

# Luis Paints the World

Classroom Connections, including a 3-act play to read or perform

Terry Farish and Oliver Dominguez have turned their picture book into a play! You may simply read the play aloud, or act it out. There are even directions to perform the play on an online platform such as Zoom. *Luis Paints the World* is published by Carolrhoda Books, a division of Lerner Publications. [The play begins on page 3.](#)

## Summary

Luis wishes Nico wasn't leaving for the Army. To show Nico he doesn't need to go, Luis begins a mural on the alleyway wall. Their house, the river, the park - it's the world, all right there. What about their baseball games? And the flan? But Nico is deployed, and Luis's own world expands through swooping paint on the alleyway wall and help from their Dominican-American neighborhood.

## Themes

Families and military service  
American neighborhoods  
Community murals

Brothers  
Baseball  
We Are Family

## Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

*Luis Paints the World* offers socially relevant reading for schools and individual classrooms with its features of cultural diversity and emotionally rich text. Luis experiences many emotions as the story unfolds and he and his neighborhood wait for his big brother's return from deployment. Reading the story aloud or performing it as a play can lead to activities that exemplify and reinforce SEL, Social and Emotional Learning. Students can journal, play out scenes, discuss. Possible questions:

- How do you think Luis feels at the beginning of the story? How do you think he feels at the end? What is a word or a picture that helps you understand how he feels?
- How does Luis care for himself?
- Does Luis have the tool of patience? "I am strong enough to wait." (A strategy from the SEL Toolbox Project.)
- Do you think Luis understands what his mother feels?

## Sing

[Mama Lisa's World](#) offers lyrics and music of "Naranja Dulce" - the song Mami sings - and other children's songs from many parts of the world.

## Praise

"With song and paint brushes, a family and also a community wait for that most wonderful moment, when a soldier, someone's brother or sister, daughter, husband, wife, or son, returns to the world of home. A beautiful book." --ReaderKidz

"Its beautiful message will touch the hearts of readers and maybe inspire them to create art of their own."--*Booklist*

An NCTE Charlotte Huck Recommended Book; A Bank Street College of Education "Best Book".

## Read

Other picture books by Latinx authors and illustrators that support social and emotional learning.

*All Around Us* by Xelena González, illustrated by Adriana M. Garcia (Cinco Puntos Press)

A grandfather and granddaughter have an adventure together, seeing everything in the shape of circles, the natural world, each other's eyes, and the circle of life.

*Alma and How She Got Her Name* by Juana Martinez-Neal (Candlewick Press)

Alma has a very long name. "Too long, if you asked her." But when her father describes all the wonderful people she's named for, she likes her name just fine.

*Here Comes Ocean* by Meg Fleming, illustrated by Paola Zakimi (Beach Lane Books)

Paola Zakimi's art is stunning and helps the reader see a young boy's awe when he and his parents go to the seashore. Illustrations of a startled big-eyed horseshoe crab, sandpipers, sand dollars and Fleming's poetic lines are pure joy.

*Mango Moon* by Diane de Anda, illustrated by Sue Cornelison (Albert Whitman)

The mango moon represents a memory a child has of the last time she was with her father. He has been deported. Through the moon, she holds on to a feeling of connection to him.

*My Papi Has a Motorcycle* by Isabel Quintero, illustrated by Zeke Peña (Random House)

A mad-cap ride on a motorcycle, a love story between a little girl and her carpenter dad, and an ode to a city - the author's Corona, California - this story is huge fun to read aloud.

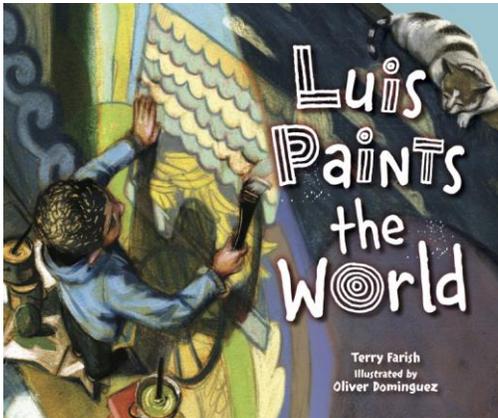
The child captures her home town in flux when her dad takes her to see the new homes replacing the citrus groves. This story feels deep and true about memory and home.

*Nacho's Nachos, the Story Behind the World's Favorite Snack* by Sandra Nickel, illustrated by Oliver Dominguez (Lee and Low)

Ignacio "Nacho" Anaya really did create the first nachos. Illustrator Oliver Dominguez said, "Creating this book always made me hungry, and I loved it. I had to indulge my creativity and make my own nacho plate and use it as inspiration and reference." Picture book biography.

*Swashby and the Sea* by Beth Ferry, illustrated by Juana Martinez-Neal (Houghton Mifflin)

Swashby is having no part of the little girl and her granny who move into the cottage next door to his quiet cabin by the sea. Martinez-Neal and Ferry create an irrepressible little girl who sings to him and draws him into her play. Can you guess who has a moment with new emotions?



# LUIS PAINTS THE WORLD

## In 3 Acts

### Actors or Readers

There are three main characters and a narrator (the neighbor). The neighbor can be one reader or a group of readers sharing lines.

### CHARACTERS

LUIS	A young Dominican-American boy
NICO	A young soldier, Luis's older brother
MAMI	Nico's and Luis's mom.
NEIGHBOR(S)	The neighbor or neighbors step in to tell parts of the story. It can be one actor or a group of actors sharing lines.
<i>(WORDS IN ITALICS)</i>	are not to be spoken; they are for the actor or reader to act out with props or to mime.
PARTICIPATION	At points in the play, the neighbor can invite all students to make a sound effect. If you do this, establish a hand signal that means "Silence!" to conclude the participation.
PROPS	might include baseball mitt, large paintbrush, cell phone, duffle bag (if possible large olive drab or camouflage)

SLIDES Oliver's illustrations are presented as slides with suggestions for when each slide could be projected in a classroom or screen-shared online. They include the title slide and a slide to open each act. The [slides are hosted on Google Drive](#).

SETTING A neighborhood in a diverse city in the U.S. that's seen waves of immigrants from many countries.

Act I	The Alleyway	Early evening, Fall
	The House	Later in the evening
Act II	The House	A week later,
	The Alleyway	Winter
Act III	The Alleyway	Summer,
		Fall again

## LUIS PAINTS THE WORLD in 3 acts

*(Screen Share Title Slide )*

### NEIGHBOR

Luis Paints the World by Terry Farish with pictures by Oliver Dominguez, published by Carolrhoda Books. Performed by .....*[fill in this blank.]*

Act I.

**(ACT I)**  
*Screen share Slide 2)*



**NEIGHBOR** *(speaking over screen share to audience)*

Come on into the alleyway in my neighborhood. I'm gonna help tell you the story of my friends. Nico, that's the tall one. His army unit's about to ship out. This is his last night home. The little one way down the alley – that's his kid brother, Luis.

*(End Screen Share)*

**NICO**

*(Nico winds up.)*

**LUIS**

*(Luis runs back to catch the ball, wearing his brother's too-big mitt.)*

Wait, I'm running. I'm ready. Your glove is so big. SMACK! Did you hear that? I got it.

*(Luis breaks into a smile with the ball in his mitt.)*

Will you be back before it snows? And we can play at the park?

**NICO**

No, man, I'll be gone. Seeing the world. Just like the army promised.

**LUIS**

Can I go too? To see the world?

**NEIGHBOR(S)**

*(Make the sound of a squeaking car door. Neighbor can invite all the kids to make the sound of a squeaking door. Then signal "silence.")*

That's Nico hauling open his car door. He's heading out to see his buddies.

**NICO**

Not leaving till morning. Catch ya before I go.

**LUIS**

*(Goes in his house, slams door, points to big duffel bag on floor.)*

What is that?

**MAMI**

*(She's at the stove stirring a pot with a spoon.)*

Your brother's army duffel bag.

**LUIS**

I'm getting inside the duffel and I'll go with him.

*(He tries to slide in the bag.)*

**MAMI**

*(Mami mimes pulling him out of the duffel by his legs while she talks.)*

I'm pulling you out of there right now. You're not going to the army, too.

**LUIS**

Where is the army?

**MAMI**

Far away. *(Pause)*

I have to get back to the flan before the sugar burns.

*(She stirs. She begins to sing as she stirs.) ("Naranja Dulce" music [here](#).)*

Naranja dulce, limon partido. Sweet honey orange, a slice of lemon.

**LUIS**

Mami, why are you singing about oranges and lemons?

**MAMI**

Oranges are sweet. Like you kids. But Nico, aiii, good-byes are sour like lemons. Why are you wearing your brother's army boots?

**LUIS**

*(Luis doesn't answer. He opens door, steps outside to the alleyway, in his brother's boots. Lets the door slam.)*

Look at that big fat moon. Can't Nico see the world from here?

**MAMI**

*(Opens the door to the back alleyway, sound of shutting door. Mami sings.)*

Naranja dulce, limon partido...

**LUIS**

*(Hauls over a can of paint and a brush to the alleyway wall and begins to paint oranges and lemons. He talks to himself, mumbly.)*

What if Nico goes far away? And he doesn't come back? *(He paints like crazy.)*

**NEIGHBOR(S)**

Hey, Luis, what are you painting?

**LUIS**

I'm painting my house. And the river. See, it loops outside my window. That's Nico - tall like David Ortiz, and me, I'm the short one like a bat. It's the world!

**NEIGHBOR(S)**

Just then, headlights light the wall. *(Make sound of the squeaky door.)*

Here's Nico come home.

**NICO**

What's all this?

**LUIS** *(Grinning wide.)*

It's the world. So now you don't have to go.

**NICO**

Come 'ere. You got this glop of paint on your cheek. What are you doing with my jacket? Where you going? You got my camouflage?

**LUIS** *(Luis runs.)*

I'm running so you'll never get it back. And that means you can't go.

**NEIGHBOR**

Luis runs inside. And there goes Nico, right behind him. *(Make sound of door slamming. Then pause in silence.)*

Listen.

*(Sound effects of the brothers rough housing. Neighbor can invite students to make the sounds of what they think rough housing sounds like.)*

**MAMI**

All right, all right, it's late. Luis, hurry and finish your flan. Stop racing around you two.

**LUIS**

I'm not going to bed.

**NICO**

Yeah, right.

**LUIS**

I'll stay awake till you come back.

**NICO**

Got you some stuff. Got you this baseball mitt. *(Hands Luis a brand new mitt.)*

And here's a new paintbrush. *(Hands Luis the paint brush.)*

Now I'm landing you in bed. Get some sleep.

**LUIS**

*(In bed. Luis squeezes the paintbrush. Squeezes the mitt. Then he squeezes his eyes shut.)*

**NICO**

Bye, kid.

**(ACT II**

Screen Share Slide 3)

**NEIGHBOR**

Act II

*(Leave slide up a full minute to allow kids to see details in the picture. Neighbor might ask kids for one detail. On Zoom, Neighbor can ask kids to write detail in the chat.)*

**LUIS**

Mami, it's been a week and the duffle is still gone.

**MAMI**

Come. We will text him again. *(She taps on her cell phone.)*

"What's happening? Send us a picture."

**LUIS**

He's writing!

**MAMI**

He says, There's mountains here like I never saw. And bikes people use to carry food.

**LUIS**

Look, there's pictures. The bike. And the mountain.

**LUIS**

*(Luis goes out. Sound: Door slams)*

I'll make the river longer. I'll make it as long as the alleyway.

**NEIGHBOR(S)** *(Watching him paint.)*

Now what are you painting?

**LUIS**

I don't know. It just happened. It's a bike. It's a bike my brother sent a picture of. And he sent a mountain. That's what these are. Now they're in the world.

**NEIGHBOR(S)**

In our neighborhood, the air's getting cold.

Icicles hang over the river on the alleyway wall.

Luis can't paint when there's ice everywhere.

But when the snow melts, he goes back to painting pictures of things Nico texted.

Luis paints a turquoise cart and bananas on the wall.

**(ACT III)**

*Screen Share Slide 4)*



**NEIGHBOR(S)**

Act III

Summer comes.

Now the sun warms the ground and the alleyway smells like honeysuckle.

*(Allow slide to stay up about a while for students to take in the details, maybe list in chat. Take down screen share.)*

**MAMI**

*(Sitting out on the back stoop by the alleyway.)*

Luis, is there a text? Bring me the phone.

**LUIS**

*(Luis sits beside Mami.)*

I want to hold it. He didn't text. No pictures. How long before Nico comes home?

**MAMI**

He comes soon. But Luis. Sometimes people, they move on. They don't come back for the baseball. Even the flan.

**LUIS**

*(Whispers loudly.)*

Yes, they do.

*(Luis runs back to the wall.)*

I'm going to paint.

**MAMI**

What's that? Who are you painting?

**LUIS**

It's Nico, see, in a Red Sox cap and it's got the # 34.

He has to promise me he'll come home.

**MAMI**

*(Singing from the stoop.)*

Naranja dulce, limon partido.

**NEIGHBORS**

The wall is bright and exciting. Look at all the people who came out to paint on the wall.

*(They speak variously.)*

Hey, Luis, can I paint too?

Luis, can I paint my puppy?

Can I use the purple?

*(Readers can call out something they like that they'd paint on the wall.)*

**MAMI**

I'm going to paint the panadería on the bank of the river.

**LUIS**

Go ahead, everybody can paint.

**NEIGHBORS**

We do. We use all the colors. The alleyway in the neighborhood is alive! But Luis - he doesn't forget that sometimes people don't come home, even for baseball, or flan.

**LUIS**

*(Luis looks worried. Neighborhood voices fade.)*

**NEIGHBOR(S)**

Next day, when school's out, Luis is back to painting on the wall.

*(Speaks reflectively.)* Sometimes people *do* come home.

It's already fall again and leaves are red and gold.

Wait! *(Looks in the distance.)* I think I see him. It looks like Nico.

Luis sees him too.

And there's his brother, walking up the alleyway.

Luis puts down his paintbrush. But he doesn't move.

He just watches. Then his face tightens. He whispers slowly

**LUIS**

You have to promise.

**NICO**

*(Kneels down a distance away. Slowly opens out his arms.)*

**LUIS**

*(Standing, makes small fists by his side. First he speaks softly. Then he shouts)*

I'm coming. I'M COMING. **I'M COMING!!**

**NEIGHBOR(S)**

*(Invite all the students to repeat.)*

You say it, too, real quiet: I'm coming.

A little bit louder: I'M COMING.

Shout it: **I'M COMING!!**

*Signal for silence.*

Then all you can hear is that kids' feet pounding on the street to get to his brother.

END