

A book review of

“Dallas, S. (2019). *Someplace To Call Home* (1st ed.). Sleeping Bear Press.”

From Hardship to Hope: *Someplace to Call Home* as a Tool for Multilingual Learners

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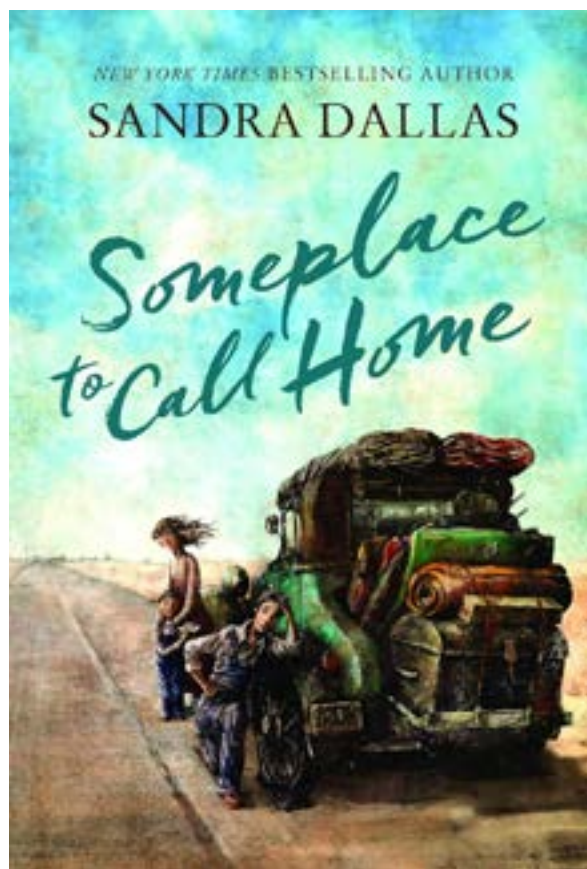
Sandra Dallas’s historical fiction novel *Someplace to Call Home* provides an in-depth look at young people searching for a place of belonging in the United States. Although the main characters in this story move from one part of the country to another, their journey mirrors the experiences of many multilingual learners arriving in the U.S. for the first time. The characters struggle to establish themselves in a new environment, facing obstacles similar to those encountered by newcomers adjusting to an unfamiliar culture.

Forced to flee the hardships of the Dust Bowl, the three orphaned Turner children—Tom, Hallie, and Benny—embark on a migratory journey in search of basic necessities. Throughout the story, they grapple with the challenges of fitting in, finding work, and adapting to a new way of life while holding on to their core values of honesty and integrity. Constantly facing the threat of being labeled as squatters and treated as burdens on society, the Turner kids find hope in an unexpected place when they meet the Carlson family.

This culturally responsive novel offers intermediate-grade students valuable historical knowledge about the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl while encouraging critical analysis of the economic challenges of the time. *Someplace to Call Home* introduces multilingual learners to fundamental economic concepts, such as the distinction between wants and needs. The Turner children, for example, must decide between buying food or repairing a flat tire—both essential to their survival. Additionally, this book allows educators to teach students about the physical characteristics and locations of places in the United States and the ways in which people interact with the land. Dallas’s novel presents historical events in a compelling, character-driven narrative, offering insight into the difficulties of starting over in an unfamiliar place.

Due to its 580 Lexile score and 3rd–6th grade interest level, this book may not be suitable for newcomer multilingual learners. However, it could be an excellent choice for high

school multilingual learners or students with interrupted formal education (SIFE), depending on their academic proficiency. While Washington State provides a recommended list of books for social studies instruction, *Someplace to Call Home* offers a fresh, modern perspective on historical events. The novel encourages students to analyze character interactions and explore how ideas influence individuals. Educators can support multilingual learners by incorporating graphic organizers and sentence stems across the four domains of language—listening, reading, speaking, and writing—to help students interpret characters’ dialogue, body language,



actions, and tone, all of which contribute to the development of the plot. The novel also contains historical slang, which, when compared with contemporary language and Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS), can enhance students' understanding of language evolution. The included glossary serves as a valuable resource for deciphering unfamiliar terms.

This 222-page novel is an excellent literary tool for designing a research project in which students create a timeline tracing the Turner children's journey from Oklahoma to their eventual arrival at Someplace to Call Home.

As one of my favorite authors, Sandra Dallas has crafted a story with the power to inspire students to persevere and move forward, regardless of the challenges they face. Just as the characters in the novel grow and develop, so do we—learning, adapting, and discovering hope and success in our

own journeys. Though each of our circumstances may differ, students engaging with this story will come to realize they are not alone in the struggles of starting anew. The themes of resilience, perseverance, and self-discovery in *Someplace to Call Home* extend beyond the novel itself, fostering connections through shared experiences of growth and change.

REFERENCES

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