

# Comprehension

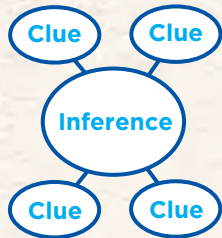
## Genre

**Realistic Fiction** is a made-up story that could have happened in real life.



## Generate Questions

**Make Inferences** As you read, fill in your Inferences Word Web.



## Read to Find Out

What benefits does Amada get from keeping a diary?



# My Diary

## From Here to There

By Amada Irma Pérez

Illustrated by Maya Christina Gonzalez

Award  
Winning  
Selection



Si que ya debería  
estar dormida pero  
no me importa.  
¡Qué sueño que sí!



Dear Diary, I know I should be asleep already, but I just can't sleep. If I don't write this all down, I'll burst! Tonight after my brothers—Mario, Víctor, Héctor, Raúl, and Sergio—and I all climbed into bed, I **overheard** Mamá and Papá whispering. They were talking about leaving our little house in Juárez, Mexico, where we've lived our whole lives, and moving to Los Angeles in the United States. But why? How can I sleep knowing we might leave Mexico forever? I'll have to get to the bottom of this tomorrow.

Today at breakfast, Mamá explained everything. She said, “Papá lost his job. There’s no work here, no jobs at all. We know moving will be hard, but we want the best for all of you. Try to understand.” I thought the boys would be upset, but instead they got really excited about moving to the States.

“The big stores in El Paso sell all kinds of toys!”

“And they have escalators to ride!”

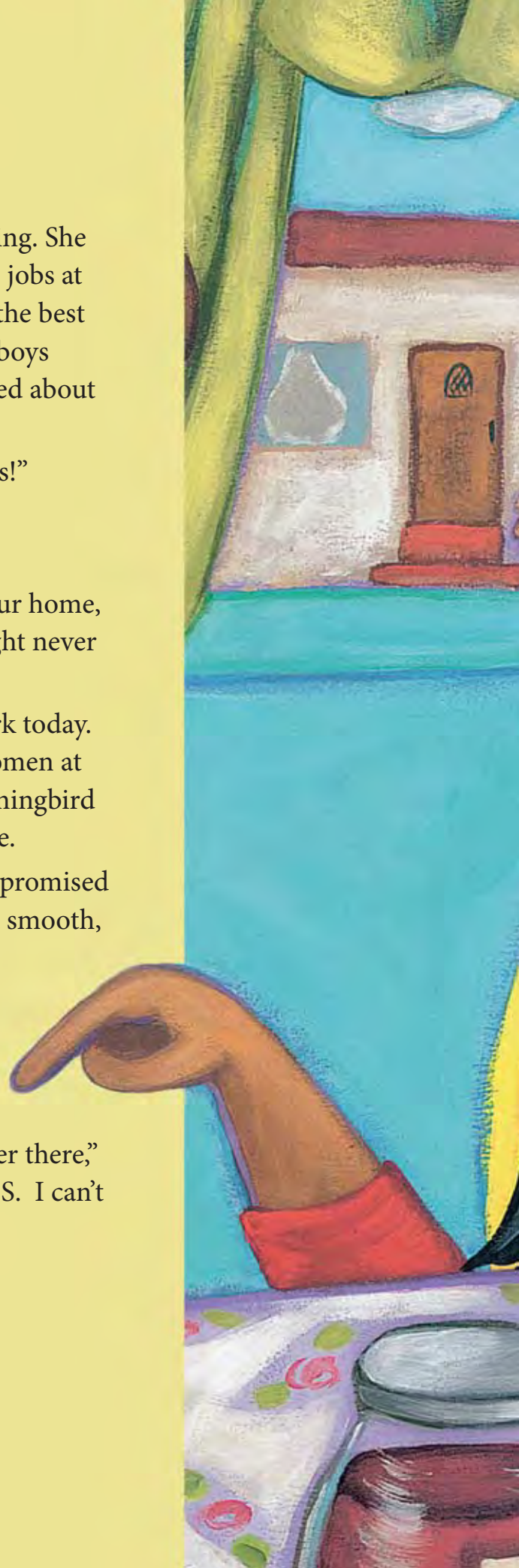
“And the air smells like popcorn, yum!”

Am I the only one who is scared of leaving our home, our beautiful country, and all the people we might never see again?

My best friend Michi and I walked to the park today. We passed Don Nacho’s corner store and the women at the tortilla shop, their hands blurring like hummingbird wings as they worked the dough over the griddle.

At the park we braided each other’s hair and promised never to forget each other. We each picked out a smooth, heart-shaped stone to remind us always of our friendship, of the little park, of Don Nacho and the tortilla shop. I’ve known Michi since we were little, and I don’t think I’ll ever find a friend like her in California.

“You’re lucky your family will be together over there,” Michi said. Her sisters and father work in the U.S. I can’t imagine leaving anyone in our family behind.





OK, Diary, here's the plan—in two weeks we leave for my grandparents' house in Mexicali, right across the **border** from Calexico, California. We'll stay with them while Papá goes to Los Angeles to look for work. We can only take what will fit in the old car Papá borrowed—we're selling everything else. Meanwhile, the boys build cardboard box cities and act like nothing bothers them. Mamá and Papá keep talking about all the **opportunities** we'll have in California. But what if we're not allowed to speak Spanish? What if I can't learn English? Will I ever see Michi again? What if we never come back?





COCINA

COCINA

GATO

FRAZADAS





Today while we were packing, Papá pulled me aside. He said, “Amada, *m’ija*, I can see how worried you’ve been. Don’t be scared. Everything will be all right.”

“But how do you know? What will happen to us?” I said.

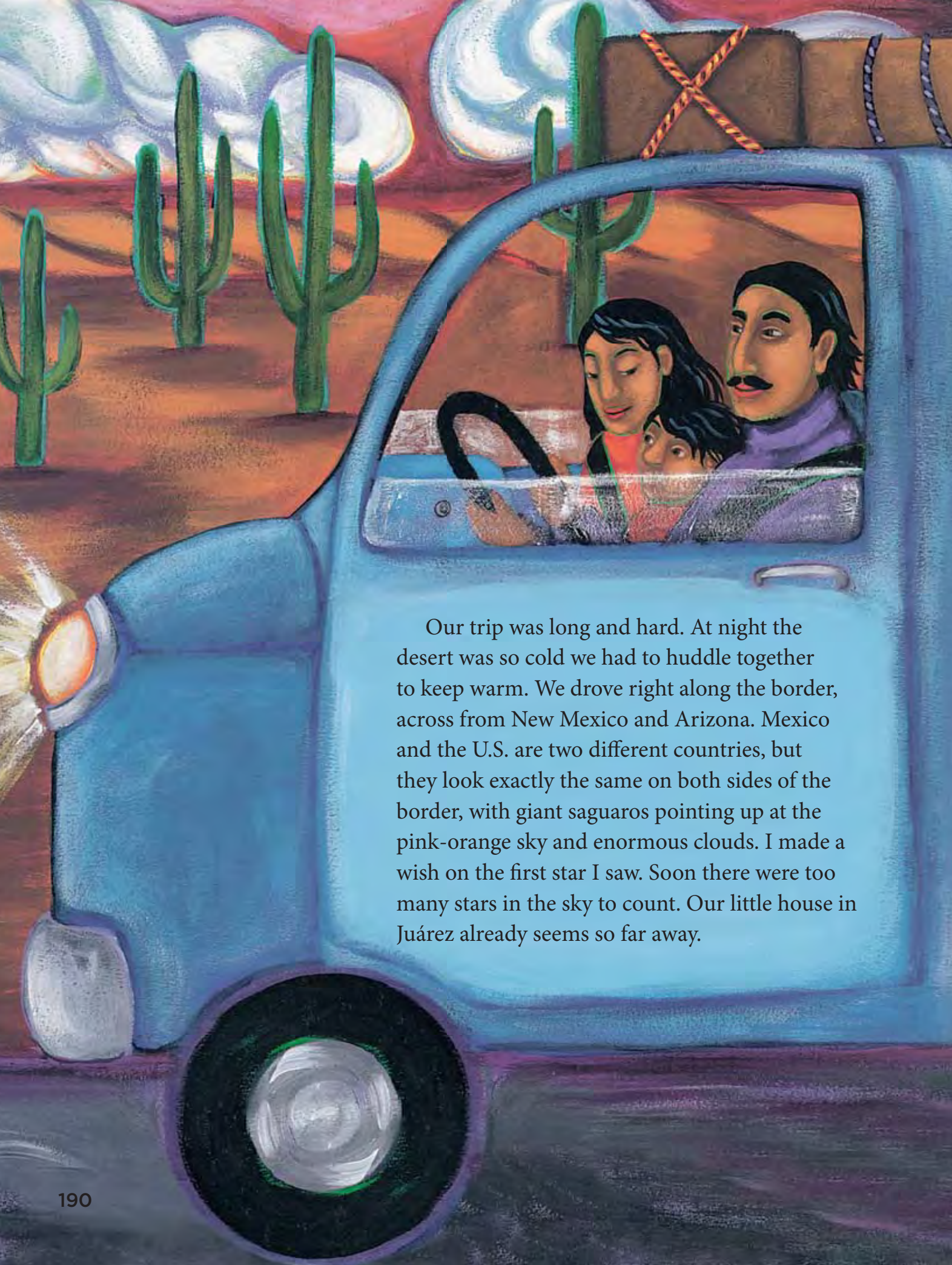
He smiled. “*M’ija*, I was born in Arizona, in the States. When I was six—not a big kid like you—my Papá and Mamá moved our family back to Mexico. It was a big change, but we got through it. I know you can, too. You are stronger than you think.” I hope he’s right. I still need to pack my special rock (and you, Diary!). We leave tomorrow!



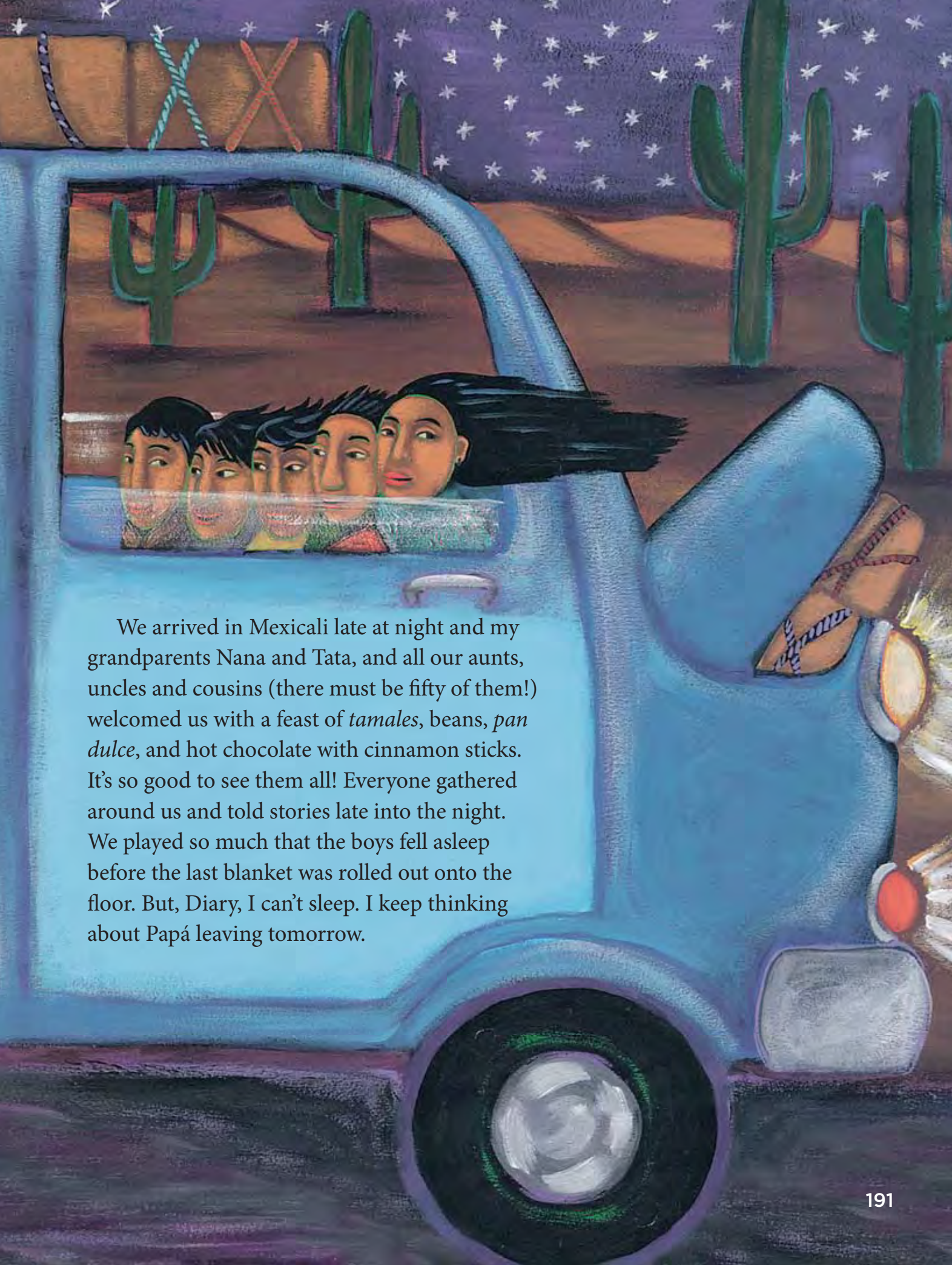
### Make Inferences

Based on Amada’s journal entries, what do you think she is feeling about the move? How can you tell?





Our trip was long and hard. At night the desert was so cold we had to huddle together to keep warm. We drove right along the border, across from New Mexico and Arizona. Mexico and the U.S. are two different countries, but they look exactly the same on both sides of the border, with giant saguaros pointing up at the pink-orange sky and enormous clouds. I made a wish on the first star I saw. Soon there were too many stars in the sky to count. Our little house in Juárez already seems so far away.



We arrived in Mexicali late at night and my grandparents Nana and Tata, and all our aunts, uncles and cousins (there must be fifty of them!) welcomed us with a feast of *tamales*, beans, *pan dulce*, and hot chocolate with cinnamon sticks. It's so good to see them all! Everyone gathered around us and told stories late into the night. We played so much that the boys fell asleep before the last blanket was rolled out onto the floor. But, Diary, I can't sleep. I keep thinking about Papá leaving tomorrow.

Papá left for Los Angeles this morning. Nana comforted Mamá, saying that Papá is a U.S. **citizen**, so he won't have a problem getting our "green cards" from the U.S. government. Papá told us that we each need a green card to live in the States, because we weren't born there.

I can't believe Papá's gone. Tío Tito keeps trying to make us laugh instead of cry. Tío Raúl let me wear his special *medalla*. And Tío Chato even pulled a silver coin out of my ear. The boys try to copy his tricks but coins just end up flying everywhere. They drive me nuts sometimes, but today it feels good to laugh.

We got a letter from Papá today! I'm pasting it into your pages, Diary.

*My dear family,*

*I have been picking grapes and strawberries in the fields of Delano, 140 miles north of Los Angeles, saving money and always thinking of you. It is hard, tiring work. There is a man here in the fields named César Chávez, who speaks of **unions**, **strikes**, and **boycotts**. These new words hold the hope of better conditions for us farmworkers.*

*So far, getting your green cards has been difficult, for we are not the only family trying to start a new life here. Please be patient. It won't be long before we are all together again.*

*Hugs and kisses, Papá*



### Make Inferences

What does Papá have to take into consideration as he plans his family's move to California?





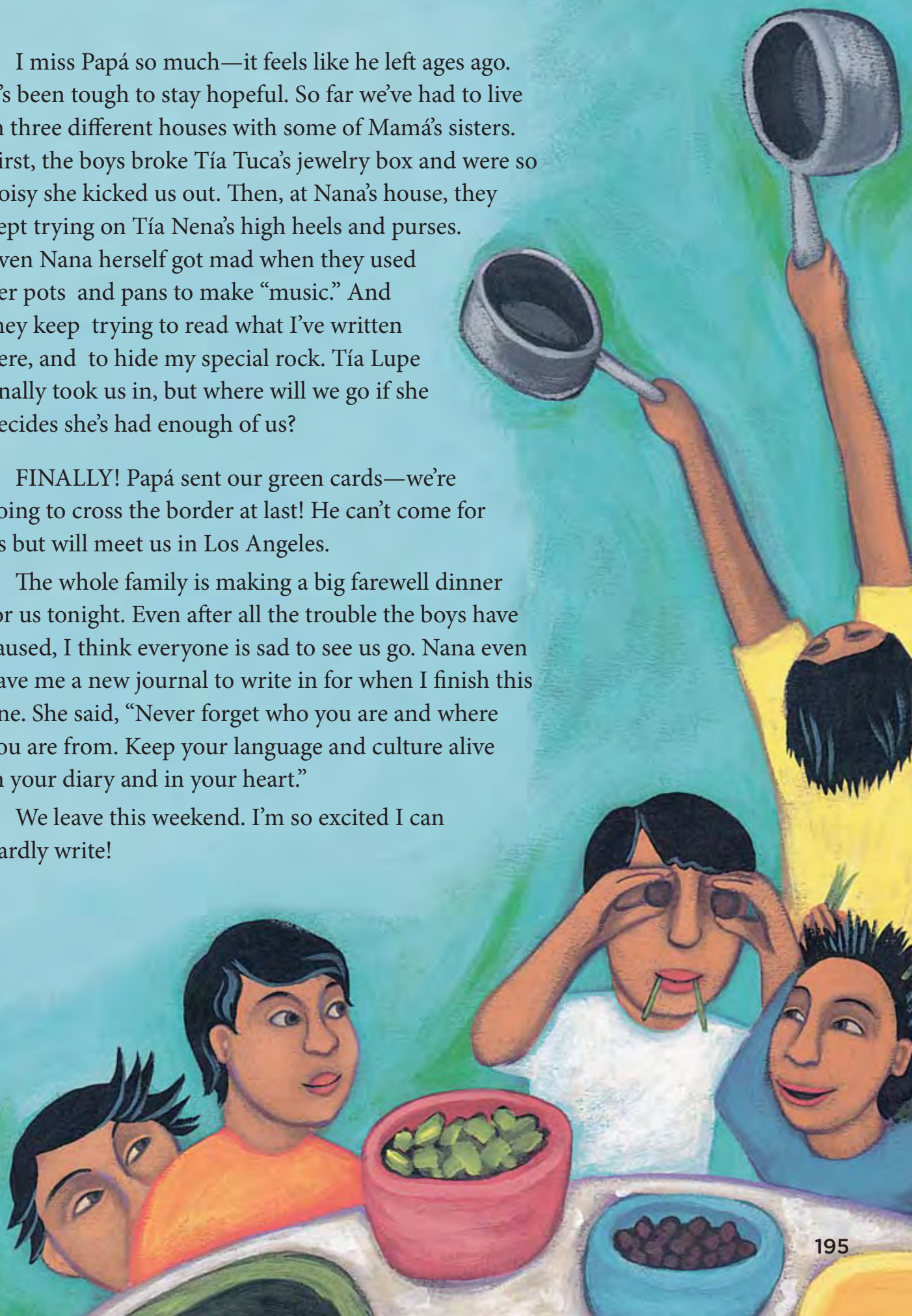


I miss Papá so much—it feels like he left ages ago. It's been tough to stay hopeful. So far we've had to live in three different houses with some of Mamá's sisters. First, the boys broke Tía Tuca's jewelry box and were so noisy she kicked us out. Then, at Nana's house, they kept trying on Tía Nena's high heels and purses. Even Nana herself got mad when they used her pots and pans to make "music." And they keep trying to read what I've written here, and to hide my special rock. Tía Lupe finally took us in, but where will we go if she decides she's had enough of us?

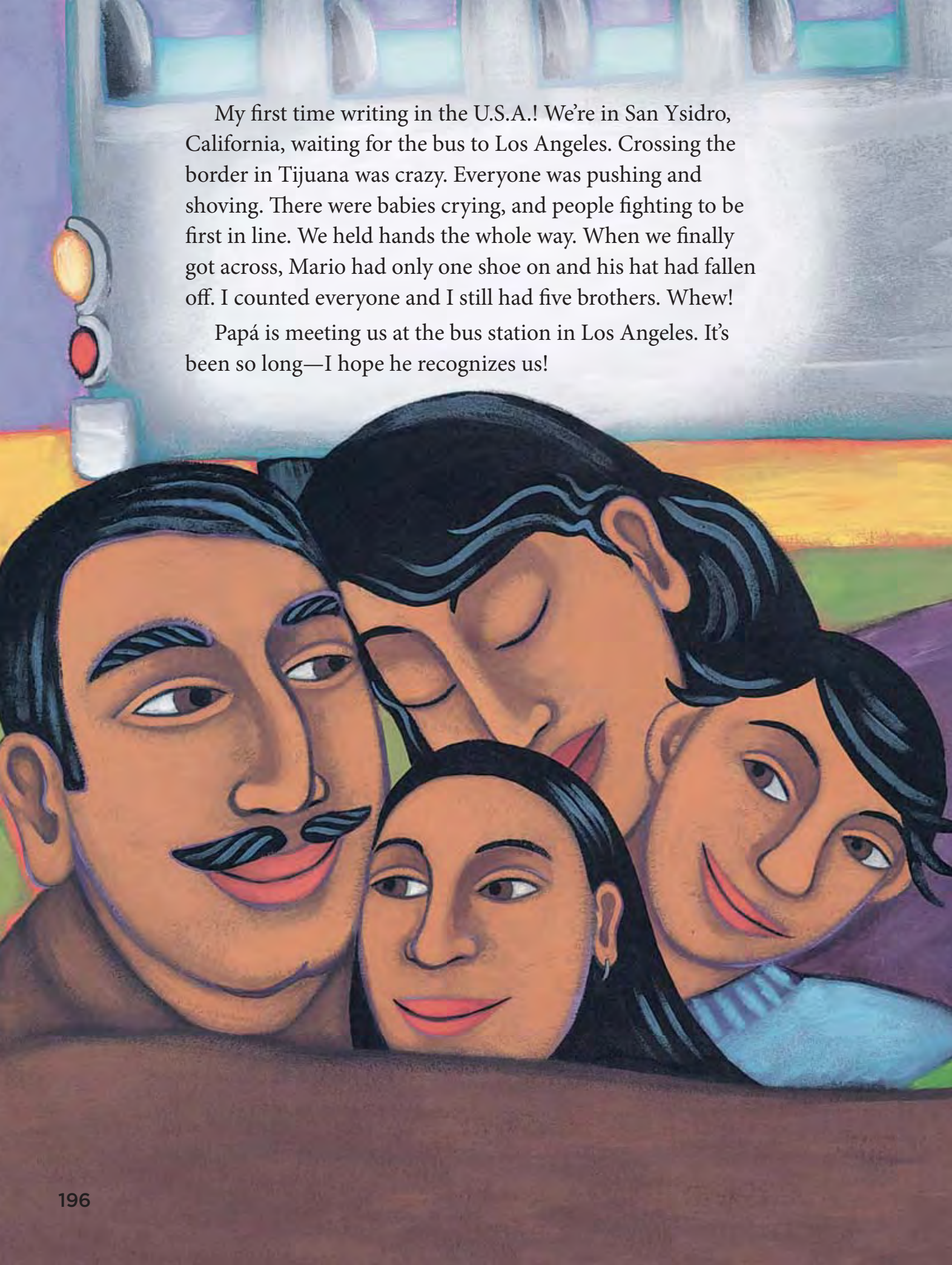
FINALLY! Papá sent our green cards—we're going to cross the border at last! He can't come for us but will meet us in Los Angeles.

The whole family is making a big farewell dinner for us tonight. Even after all the trouble the boys have caused, I think everyone is sad to see us go. Nana even gave me a new journal to write in for when I finish this one. She said, "Never forget who you are and where you are from. Keep your language and culture alive in your diary and in your heart."

We leave this weekend. I'm so excited I can hardly write!







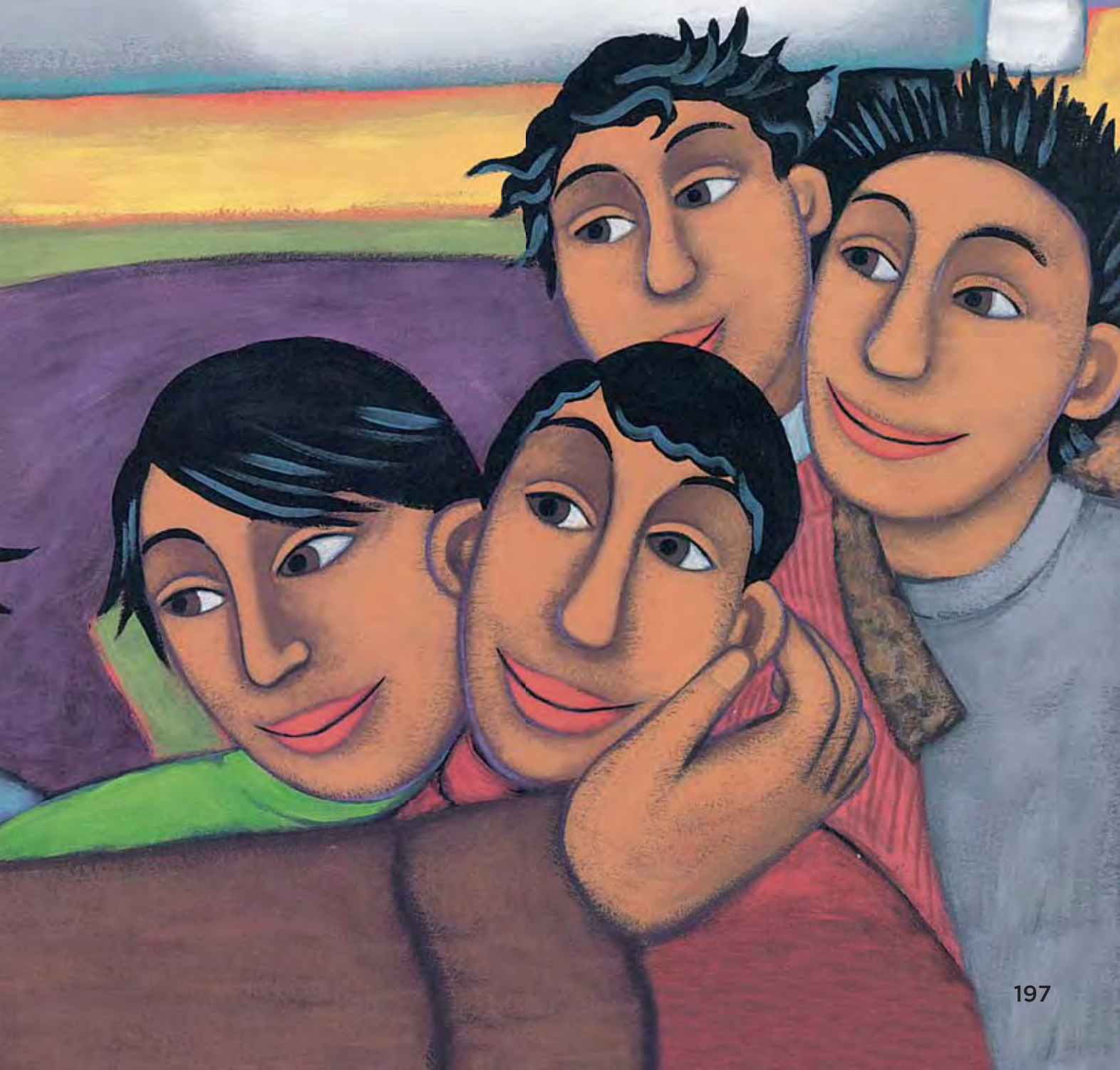
My first time writing in the U.S.A.! We're in San Ysidro, California, waiting for the bus to Los Angeles. Crossing the border in Tijuana was crazy. Everyone was pushing and shoving. There were babies crying, and people fighting to be first in line. We held hands the whole way. When we finally got across, Mario had only one shoe on and his hat had fallen off. I counted everyone and I still had five brothers. Whew!

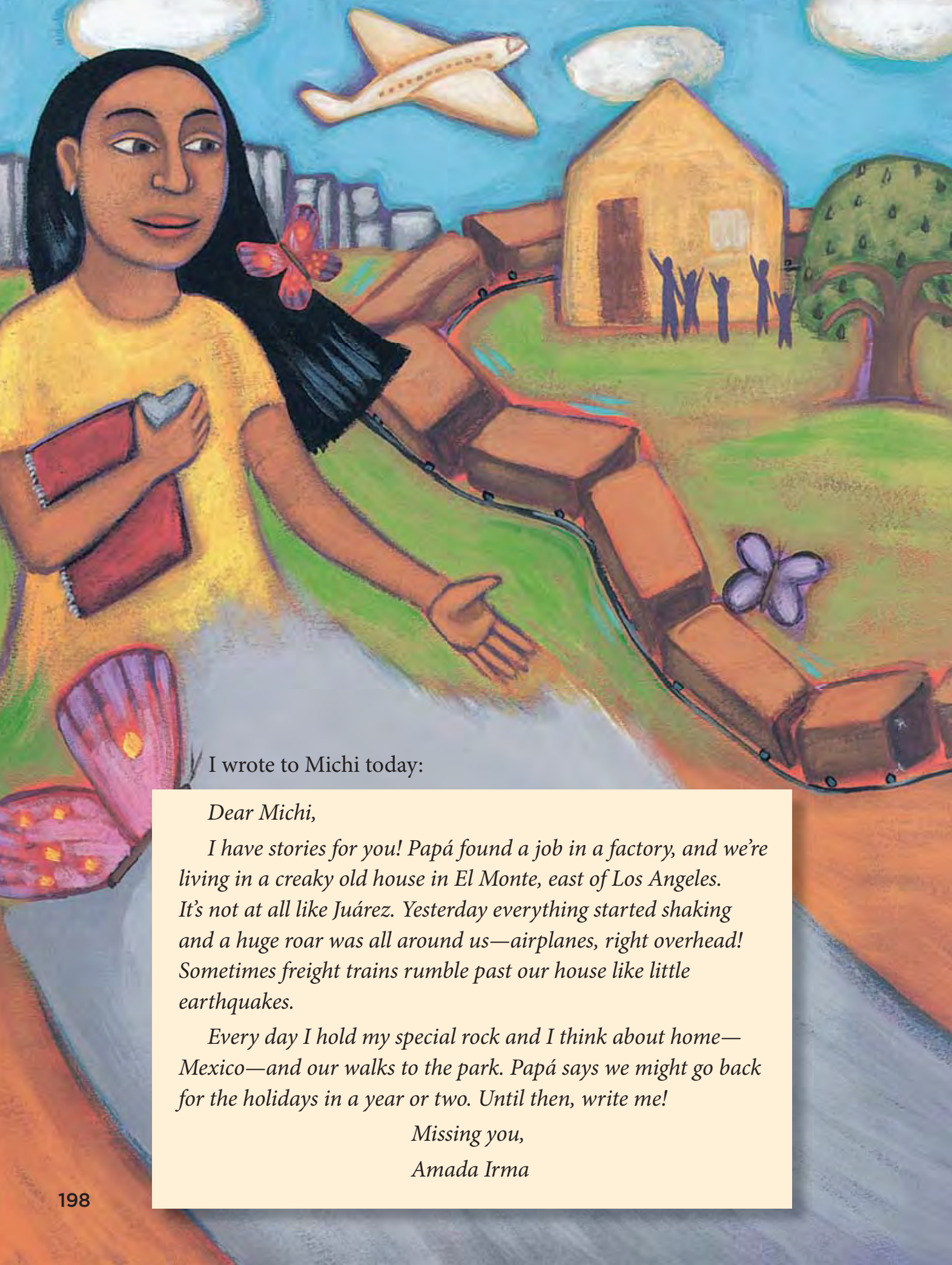
Papá is meeting us at the bus station in Los Angeles. It's been so long—I hope he recognizes us!



What a long ride! One woman and her children got kicked off the bus when the immigration patrol boarded to check everyone's papers. Mamá held Mario and our green cards close to her heart.

Papá was waiting at the station, just like he promised. We all jumped into his arms and laughed, and Mamá even cried a little. Papá's hugs felt so much better than when he left us in Mexicali!





I wrote to Michi today:

*Dear Michi,*

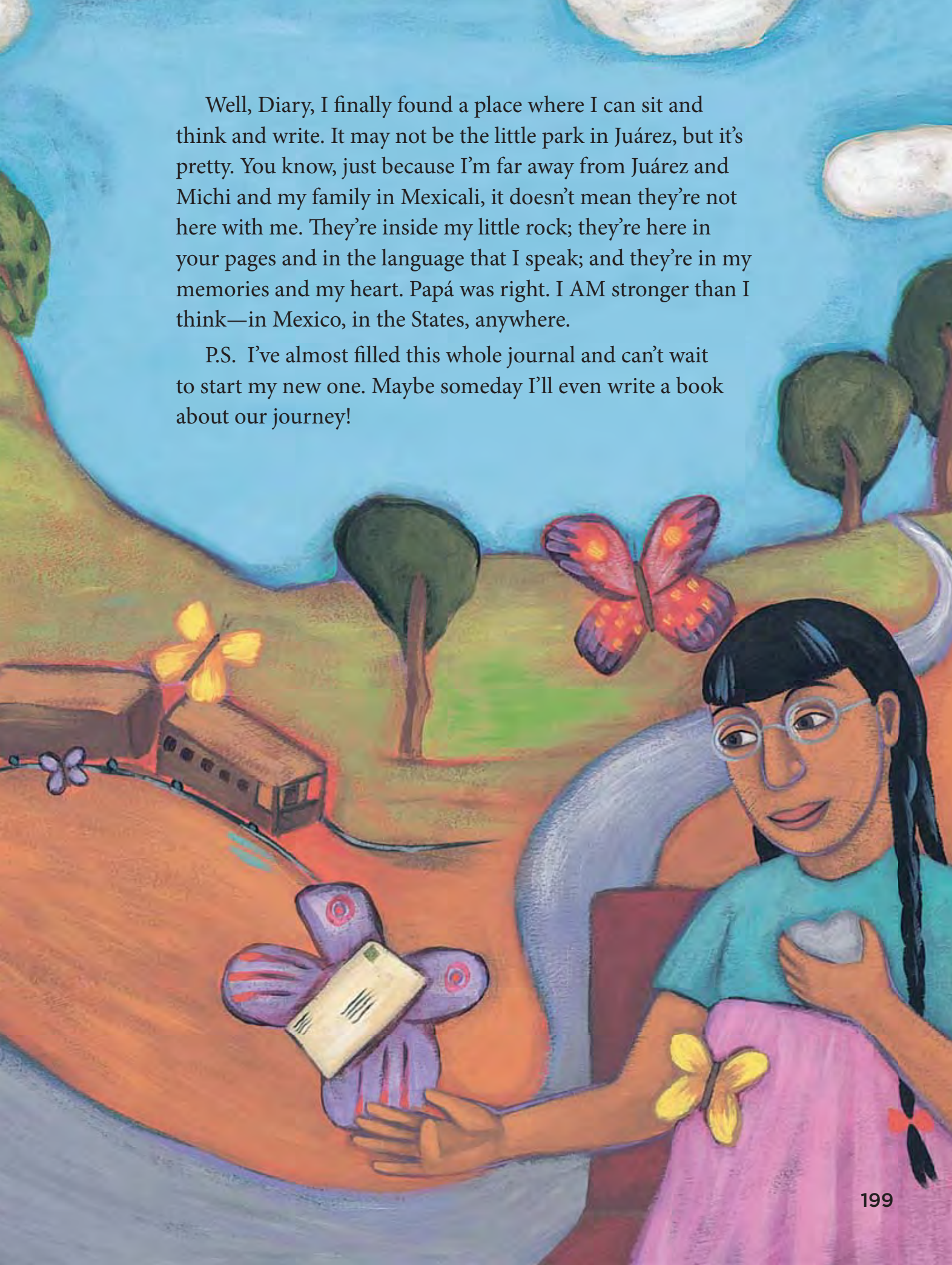
*I have stories for you! Papá found a job in a factory, and we're living in a creaky old house in El Monte, east of Los Angeles. It's not at all like Juárez. Yesterday everything started shaking and a huge roar was all around us—airplanes, right overhead! Sometimes freight trains rumble past our house like little earthquakes.*

*Every day I hold my special rock and I think about home—Mexico—and our walks to the park. Papá says we might go back for the holidays in a year or two. Until then, write me!*

*Missing you,  
Amada Irma*

Well, Diary, I finally found a place where I can sit and think and write. It may not be the little park in Juárez, but it's pretty. You know, just because I'm far away from Juárez and Michi and my family in Mexicali, it doesn't mean they're not here with me. They're inside my little rock; they're here in your pages and in the language that I speak; and they're in my memories and my heart. Papá was right. I AM stronger than I think—in Mexico, in the States, anywhere.

P.S. I've almost filled this whole journal and can't wait to start my new one. Maybe someday I'll even write a book about our journey!

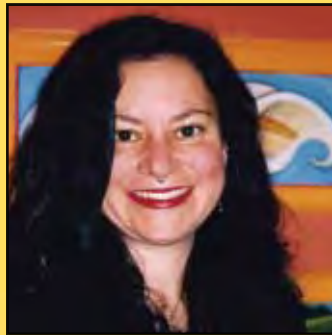
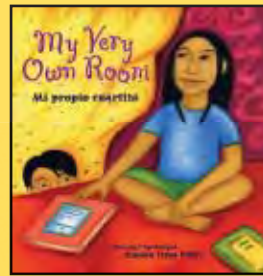


# From the Diaries of . . .



**Amada Irma Pérez** used memories of her own journey from Mexico to the United States to write this story. Just like the girl in the story, she was both excited and scared about moving. Today Amada still writes in a journal. She believes that diaries help keep our memories alive.

Another book by Amada Irma Pérez



**Maya Christina Gonzalez** has always loved to draw. When she was a child, she could not find any pictures of Mexican American children like herself in books. Maya would draw her own picture on a blank page in each book she read. Today Maya's books show lots of people of color so readers can feel proud of who they are.



Find out more about Amada Irma Pérez and Maya Christina Gonzalez at [www.macmillanmh.com](http://www.macmillanmh.com)

## Author's Purpose

Do you think using her own memories affected Amada Irma Pérez's purpose for writing? What clues tell you whether the story mainly informs, explains, or entertains?



## Comprehension Check



### Summarize

Summarize *My Diary from Here to There*. State the most important events, where the story takes place, and how the main character thinks and acts as the story progresses.



### Think and Compare

1. What clues from your Inferences Word Web help you figure out what Amada is like? **Generate Questions: Make Inferences**
2. Reread page 184. What conclusions can you draw about employment **opportunities** in Mexico at the time of this story? Use details from the story to support your answer. **Analyze**
3. Suppose Amada writes another story about her experiences in the U.S. What would you like her to write about? **Synthesize**
4. Compare Amada's feelings with those of her brothers. Are some of their feelings the same? Use details from the story. **Analyze**
5. Read "Mexico: My New Home" on pages 178-179. How is Paul's situation similar to Amada's? How is it different? Use details from both selections in your answer. **Reading/Writing Across Texts**

