and towns where the people are engaged in the events of the day. All the while, little sister Nora asks her persistent question “Are we there yet?”

Anticipation builds as the journey stretches on, requiring family stops for at least three nights. Finally! La Perla comes into view with discernable sense of relief as Jose announces their arrival home. The story ends with narrator Carlos coming to realize the significance of “home” for his parents and that they have come to America for their children to make a new life. Carlos also discovers his parents in their laughter and joy as they dance in the street in the evening—at home.

Although this picture book is described as appropriate for children ages 4-8, it holds potential for exploring diversity, multiculturalism, immigration, globalization and inclusion across ages. It engages the listener and reader with the story and the images. Given the ever-changing face and landscape of American society and the underlying efforts to build awareness and understanding of others, this book is essential to cultivating an inclusive perspective. As Mara Sapon- Shevin (2008) comments “Inclusion is about creating a society in which all children and their families feel welcomed and valued” just like “home” in La Perla, Mexico.

The book's author, Eve Bunting, is a prolific writer of stories, realistic and historical fiction. David Diaz sets this wonderful story against a vibrant colorful background filled with art and photographs reflective of Mexico—adobe houses, flowers, fruits, people, animals (burro) and holiday artifacts such as tinsels, hand-decorated ornaments. The illustrations are lively in their portrayal of daily life and artifacts of Mexico.

This book can also be shared along with other picture books that explore and celebrate the importance of “home” such as: *When Africa Was Home* (Karen Lynn Williams, 1991); *Planting the Trees of Kenya: The Story of Wangari Maathai* (Claire Nivola, 2008). These books can also be supported with picture books that celebrate and honor ‘home’ while at the same time discovering new places as *Klara’s New World* (Jeanette Winter, 1993) and the classic *All Us Come across the Water* (Lucille Clifton, 1973).

### References

Shapon-Sevin, M. (2008, September). Learning in an inclusive community. *Educational Leadership* 66, (1), 49-53

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