



Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Department

About the Book of the Month: This collection of featured books is from Books Matter: The Best Kid Lit on Bias, Diversity and Social Justice. The books teach about bias and prejudice, promote respect for diversity and encourage social action. For educators, adult family members and other caregivers of children, reading the books listed on this site with your children and incorporating them into instruction are excellent ways to talk about these important concepts at home and in the classroom.

Stef Soto, Taco Queen

Jennifer Torres (Author)

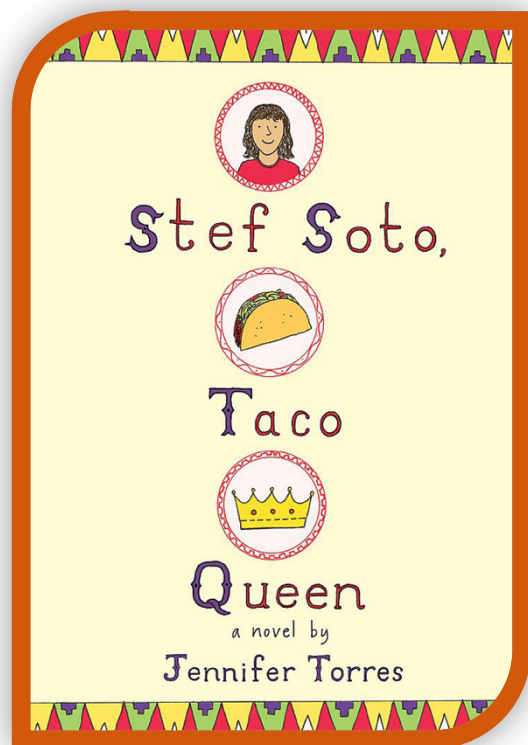
Estefania "Stef" Soto is itching to shake off the onion-and-cilantro embrace of Tia Perla, her family's taco truck. She wants nothing more than for Papi to get a "normal" job and for Tia Perla to be a distant memory. Then maybe everyone at school will stop seeing her as the Taco Queen. But when her family's livelihood is threatened, and it looks like her wish will finally come true, Stef surprises everyone (including herself) by becoming the truck's unlikely champion. In this fun and heartfelt novel, Stef will discover what matters most and ultimately embrace an identity that even includes old Tia Perla.

ISBN: 978-0316306867

Publisher: Little Brown Books for Young Readers

Year Published: 2017

Age Range: 8–12



Book Themes

People, Identity and Culture, Pride, Taking a Stand, Friendship, Teasing and Bias

Key Words

Discuss and define these words with students prior to reading the book and remind them of the meanings as they come up in the book. See ADL's [Education Glossary Terms](#).

- approval
- awkward
- cavernous
- commuters
- convince
- hovering
- paparazzi
- scrimping

- | | | | |
|--------------|------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| ■ debate | ■ intervene | ■ privilege | ■ standoff |
| ■ disbelief | ■ irritation | ■ protest | ■ translate |
| ■ donation | ■ negotiate | ■ publicity | ■ unanimous |
| ■ employees | ■ offended | ■ regulations | ■ uncomfortable |
| ■ frustrated | ■ optimism | ■ reputation | ■ unimpressed |
| ■ generous | ■ ordinary | ■ resist | |
| ■ gut | ■ overprotective | ■ restriction | |

Discussion Questions

As students read the book in small groups or as a whole class, ask discussion questions throughout their reading in order to check comprehension and engage them on a deeper level. Some of these questions can also be used as writing prompts. When students have finished the book, choose from these questions to guide a group discussion:

- What is the book about?
- When you initially meet Stef, what do you learn about her?
- As the book progresses, what else do you find out about Stef? How does your impression of her change throughout your reading of the book?
- How does Stef feel about Tía Perla, their food truck? How do her feelings changed over time?
- Why do you think Stef sometimes feels embarrassed by Tía Perla? Have you ever felt embarrassed by something about your family?
- What do you learn about Julia and Stef's friendship from when they were little? How does Julia treat Stef now? How does their relationship change throughout the book?
- What happens when Amanda and Stef win tickets to see Viviana Vega? How does Stef try to convince her parents to let her go? What happens?
- Have you ever tried to persuade your parents about something you didn't think they would agree to? What happened?
- When the city proposes new regulations (i.e., rules) about food trucks, why do you think Papi asks Stef to translate the letter? When she says, "When he asks for help with English, it's like he really needs me." How do you think that makes Stef feel?
- When Papi receives the letter about the new regulations, how does he feel and what does he think might happen to his food truck?
- Why do you think Mr. Salazar, Stef's Art teachers, asks for the students help in raising money? What do they decide to do?
- Why does Stef feel like her parents are overprotective? Can you relate to that and if so, how?
- When Mami says, "Can you imagine what it was like for us, for Papi and me, when we first got here (to the U.S.)? We were older than you, but not by much. We didn't speak the language. We knew almost no one. Can you imagine what it's like to settle down in a place where you feel so lost?" What does Mami mean by this?

- When Stef realizes she met Viviana Vega with realizing it was her, she says, “By lunchtime, I’m not the girl whose dad drives a taco truck, I’m the girl who has met Viviana Vega.” What do you think Stef means by this? How is her “reputation” important to her?
- What happens when Papi speaks at the City Council meeting about the new food truck rules? What makes Stef want to speak also? How did you feel about what they said?
- Do you think it was a victory for the food truck owners? Please explain.
- What does Stef find out about how Julia felt about their friendship and how it ended? What do you think will happen between the two of them?
- Why do you think Stef called the food truck “The Taco Queen?”
- In the end, what does Stef realize about her family’s food truck? How does Stef change throughout the story?
- How did you feel when the book ended? What do you think will happen next?
- What are the overall themes of the book? What message does the author communicate through the story?

Extension Activities

Below are activities that can be done with students in order to extend the learning from the book.

1. Reader’s Response Writing and Drawing Activities

- **Create the New Taco Queen Food Truck:** At the end of the book, Stef and Julia rename the food truck and use fresh paint to spruce it up, with plans to continue re-designing it. In an essay or action plan format, have students write about how they would re-design the family’s food truck, now called “The Taco Queen.” They should consider what message they want to come across in the food truck, what they want to communicate about their family, what words images, ad symbols to use, and the color scheme and style. Then have students, either working alone or in pairs, execute their plan by drawing how they want the food truck to look. They can use paint, markers, crayons and other supplies and when completed, share the new trucks with the class and consider sharing them with families and the school either by posting online or having a food truck art exhibit.
- **Diary Entry of a Character:** Have students select one of the main characters (Stef, Amanda, Arthur, Julia, Papi, Mami) from the book. Have students write imagined journal entries for their chosen character, writing 8–10 entries (which can include illustrations) that the character might have written throughout the events in the book. Explain to students that for the journal entries, the character’s thoughts, feelings, and reflections are important, as well as their reaction to the day-to-day events that happen to them and other characters. You may choose to have students engage in pre-writing discussions with a partner about their character in order explore some of their ideas. After they have completed the assignment, have them share their journal entries with the class and consider creating an online collection of all the journal entries. The journal entries can also be done as audio or video journals.
- **Learn about the Author:** Have students get to know Jennifer Torres, the author of *Stef Soto, Taco Queen*. Explain to students that they will conduct research about her that will culminate in a project. First, as a class, discuss with students what they want to know about the author such as: where she grew up, her inspiration for writing the book, aspects of her identity and their relevance

to the book, other books she wrote, her interests and hobbies, family life, relevant quotes, etc. Possible sources for their research can include: (1) Torres' website (<https://jennitorres.com/>), (2) her social media posts on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook (3) interviews she has conducted and (4) online research. The final culmination of their research may include one of the following project ideas: an extended "author bio" contact page, a timeline of Jennifer Torres' life including other books she has written or a video (or audio) simulated interview between the author and a journalist (one student plays the author and another plays the interviewer).

2. Write and Deliver a Persuasive Speech

Ask students: *What does it mean to persuade someone about something?* Elicit and explain that when you persuade someone, you "cause someone or a group to do something by asking, arguing, or giving reasons." Remind students that in the book, Stef tries to persuade people about many things. Ask students if they can provide examples from the book (e.g., persuade her parents to allow her to walk home alone from school, try to convince her parents to let her go to the Viviana Vega concert, try to get Viviana Vega to perform at their school's dance, try to convince the City Council that the new regulations for food trucks are unfair).

Ask: *Have you ever tried to persuade someone or a group about something?* Brainstorm some ideas about how they have tried to persuade others. Then ask: *How did you do it? What words, methods and approaches did you use?* Have them talk with a partner to share an example. They should share (1) what and who they were trying to persuade, (2) what words and methods they used and (3) what happened in the end.

If time permits, engage students in an activity where they write and deliver a persuasive speech, as Stef and her Papi did with the City Council about the new rules about food trucks. Have students select a topic that is important to them that they want to convince others about. Talk with them about the different parts of a persuasive speech: (1) opening line to grab audience, (2) main point: what you are trying to persuade and what problem you are trying to solve, (3) a story or example that illustrates your point (4) facts, quotes, statistics, opinions or other information can you provide to convince your audience and (5) your "call to action" (what do you think should happen). Also, discuss important elements of the tone and style of a speech including facial expressions, tone and expression of voice, word emphasis, expressive hand or body motions, visual aids, etc. Provide time for students to write, revise and practice their speeches. When completed, you can consider inviting families in to hear the speeches or record them and share it with the families and/or rest of school.

3. Learn about Immigration

(Note: Before discussing this topic, it is important to consider that you may have students in your class whose family members or they themselves are immigrants and/or undocumented immigrants. Be prepared and sensitive to those students and be mindful as to how you discuss this in your classroom. Students who may not have shared this part of their identity previously may disclose it during the lesson and that information should only come from the student themselves.)

Remind students that in the book, we learn that Stef's parents are from Mexico and came to the U.S. when they were a little older than Stef. Because they were born in another country and moved to the U.S. later, they are immigrants. Engage students in a discussion about immigration. Ask students: *What is immigration? What does it mean to be an immigrant?* Define **immigration** as the process of coming into a non-native or foreign country to live. You can share with students that 40 million people who live in the U.S. were born in another country (from around the world) and that the U.S. has more immigrants than any other country in the world. Read additional stories about immigration and find out what students know and don't know about immigration. You can also provide information about undocumented immigrants, sharing that people who are "undocumented" are foreign-born people

who come to the U.S. without the legal papers to do so and who often have fled their home countries because of extreme poverty, danger or wanting to be with their families in the U.S. Some enter the country legally as tourists, students or temporary workers and become undocumented when their papers expire. After this discussion, you may have students do a research project, either having them learn more about immigration (or about a specific country) over the course of U.S history or an exploration of the theme of work and labor by undocumented immigrants and the challenges they face. Students' research can culminate in a Power Point presentation, timeline with photos/drawings, essay or something else.

As an alternative, have students write reflective essays about what it feels like to be in a new place and all the thoughts and feelings that are part of that process. They can share, if applicable, experiences they have had with immigration (either themselves or family members) or being in a new environment or situation and what that was like.

ADL Resources

The following are curriculum and educational resources on people, identity and culture, people who are Latin American/Hispanic and immigration.

Curriculum Resources

8 Ideas for Teaching National Hispanic Heritage Month, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/8-ideas-for-teaching-national-hispanic-heritage-month

Identity-Based Bullying, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/identity-based-bullying

Who Am I? Identity Poems, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/who-am-i-identity-poems

Websites

6 Ways to Be an Ally

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/6-ways-to-be-an-ally-en-espanol

Some simple things a student can do to be an ally to targets of name-calling and bullying. (Also in Spanish.)

Myths and Facts about Immigrants and Immigration

www.adl.org/education/resources/fact-sheets/myths-and-facts-about-immigrants-and-immigration

A list of common myths about immigrants and immigration and the facts.

National Hispanic Heritage Month

www.adl.org/education-outreach/curriculum-resources/c/educational-resources-in-spanish.html

A curation of PreK-12 educational resources curriculum and other resources that help bring the themes of Hispanic Heritage Month to your classrooms.

Safe and Inclusive Classrooms for All

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/safe-and-inclusive-schools-for-all

Tips to foster a safe, respectful and inclusive learning environment.

Children's Books

Below are links to lists of recommended anti-bias and multicultural books for the indicated category.

People, Identity & Culture: Latino/Hispanic, Latino-American, Hispanic-American
Social Justice

