“Deftly explores the subject of interracial mixing.”
—Multicultural Review
De la Peña’s main characters are boys who are disenfranchised, alone, and trying to overcome their situations that have previously defined them. Willing to take the risks, Sticky plays basketball every day for hours until he is accepted to play on the A-teams. And Miguel runs away from the group home, leaving behind the mess of his family with two kids as messed up as he is, but more importantly returns to complete his time.

De la Peña offers hope to those readers who live in seemingly hopeless situations; he offers a glimpse of what could be if they, like his characters, have the courage to move beyond the same person. When Kidd finds Mr. Red drunk, Kidd wants to tell him about Devon stalking and threatening Olivia. If Mr. Red would have been sober, how could things have turned out differently?

We Were Here
An ALA-YALSA Quick Pick for Reluctant Young Adult Readers
A Junior Library Guild Selection

We Were Here, how could that be a true statement? In what ways does the statement not apply to the characters?

Miguel repeatedly said himself, “Shouldn’t I have to suffer somehow?” How could his life on the run be considered payment for what he did? Why was he sentenced to one year in a group home?

Why can’t Miguel face what he did to Diego? Why can’t he talk about it? What happens to Miguel when he finally faces the truth of his brother’s death?

Mong says he fights so well because he is not afraid to get hurt. How does that make him a good fighter? How does his lack of fear enable him to commit suicide?

Rondell and Mong are an unlikely pair for Miguel to hook up with. Why does Miguel base these assumptions? How do Miguel’s grandparents help him accept what has happened? As a result of his time with them, what decisions does Miguel make?

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Story usually doesn’t work out how you think it will. And most of the time, running away is the quickest path right back to where you were running from.

Discussion Questions

• Miguel is convinced that his mom would like for him to die, that she considers him already dead, that she doesn’t want to talk to him. Are these assumptions the truth about Miguel’s mother’s feelings? On what does Miguel base these assumptions?

• Miguel raises a serious question for counselors in group homes: “You really think a punk-ass place like this could make a kid better?” (p. 14) What is Miguel inferring about the other residents and the care given in a group home? How would a counselor answer this question?

• How would Miguel describe Diego? After reading about Diego and his relationship with Miguel, how would you describe him?

• In his first month at the group home, Miguel refuses to talk to his counselors—or anyone else—about what happened to Diego. Why does Miguel isolate himself?

• Rondell and Mong are an unequal pair for Miguel to hook up with. Why does Miguel choose to leave the group home with them to go to Mexico? What is he hoping to gain?

• Mong’s cousin Mei-li wonders, “If growing up in the same person?” (p. 89). For the characters in We Were Here, what could things have turned out differently?

• When Kidd finds Mrs. Red drunk, Kidd wants to tell him about Devon stalking and threatening Olivia. If Mr. Red would have been sober, how could things have turned out differently?

• How does the relationship between Miguel and Rondell grow and change throughout the novel? What needs do the boys meet in each other—about what happened to Diego. Why does Miguel isolate himself?

• Why can’t he talk about it? What happens to Miguel when he finally faces the truth of his brother’s death?

• How do Kidd and Mr. Red play in Kidd’s life? If Mr. Red had been aware of Kidd’s entanglement with Devon, how would he have handled Kidd coming to him for work? How do Kidd and Mr. Red save each other?

• How does Olivia and Kid’s relationship help each of them become better people? In what ways do each of them change for the better? How does Olivia and Kidd save each other?

• When Kidd meets Maria at dinner, he tells her he is scared he knows he is going to mess everything up. What, if anything, could Maria have said that might have prevented Kidd from trying to commit suicide? Does Kidd believe he was trying to commit suicide? What does he believe?

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• Mong’s cousin Mei-li wonders, “If growing up in the same person?” (p. 89). For the characters in We Were Here, how could that be a true statement? In what ways does the statement not apply to the characters?

• Miguel repeatedly said himself, “Shouldn’t I have to suffer somehow?” How could his life on the run be considered payment for what he did? Why was he sentenced to one year in a group home?

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I WILL SAVE YOU
A HAUNTING EXPLORATION OF IDENTITY, LOVE, AND THE MEANING OF FRIENDSHIP.

Matt de la Peña

We Were Here
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“Story of friendship that will appeal to teens and will engage the most reluctant readers.”
—Kirkus Reviews

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Miguel is convinced that his mom would like for him to die, that she considers him already dead, that she doesn’t want to talk to him. Are these assumptions the truth about Miguel’s mother’s feelings? On what does Miguel base these assumptions?
2. Miguel raises a serious question for counselors in group homes: “You really think a punk-ass piece of shit could make a kid better?” (p. 14) What is Miguel inferring about the other residents and the care given in a group home? How would a counselor answer this question?
3. How does Miguel’s relationship with Rondell change from disinterest to friendship?
4. In his first month at the group home, Miguel refuses to talk to his counselors—or anyone else—about what happened to Diego. Why does Miguel isolate himself?
5. Rondell and Mong are an unlikely pair for Miguel to hook up with. Why does Miguel choose to leave the group home with them to go to Mexico? What is he hoping to gain?
6. Mong’s cousin Mei-li wonders, “If growing up was hard, then what can happen to a person?” (p. 89). For the characters in We Were Here, what does that say about what can happen to a person?

Matt de la Peña touches the lives of teen readers by allowing them to see a piece of themselves or someone they know in the true-to-life characters. He continues to grow as a writer with each novel, and his career will surely be long and full of characters readers will live.

De la Peña’s main characters are boys who are disenfranchised, alone, and trying to overcome their pasts. Lacking traditional support systems, they face situations that are out of their control. In Still, Don’t Lie, seventeen-year-old Sticky has been in and out of foster homes all of his life. In American Born Chinese, Donnie is sent to live in a group home after accidentally killing his older brother. And in de la Peña’s newest novel, I Will Save You, Kié, who has multiple personalities, attempts to kill himself on several occasions.

De la Peña offers hope to these readers who live in seemingly hopeless situations; he offers a glimpse of what could be if they, like his characters, have the courage to move beyond the situations that have previously defined them. Willing to take the risks. Sticky plays basketball every day for hours until he is accepted to play on the A-teams. And Miguel runs away from the group home with two kids as messed up as he is, but more importantly returns to complete his time.

Along the way, each character discovers help and support in unexpected places. Friends and family come to their aid, and each character finds they can give back the same support and help that is given to them. Mr. Red helps Kidd by giving him a job, and Kidd saves his life. And Danny’s family come to their aid, and each character finds they can give back the same support and help that is given to them.

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De la Peña’s main characters are boys who are disenfranchised, alone, and trying to overcome their or someone they know in the true-to-life characters. He continues to grow as a writer with each young men who can be proud of their accomplishments and the steps they took to achieve them.

Along the way, each character discovers help and support in unexpected places. Friends and home with two kids as messed up as he is, but more importantly returns to complete his time.

De la Peña offers hope to those readers who live in seemingly hopeless situations; he offers a glimpse of what could be if they, like his characters, have the courage to move beyond the.

When Kidd meets Maria at dinner, he tells her he is scared he knows he is going to mess everything up. What, if anything, could Maria have said that might have prevented Kidd from trying to commit suicide? Does Kidd believe he was trying to commit suicide? What does he believe?

What role do Kidd’s parents play in his confusion? Kidd who knows lives change in an instant? What clues has the author given the reader to recognize the truth that Kidd and Devon are the same person?

How do the events and people of the summer finally force Kidd to face Devon and the belief that Kidd, by nature, is evil? Is there any one event or person that brings Kidd to the final breaking point?

How does Kidd repeatedly try to free himself of Devon?

What role does Mr. Red play in Kidd’s life? If Mr. Red had been aware of Kidd’s entanglement with Devon, how would he have handled Kidd coming to ten for work? How does Kidd and Mr. Red save each other?

How does Olivia and Kidd’s relationship help Olivia and Kidd save each other?

How does Kidd find Mr. Red drunk. Kidd wants to tell him about Devon stalking and threatening Olivia. If Mr. Red would have been sober, how could things have turned out differently?

Miguel is the male protagonist. He is a biracial teen with an absent father, doesn’t fit in with his Mexican family or at his all-white private school. In Don’t Lie, he is sent to live in a group home after accidentally killing his older brother. And in de la Peña’s newest novel, I Will Save You, Kidd, who has multiple personalities, attempts to kill himself on several occasions.

De la Peña offers hope to those readers who live in seemingly hopeless situations; he offers a glimpse of what could be if they, like his characters, have the courage to move beyond the.

We Were Here

A HAUNTING EXPLORATION OF IDENTITY, LOVE, AND THE MEANING OF FRIENDSHIP.

Discussion Questions

• What do Kidd’s parents say that might have prevented Kidd from trying to commit suicide? Does Kidd believe he was trying to commit suicide? What does he believe?

• When Kidd is in the hospital in a coma, thinking he is in prison, he dreams about observing conversations. What is actually happening in his dreams? How do those dreams help Kidd come out of his coma?

• Why does Kidd repeatedly try to free himself of Devon?

• What happens to Kidd’s father when he finally faces the truth of his brother’s death?

We Were Here, how could that be a true statement? In what ways does the statement not apply to the characters?

Miguel repeatedly says himself, “Should I have to pay for what I did? Shouldn’t I have to suffer somehow?” How could his life on the run be considered payment for what he did?

Why was he sentenced to one year in a group home?

Why can’t Miguel face what he did to Diego? Why can’t he talk about it? What happens to Miguel when he finally faces the truth of his brother’s death?

Mong says he fights so well because he is not afraid to get hurt. How does that make him a good fighter? How does his lack of fear enable him to commit suicide?

How does Rondell and Miguel react to Mong’s death? Why don’t they tell Jaden or try to contact Mei-li?

How does the relationship between Miguel and Rondell grow and change throughout the novel? What needs do the boys meet in each other and how does that help form the strong bond between them?

How do Mong’s grandparents help him accept what has happened? As a result of their time with him, what decisions does Mong make?

“A story of friendship that will appeal to teens and will engage the most reluctant readers.”—Kirkus Reviews

We Were Here: An ALA-YALSA Next Book for Young Adults

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Life usually doesn’t work out how you think it will. And most of the time, running away is the quickest path right back to where you are running from.
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**Discussion Questions**

- Why does Danny dig into his skin with his fingernails? How does the pain make him feel real? How do Danny’s mom and uncles react when they realize what he is doing? How could they have helped him?
- Danny feels too brown to be a part of the baseball team and too white to be a member of his Mexican father’s family. What could Danny do to fit in at both places? Why does he let the color of his skin prevent him from being a member of either community? How would Danny’s life have been different if he had been raised in National City?
- How does Danny react to the news that his mother is moving to San Francisco with a white man? Why does he feel that his mother is dishonoring his father? What plans does Danny have for the future?
- How does Danny react to the news of his father’s family? What could they have helped him? How does Danny feel about being a member of either community? How does this affect his relationships with his family?
- Danny and Uno have more in common than either of them realize. What motive does Uno have to make friends with Danny? What does each of the boys have to gain from their friendship? How does Uno help Danny overcome his pitching blocks?
- After Danny witnesses Uncle Ray murder a man in the streets, Danny is stunned at the rage his uncle displayed. How does this help Danny overcome his fear that he will one day be like his father and his uncle?
- Sophia asks Uno, “We all start out believing we can do anything. But at some point we lose it. Why is that?” (p. 212) Who started the fight? Why?
- On page 8, Sticky justifies stealing from a department store, but not stealing from an old lady’s card shop. How does that distinguish him as a kid with morals? What changes in his life would cause him to attempt armed robbery? What role does Dante play in changing how Sticky views stealing?
- As he puts a cigarette out behind Sticky’s ear, Mico, one of Sticky’s mom’s boyfriends, reflected that he wished, “make [Sticky] grow up to be a man.” (p. 65) What kind of a man did Mico become? What does Dante do to affect Sticky’s future?
- Why does Dante explain his “race for life” theory to Sticky? Why does Dante step in to defend Sticky? (p. 218) Who started the fight? Why?
- When Dante explains his “race for life” theory to Sticky, he is totally in-his-face honest about Sticky’s life in the foster care system. (p. 229) What is Dante’s purpose in the conversation with Sticky? How does Dante react to what Dante says? How does the conversation confirm to Sticky Dante’s feelings for him?
- When Rob and Sticky get in a fight on the court, why does Dante step in to defend Sticky? (p. 226) Who started the fight? Why?
- When Dante explains his “race for life” theory to Sticky, he is totally in-his-face honest about Sticky’s life in the foster care system. (p. 229) What is Dante’s purpose in the conversation with Sticky? How does Dante react to what Dante says? How does the conversation confirm to Sticky Dante’s feelings for him?
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- Sticky is a true original, and de la Peña has skillfully brought him to life.” —School Library Journal, starred

**About the Author**

**Matt De La Peña** is a New York Times bestselling author. His books include <i>White Boy Rick</i>, <i>Ball Don’t Lie</i>, <i>Sticky</i>, <i> acne</i>, and <i>Yes, Men</i>, all about boys growing up, and <i>Homegoing</i>, which exploresracism, the history of slavery, and the cost of freedom. Matt lives in Queens, NY, with his wife and two children.