

Immigration and Transformation: My Literary Metamorphosis

By Reyna Grande

Illustration by Scott Gandell

Curriculum developed by Andrew Ramirez



OVERVIEW

Quick-Glance 10 Points for Usage Guide

Student Population	
Age/Grade-Level Appropriateness	* 13+/9th grade
Genre/s	* Memoir * Non fiction * Coming of age
Length	* 1,826 words (12 minute read)
Content Advisories	* Memories of childhood loneliness, fear of abandonment
One-Sentence Summary	A writer reflects on her journey as a young immigrant child who became a working writer in the United States, navigating life as an artist.

Lesson Planning	
Topics & Key Themes Overview	<p>Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Immigration * Broken family * Writing and creativity * Fitting in/ Feeling left out * Transformation * Discovery * Nature <p>Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Exile * Transformation/Growth * Opportunity * Hard work/ Dedication * Naivety * Success * Activism * Memory * Borders
Historic Events/Time Period for Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * US immigration policy (Zero Tolerance) * Guerrero, Mexico culture * Immigration events
Complementary Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Documentary Video: "Girl Rising: Peru" dir. Richard E. Robbins * Novel: Woman at Point Zero by Nawal El Saadawi * Interactive website: World Migration Map
Author & Artist Information	<p>Reyna Grande is the author of novels and memoirs. Her books have been adopted as the common read selection by schools, colleges, and cities across the country.</p> <p>Scott Gandell is the Art Curator at Locavore Lit LA. He is also a Board Member of The Society of Illustrators of Los Angeles.</p>
Key Common Core Standards (found in detail following the curriculum)	<p>Grade 9-10 Common Core Standards:</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.6 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.1</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.A CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.B CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.C CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.D CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.E CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.E CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.7 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.4</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.3 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.1.A</p>

	<p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.1.B CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.4.A CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.4.B</p> <p>* Note: Questions recommended for assessment are marked with two asterisks.</p>
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Author Biography

Reyna Grande is an award-winning novelist and memoirist. She has received an American Book Award, the El Premio Aztlan Literary Award, and the Latino Book Award. In 2012, she was a finalist for the prestigious National Book Critics Circle Awards. Her works have been published internationally in countries such as Norway and South Korea. Her books include *Latinos in Lotusland*, *Radical Hope*, *Count on Me*, *Somewhere We Are Human*, *The Distance Between Us*, *A Dream Called Home*, and *A Ballad of Love and Glory*. (<https://reynagrande.com/>)

Artist Biography

Scott Gandell wears many hats. He descends from a long line of creatives and business professionals. His experience is as diverse as the subjects he illustrates. He is a proud alumnus of Art Center College of Design in Pasadena. (https://www.gallerynucleus.com/artists/scott_gandell)

SYNOPSIS

A writer shares her personal story of immigrating to the US from Mexico, and her path to becoming a writer. The writer uses a butterfly analogy to describe her life — starting with stage one, the cocoon stage, growing up in poverty in Guerrero and her early interest in writing. Stage two, pupa stage, describes her college years at UCSC and pursuit of her craft. Stage three, the emerging stage, describes her career as a writer and the publication of her first novel. Stage four, taking flight, describes Reyna’s artistic aspirations to change the way people see the world.

CURRICULUM

Pre-Reading & Themes Activity Options

Topic

Google Image search “metamorphosis art” and click through images. What catches your eye about the images you see? Pick one image that is your favorite. What is it about this image that conveys metamorphosis to you? (Hint: If you don’t know what metamorphosis means, look it up!) What emotions does the image make you feel?

Five-Minute Quick Write:

Imagine a backstory to the image you selected from google. Maybe the image reminds you of a character, or a story you loved to hear when you were a child. Maybe the colors feel like a movie poster you would see on Netflix. Spend a little time gazing at your image, and then write a short story around your image. (Note: The story can be as literally or abstractly connected to the image as you wish. Be creative!)

Optional: Create a word bank for your image, selecting words that connect on some level with the image. These can be adjectives or nouns, or anything else, so long as the connection is good. After you've written about ten words, give your image a title or name from the words you wrote (e.g., *Rainbow Sunshine Unicorn Vortex*).

Main Ideas

Journaling:

In a ten-minute journal entry, respond to the following prompt:

Write a "highlight reel" of your life. Include at least 3 moments, and describe each moment and why it's special to you. These moments can be serious or funny or anywhere in between. Finally, give your highlight reel a title (i.e., *Kung Fu Panda*).

Share your writing with a partner.

Passage-Specific Themes

Small-Group and Class Discussion:

Read the following passage from "Immigration and Transformation: My Literary Metamorphosis." Discuss the questions below in small groups, then share your ideas with the class:

My writing was not meant as political engagement. It was not an act of protest, not a call for social change or a demand for social justice. It was not an act of activism. I was not writing to raise my voice to speak up for immigrants. I was not writing to change other people's perception of the world. I wasn't using language to fight for human rights. I was not writing for and about my community.

Now I do write for all of these reasons and more. But back when I was a young girl, writing for me was simply an act of survival. I wasn't trying to save the world. I was trying to save myself.

Question One: What do you think it means to write simply for survival? Do you think the author is being literal or figurative in reference to survival? Why?

Question Two: Do you believe art can help a community? Do you think it's important for artists to think about their community when they create art? Why or why not?

Question Three:

"Don't write about the things that you remember... write about the things you wish you could forget." — Sandra Cisneros

What does Cisneros mean by this? What effect does it have on the reader when someone writes about a moment they wish to forget? What effect does it have on the writer, reliving a moment they wish to forget?

Universal Themes

Option One: If you had the power to look into a crystal ball and see *your* future... would you look? Why or why not?

Option Two: You wake up tomorrow and it's the year 2032... take us through your day. What do you do? Who do you live with? What is society like? For this, you may write out time stamps to describe your day (*i.e.*, *8AM Coffee*, *hoverboard to work*, *chat with Alpha5000*) or simply tell it like a story. Good luck!

Key Vocabulary

Definitions are context-dependent. Make sure any definitions you look up or work from are the ones that most correctly fit in the context of the story.

Level One	Level Two	Level Three
nurture	chaos	metamorphosis
emerge	semi-autobiographical	marginalization
solitude	kaleidoscope	architecture
ambition	stigma	PTSD
trauma	deportation	philosophy
smuggler	caravan (n.)	social skills
avid	profound	
	refugee	

Vocabulary Activity Options

- Tell a “semi-autobiographical” story about yourself. Remember, a semi-autobiography means as you write the story of your life, you are free to include make-believe or fictional elements. Feel free to format the story any way you wish, such as including chapter headings, breaking it up into an epistolary narrative, or engaging in a complete stream of conscious “free flow.” Have fun!
- Click around this virtual “flow” map of immigratino/emigration throughout the world, the World Migration Map: <https://metrocosm.com/global-migration-map.html>). After you spend some time looking at the World Migration Map, please answer the following questions.
 - Do you live in a place (country, region, etc.) that is “attractive” to the rest of the world? Why or why not? Provide evidence to support your claim.
 - How does this map resemble a kaleidoscope? (If you do not know the definition, look it up!)
 - Do you believe the world would be a safer place if people were free to travel and live anywhere they wished in the world? Why or why not?

Post-Reading Class Discussion Options

- Do you think Grande would have pursued writing if she was born in a wealthy suburb? Why or why not?

2. What does Grande discover in college and how does that moment differ from her experience in 5th grade?
3. What does Grande mean when she compares her community of writers and thinkers to a kaleidoscope?
4. Do you think it's possible to change the way another person sees the world? Why or why not?

** Text-Dependent Question Options

1. What does Grande compare her life's journey to... and how does this comparison "parallel" the story, as Grande grows as a writer and artist? Cite the text to support your answer.
2. During what "stage" of Grande's journey did she feel like she found her connection to literature? Who in Grande's life helped foster this connection?
3. Re-read the following excerpt from "Immigration and Transformation: My Literary Metamorphosis":

"I learned that writing for social justice means having the courage to critique the society in which we live, to be honest about our struggles, to see the world from a more critical perspective, to examine our own personal histories and use those experiences for personal growth; it means accepting the idea that in order to become empowered, you first have to allow yourself to be vulnerable. It means that in order to change the world, you first have to change yourself."

In literature, authors will blend critique of society with sometimes harsh introspection into their personal lives and psyche. With this in mind, what do you think Grande means by "In order to change the world, you first have to change yourself."? Do you believe everyone has the power to change themselves? Why or why not?

Writing Exercises

Narrative

In "Immigration and Transformation: My Literary Metamorphosis," Grande uses a parallel structure of the butterfly's development and her own personal journey as a writer. This technique helps the reader balance the narrative with the physical beauty of a butterfly in order to better understand and appreciate the story.

With this in mind, think about how *your* life connects with the journey a butterfly undergoes from cocoon to final form. What events have happened in your life so far that have helped to create the person you are today? If you'd prefer, you may use another animal to make your point — like a reptile shedding its skin (*ew!*) or a bear going into hibernation (*yay!*). Have fun!

Aim for two pages. Share your essay with a partner.

Descriptive

In the essay, Grande describes the "Emerging Stage" as the time when she transformed from being "an undocumented immigrant living on the margins of society, to a professional writer who knew she had a place in the world." Even though you may not be at the point in your life where you have emerged in your final form... you might have an idea where you want to go... and who you want to be, either in the way of a career, or just a certain type of person.

For this assignment, please write a “character profile” of yourself in twenty years (if you’re 17... that means 37 years old). Your character profile can include as much information as you want, but be sure to include at least the following:

- Where you live
- What you do
- Who you live with
- What the world is like, and how you fit in

** Analysis

Write a two-page analysis in response to following questions:

- What effect does Grande’s upbringing have on her life as an adult? Do you believe Grande’s tough upbringing helped or hurt her development as a writer? Do you think artists benefit from experiencing great pain in their life? Why or why not?
- Should artists feel responsible for helping other people in their community? Why or why not? Is it possible for an artist to make art that is critical or even angry toward their community? How does this change the art?

Remember: In good writing, everything happens for a reason. When you structure your analysis, step inside Grande’s mind as if you were sitting next to her as she wrote.

Complementary Text Option

Consider this short excerpt from Egyptian writer, Nawal El Saadawi’s novel *Woman at Point Zero*, a story about a young girl who faces tremendous turmoil in her young life:

Back in my father’s house I stared at the mud walls like a stranger who had never entered it before. I looked around almost in surprise, as though I had not been born here, but had suddenly dropped from the skies, or emerged from somewhere deep down in the earth, to find myself in a place where I did not belong, in a home which was not mine, born from a father who was not my father, and from a mother who was not my mother. Was it my uncle’s talk of Cairo, and the people who lived there that had changed me? Was I really the daughter of my mother, or was my mother someone else? Or was I born the daughter of my mother and later changed into someone else? Or had my mother been transformed into another woman who resembled her so closely that I could not tell the difference?

Writing Exercise

According to this excerpt, the narrator feels alienated from her home and her family. She questions whether her mother is really her mother, and her home is really her home, etc. More importantly, the author is questioning a character norm... and using intriguing, stylized language to enhance the effectiveness. This is a good way to both show us who a character is, as well as give us a rich perspective as to how they think...

Journaling:

Think about a norm or assumption that you have questioned in the past, or have always wanted to critique or speak strongly against. What is it about the certain idea or norm that makes you question it?

Why do you believe other people do not question or critique this norm? Can you understand their perspective too? How does *your* perspective make you different from some people, but also similar to others?

Spend 15 minutes journaling your response.

Activity Options

Classroom Activity One: School Spirit Animal

Divide the class into three groups. All groups will present and combine their work after they spend about 17-20 minutes working together...

As a class: Pick a spirit animal that embodies the spirit or essence of the class as a whole.

Then...

Group 1: These students are in charge of selecting an animal that resembles the CLASS as a whole. It could be a sloth because the class is always a little slow to wake up in the morning, but ultimately they're thoughtful and kind. It could be a tiger because the class is fierce and opinionated. Whatever the case, this group is in charge of picking an appropriate animal to represent the class. After picking the animal, the group is in charge of DRAWING this animal on poster board with markers or colored pencils.

Group 2: This group is tasked with writing 5 reasons this animal and the class "match up." It could be for any of the reasons that are mentioned above... or something entirely unique and weird. Each reason should be logical, well written, and clear. These 5 reasons will be put on notecards that can be taped to the drawing that group 1 is responsible for producing.

Group 3: These students research "enemies" or natural obstacles of this animal. These could be other animals (i.e., a cobra versus a mongoose) or a larger issue, like endangered habitats. This group may select 1 big enemy or several little ones... depending on what is available.

Following, the students combine their work and feature their class spirit animal for the year. Lastly, students may be interested in thinking about the following questions:

1. What did I already know about the class as a whole going in?
2. What did I learn about the class that I didn't know before, after doing this?
3. How do I fit into this class (group) as an individual?

Classroom Activity Two: Hopes and Dreams

Gather students into groups of 2. Each student writes down one goal they have for the year, as well as one obstacle or difficulty they might experience while achieving that goal. Then, their partner listen sand offers one piece of friendly encouragement.

For example:

Student 1: I want to go to medical school, and one obstacle will be getting over my fear of blood.

Student 2: I understand your concern, but I know you to be a brave person who is attracted to a challenge, and I think that will help you overcome your fear.

Then, students present their answers to the class, as well as write their individual goals/dreams on a note card. Then, their partner says why that dream can be achievable for them (they are hard working and

wise, etc.) and staple that card to the other one. Both cards will be taped to a poster board labeled “Here We Go!”

Home Activity

Interview a family member who is at least 25 years older than you. Ask them to give you a rough timeline of their lives. As they are speaking to you, be sure to have a few questions ready, as well as a reliable way to take notes. If it is ok with the family member you are interviewing, record the conversation so you can review the story after the actual interview.

Afterward, process your notes and break down the person’s life into 3 big stages or moments that made them into the person they are today. These could be surprise events (my brother moving home unexpectedly) or planned events (graduating college).

Lastly, present these three big moments to the person you interviewed, and thank them for taking the time to share their story with you.

(Before you give this to your family member, present it to your teacher for extra credit!)

COMMON CORE STANDARDS REFERENCE

This story and its exercises are appropriate for 10th grade and above. Ninth- and tenth-grade standards are cited.

Pre-Reading & Themes Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.A - Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or establish the significance of opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.B - Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level and concerns.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.C - Use words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text, level, concerns, values, and possible biases. create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, as well as varied syntax to link the major counterclaims

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.1.A - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking. Use parallel structure.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.1.B - Use various types of phrases (noun, verb, adjectival, adverbial, participial, prepositional, absolute) and clauses (independent, dependent; noun, relative, adverbial) to convey specific meanings and add variety and interest to writing or presentations

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.4.A - Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a word’s position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

Vocabulary Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.D - Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending between claim(s) and counterclaims.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.E - Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1 - Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.4.B - Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech (e.g., analyze, analysis, analytical; advocate, advocacy) and continue to apply knowledge of Greek and Latin roots and affixes.

Post-Reading Class Discussion Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.6 - Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5 - Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3 - Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4 - Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.3 - Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, identifying any fallacious reasoning or exaggerated or distorted evidence.

Text-Dependent Question Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.1 - Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.E - Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.7 - Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.1.A - Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking. Use parallel structure.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.1.B - Use various types of phrases (noun, verb, adjectival, adverbial, participial, prepositional, absolute) and clauses (independent, dependent; noun, relative, adverbial) to convey specific meanings and add variety and interest to writing or presentations

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.4.A - Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

Writing Exercise Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.D - Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending between claim(s) and counterclaims.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.E - Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.E - Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.7 - Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.4 - Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)

Complementary Reading Text (Comparative Writing Exercise)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.E - Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.E - Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.7 - Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.D - Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending between claim(s) and counterclaims.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1.E - Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3.E - Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4 - Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically (using appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation) such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.1 - Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.