



Pam Muñoz Ryan

Born and raised in Bakersfield, California, Pam Muñoz Ryan has always been interested in stories. From dramatic play in her backyard, to exploring encyclopedias at her grandmother's house, to devouring books from the public library, stories have been part of her life. It was not until she was an adult that Ryan decided to write her stories down.

Growing up around the corner from her "Mexican grandmother's" house and one town over from her "Oklahoma grandmother" provided Ryan with a rich cultural background. Traces of her history and passion can be found in many of her books. Her command of language, in both English and Spanish, paints vivid pictures in the mind of readers.

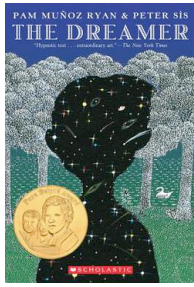
After college, Ryan coordinated Vietnamese playschools at relocation camps, taught at a bilingual preschool, and became a preschool director. Throughout all of these jobs, she maintained her love of stories and a deep appreciation for diversity among readers.

Most of her books, both picturebooks and novels, emphasize the importance of roots, whether they are family and friendship, geography, or culture. Her characters escape persecution in the middle of the night, embark on quests to find family or themselves, discover the beauty of their new homes and lives, and appreciate the simple things. All of them do so with a sense of adventure and a desire to belong, cherishing their past memories, and embracing the future. Pam Muñoz Ryan provides readers with hope, joy, and a sense of connection.

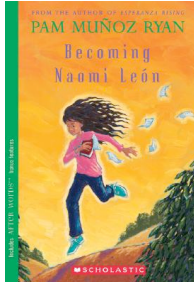
Selected Bibliography



Esperanza Rising (2000). Esperanza has it all: a big house, beautiful clothes, all of the toys a girl could want, and loving parents. In the blink of an eye, Esperanza's life shatters. She is forced to leave, smuggled out of Mexico with her mother in the bottom of a wagon. Crossing the border, Esperanza and her mother become migrant workers in California during The Great Depression. As she adjusts to her new life, Esperanza learns about friendship, acceptance, and the importance of family.



The Dreamer (2010). Listening to the mysterious voice Neftali hears, he follows, despite the taunting and teasing from neighbors and his father. His choice to follow leads him on incredible journeys. Ryan's poetic writing and Sis's gripping illustrations take the reader with Neftali, in this literary fiction novel that mixes magical realism with biography, into a promising and hopeful future.



Becoming Naomi León (2004). Naomi and her brother, Owen, live with their great-grandmother, Gram. When their mother reappears after seven years, ready to take Naomi back to live with her, Naomi, Owen, and Gram fight to keep their family together. They embark on a journey to find Naomi and Owen's father in Mexico. In the process, they learn about themselves, their roots in Mexico, and their family.

Awards

- National Education Association Author recipient of the Civil and Human Rights Award
- Virginia Hamilton Award for Multicultural Literature
- Pura Belpré Award (*The Dreamer*, *Esperanza Rising*)
- Américas Award (*The Dreamer*) and honor (*Esperanza Rising*)
- Schneider Family Award (*Becoming Naomi León*)
- Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children's Books Award (*Becoming Naomi León*)
- IRA Notable Children's Books for a Global Society (*The Dreamer*, *Esperanza Rising*, and *Becoming Naomi León*)
- NCTE Notable Books (*The Dreamer*, *Becoming Naomi León*)
- NCSS Notable SS Trade Books (*The Dreamer*)
- Willa Cather Literary Award for Writing (*Riding Freedom*, *Esperanza Rising*)

Links of Interest

- <http://www.pammunozryan.com>
Pam Muñoz Ryan's Website
- <http://www.readingrockets.org/books/interviews/ryan>
Video Interview with Pam Muñoz Ryan

Pam Muñoz Ryan is a member of USBBY. Why not join her?



This featured author profile was prepared by Bettie Parsons Barger, June 2014.