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For María Isabel Salazar López, the hardest thing about being the new girl in school is that the teacher doesn't call her by her real name. "We already have two Marías in this class," says her teacher. "Why don't we call you Mary instead?"

But María Isabel has been named for her Papi's mother and for Chabela, her beloved Puerto Rican grandmother. Can she find a way to make her teacher see that if she loses her name, she's lost the most important part of herself?

My Name Is María Isabel Details

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From Reader Review My Name Is María Isabel for online ebook

ABC says

This is a short chapter book about a girl called Maria Isabel Salazar Lopez. The teacher insists on calling her Mary Lopez to make things easier, and Maria Isabel is too shy to correct her. Plus, Maria Isabel is excluded from the Winter Pageant. It all works out in the end when Maria Isabel writes a paper saying what her true name is and that she'd like to participate in the pageant.

It is a nice story, but if there is a flaw it is that it doesn't really explain why the teacher seems so dumb and unfriendly (downright abusive almost!) at the beginning, but changes and becomes friendly and understanding at the end. It could have gone more in depth there. (I find it hard to believe a teacher can go a culturally insensitive idiot to Ms. Friendly Smile so fast.)

I wish the book would have resolved itself a little more slowly--I found myself wondering if Maria Isabel makes new friends or if she ever builds her snowman.

The book discusses the plot of "Charlotte's Web" so it is good to have read that prior to reading this book. It gives away a BIG spoiler to "Charlotte's Web", which I thought was a rather dumb thing to do.

Also, it discusses winter holidays so it would have been nice to have read this in December.

But I do think it is an important issue and good to read about.

Erin Ramai says

I gave this book a 3 star rating. It is intended for children ages 7-10. The story is narrated in third person. Maria Isabel is the new kid at school and there are already two Maria's, so the teacher decides to call her Mary Lopez. The only problem with this is that every time the teacher calls out "Mary Lopez!" Maria does not respond. This inevitably leads Maria to believe that the teacher is always angry at her and Maria Isabel's exclusion from the winter pageant. At the end of the book, Maria Isabel writes an essay entitled, "My Greatest Wish." She has an internal struggle about what to write. And she ultimately decides that above all, she would like to be called by her true name and sing in the pageant.

The plot of this chapter book is very simplistic. This may be deliberate because it is intended for readers in second through fifth grade. My Name is María Isabel would be useful in teaching literary elements including plot, setting, theme, point of view, and characterization, especially as an introduction to these terms and concepts. This chapter book is about the importance of identity and this theme is established through the use of culturally accurate versus inaccurate names. However, if you changed the name María Isabel to a name from any other culture, I feel that the book would retain most of its meaning. In my opinion, this book is mostly culturally generic. And yet, I guess that gives the book a bit of wide range appeal among various cultures.

I gave this book 3 stars because, for me, it was too straightforward. Also, the repeated use of the name María Isabel irritated me because it was as if the author thought kids would not be receptive enough to understand the book's message without heavy handed reminders.

Deb (Readerbuzz) Nance says

Maria Isabel Salazar Lopez hates having to start over at a new school. But worst of all, there are already two other Marias in her class and her new teacher decides to call her Mary Lopez!

Maria Isabel never hears her teacher when she is addressed as Mary Lopez and she ends up being skipped for the class play.

I know exactly how Maria Isabel feels. I was always Debbie A. or Deborah in a class with scores of other Debbies. I just wanted to be called by my name, too, just like Maria Isabel. I loved this book and can't wait to share it with kids in my school.

Favorite Quote: "Ah, Maria Lopez," the teacher said as she read the card. "We already have two Marias in this class. Why don't we call you Mary instead? Take a seat over there by Marta Perez and I'll give you your books later."

Chelsea says

Not impressed. The story line could have been way better and I know it's a cliche topic, but I became uninterested. I thought this was going to be a great story for my class to read together as a book club project, but the story line disappointed me. It was bland and not the inspiring book I was looking for. I think my students would get bored before they finish the book. I'll continue to look for another book for my classroom.
Pros: short, could be a good book for an individual reader
Cons: bland, would not make a good book for a class project

Alexsandy Jimenez says

My Name is Maria Isabel walks the reader through an event that many might not think will affect a child. Transferring into a new school to find yourself with a student that already has your name. Defending yourself through a piece of writing might not seem as a strong way to do so but it is efficient. The young girl Maria Isabel goes to school in discomfort for not being called her birth given name.

This is a great book to introduce any classroom to because it speaks to every single one within the classroom. This is believed because we all possess culture, our name is part of our own sense of self. Our names carry meaning, memories, and many more things that help us know who we are. Maria Isabel makes it clear that she has her very own meaning to her name despite the fact that there are others with her name in the new classroom.

Growing up there were other girls in the classroom with part of my name “Sandy” or “Alex” teachers would often call me either or Alexa but I was always bummed out that my name wasn’t what I was called, Alexsandy. This book I can really connect to , though my name has no connection to my parents family it does come along with a funny story, which is part of me.

Courtney R says

Este libro aborda la importancia del nombre de uno y cómo puede impactar su vida, que es algo que todos tienen en común. También aborda el problema que muchas personas con nombres que reflejan su cultura están siendo pronunciadas o ignoradas. La cultura de una persona es algo que ellos valoran, y los hace únicos, y por eso merece ser reconocido. Este libro hace que la gente se dé cuenta que su herencia es algo de lo que enorgullecerse y que las culturas de las otras personas deben ser respetadas. Es importante tomarse el tiempo para aprender el nombre de una persona de modo que usted no ignore el significado y el valor detrás de ese nombre. Tener este tipo de respeto beneficiará a las identidades culturales de otras personas, en lugar de hacer que se sientan mal por su cultura. Creo que el libro tiene una gran moral.

Ckorbakis says

Many students will be able to relate to this story about a little girl who is not called her name by the teacher. It shows the importance of personal identity and family and highlights being new, fitting in, and not feeling "smart" or looked at as not knowing. It's a good read during Hispanic Heritage Month or the holiday season since it touches on Thanksgiving and Christmas. Students can personally connect to the story because of the school settings and the interactions with siblings and parents. The level is around a 3rd grade level and it's available in Spanish. It can work nice as literature circles since the language is not complicated and the chapters are short.

Nicole Nunn says

This is one of my favorite children's books because it discusses her struggle to adapt to changes, find her voice, and explore important issues of identity and understanding. I would use this as a journal activity after reading the story. "Write about a time when you felt different from everyone else or misunderstood. How did you overcome this feeling?"

(NS) Becca says

My name is Maria Isabel is written by Alma Flor Ada and illustrated by K. Dyble Thompson. It was published by Aladdin Paperbacks in 1993.

This wonderful book is about a young girl named Maria Isobel who school in a new town. She is worried because she is starting late in the year and doesn't want to be the odd one out. Although Maria is a mixture of excited and nervous, she ends up leaving school feeling very frustrated. Her new teacher has decided to call her Mary instead of her name, Maria. Throughout the book Maria struggles with being able to adjust to her new school (and new name). She wants to play a role in the school play but the teacher does not relate to Maria because she is always zoning out in class. Maria wishes the teacher could just understand that the reason she is always "zoning" is because she can't get used to responding to a new name. She is very proud of her name and does not identify with the person her teacher expects her to be. The problem is resolved at the end of the story as Maria finally finds her voice and expresses to the teacher her unhappiness.

As a teacher of ELL students, I was particularly enthralled by this book. I found that it was very culturally relevant to many of my students and it made me think about how much I really should try to focus on stocking my shelves with more multicultural books. I felt ashamed as I read some of the things that Maria thought because I realized I had probably acted like the teacher at times. She was not trying to be mean, but did not understand that it could something as simple as not pronouncing the child's name correctly that makes the student shut down. It can be frustrating as a teacher to encounter ELL students who "zone" when you know they are more capable, but this definitely gave me a new perspective. I feel like, if I could relate so easily to this book, than my students could probably relate even more.

This book is recommended for ages 7-10 and I found that it would probably be best used in a second/third grade classroom for students of varying cultural backgrounds.

Lisa Vegan says

I personally wanted more, more depth and more length, and in a way that lets me know this is a perfect book for its intended audience. I'd have found it perfect in those ways when I was 7-9 years old, perhaps even 6-11 years old. 10 titled chapters and 57 pages make for an excellent beginning independent readers' book. It would also make a fine read aloud book.

This short novel has a lovely story.

I appreciated how so many issues and subjects are addressed, either directly or indirectly: the importance of identity, of heritage, of family life, friendships, moving, being in a new school, how children often don't confide in adults/others, the power of writing, and of reading. I was a bit taken aback at having a Christmas, vs. holiday pageant in what seems to be a public school, but then I loved how Hanukkah was incorporated, as were various ways of celebrating Christmas/the holidays.

I also recommend this book to teachers, and I'm glad the teacher in this book learned something and made the appropriate changes when Maria Isabel finally expressed herself, in this case via essay writing.

When I was in third grade there were three boys with the same first name, and two of them had the same last name. Their call by names were changed to avoid confusion, but at least all three had full say in the process and in what names they were called. I also was once in a class that had two other girls with my name, yet there I think no changes were made and somehow there was no confusion, if I'm remembering correctly. So, when I saw how a focal point of this story was a girl named Maria coming into a classroom where she was the third Maria, I was particularly interested. The way the story unfolds, it really shows the importance of names. I think both children and adults will identify, and teachers in particular should take its message to heart.

ETA: I love how the title character compares her problems to Wilbur's, the Wilbur from the book Charlotte's Web.

Krista the Krazy Kataloguer says

I think all teachers should be required to read this book! A young immigrant from Puerto Rico named Maria Isabel is renamed by her teacher because there are already two Marias in her class. This makes Maria Isabel feel like she's lost her sense of self, of who she is, and affects her performance in school. Eventually Maria Isabel finds a way to let her teacher know that she doesn't like it, and all turns out well. It was a touching story with a sweet ending, another gem from Alma Flor Ada.

T. Denise says

This book centered around a theme of cultural sensitivity (or lack thereof) - Maria joins a class that already has 2 other students named Maria, but the teacher shortens her name to Mary without asking her she would feel about it. This creates an inner struggle with Maria who happens to love her name that is symbolic of her family.

I thought that Ada did a nice job of displaying the downfall of lack of communication to multicultural students.

Books Kids Like says

By the time Maria's family moves into their new home, the school year has begun. Her first day does not go well. On the way to the bus stop, Maria trips, skins her knee, and dirties her favorite yellow dress. Then, her teacher changes her name to Mary because there are already two Marias in the class. Maria tries hard to listen and do well, but she simply cannot remember her new name. Whenever the teacher calls on "Mary Lopez," Maria does not answer. Several times a day, the teacher scolds Maria for her inattention. When the teacher assigns an essay entitled "My Greatest Wish," Maria communicates her feelings about her name- Maria Isabel Salazar Lopez. She shares the origin of each name and expresses her greatest desire- to be called "Maria." A classic for elementary age children, My Name is Maria Isabel appeals to young readers who identify with Maria's plight as the new student at school trying to adjust to the often unreasonable expectations. Maria's courage to speak out inspires us all to stand up for ourselves.

Rutmery says

Rutmeri Mercado 12-6-10

Este libro se llama me llamo María Isabel por alma flor Ada. Este libro se trata de una niña llamada María Isabel pero ella es nueva en su clase no conoce a nadie. Pero en receso una niña llamada marta Pérez. que la invita a brincar la cuerda con ella. De ese tiempo adelante ella estaba impuesta. Uno de los personajes mi libro es María Isabel ella es una niña buena portorriqueña.

Mi opinión de este libro es que es muy bueno porque es de una niña que entra a el mundo nuevo y aprendi muchas cosas nuevas como hablar ingles

Además hace muchos amigas. y amigos una parte que me gusto .fue cuando marta. invito a Maria Isabel a brincar la cuerda con ella pero la parte que no me gusto fue cuando maria Isabel salió del el autobús y tropeco con una rama de árbol.

Yo reccomendo este libro. a la gente que le gustan libros. Que tienen menssages. importantes y bonitos. Este libro me recuerda

al libro para una vida mejor. por Nicolasa Mohr

fin

Renee says

Summary: Third grader Maria Isabel, born in Puerto Rico and now living in the U.S., wants badly to fit in at school; and the teacher's writing assignment "My Greatest Wish" gives her that opportunity.

57 pages

Would be a nice read aloud for a classroom - multiculturalism, the importance of one's name and family

Small chapter book appropriate for 3rd grade level.

I liked how it was about a Hispanic character. I am looking for more books with that aspect in them.

Maria Isabel biggest conflict is that her teacher choses to call her Mary Lopez because there is already another Maria in the class. Maria Isabel takes pride in her name and all relatives whom she is named after. She gets in trouble with the teacher because she doesn't answer to her name "Mary Lopez". Maria Isabel isn't being disrespectful she just doesn't think of that as her name and doesn't make the connection that the teacher is calling on her. This confusion causes Maria Isabel to miss out on the opportunity to sing in the school pageant. Instead she is given an unimportant job and misses out on the singing.

Maria Isabel is reading Charlotte's Web at the time and makes personal connections to the story.

In the end, Maria writes a "Greatest Wish" essay and states how she wants to be called by her real name and sing in the pageant. The teacher reads it and puts her in the pageant with a singing role.

