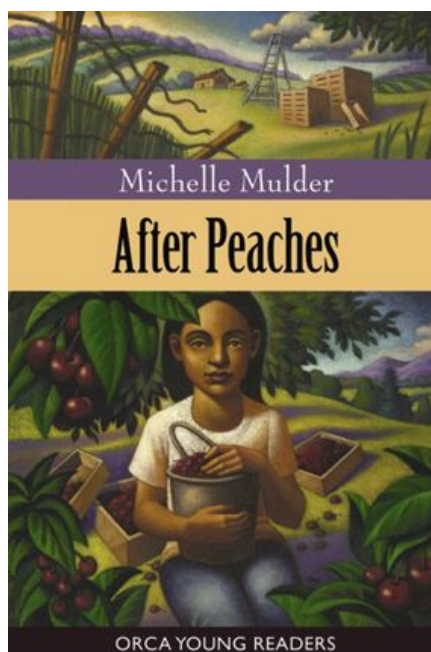


Teachers' Guide

After Peaches by Michelle Mulder



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Consider the following question as you read *After Peaches*: **What scares you most, and what could you gain by overcoming your fear?**

Story

“Cold fear twisted in my stomach. I couldn’t argue now, not with José lying on the ground, shaking, while Mamá and Marcos tried to hoist him up. But how could I talk to the patrón? A man who yelled at his workers about any little thing would never listen to a kid, especially a kid whose English was sure to come out all wrong. It always did when I was nervous or upset. And yelling the names of vegetables in Spanish wasn’t going to help me one bit this time.”

Ten-year-old Rosario Ramirez and her family are political refugees from Mexico, trying to make a new life in Canada. After being teased at school, Rosario vows not to speak English again until she can speak with an accent that's one hundred percent Canadian. Since she and her parents plan to spend the whole summer working on BC fruit farms, she will be surrounded by Spanish speakers again. But when her family's closest friend Jose gets terribly sick, Rosario's plans start to unravel. Neither Jose nor Rosario's parents speak English well enough to get him the help he needs. Like it or not, Rosario must face her fears about letting her voice be heard.

Author

When growing up, **Michelle Mulder's** favorite spot was the library, so it's no surprise that she studied literature at university. After graduating, she cycled across Canada, taught creative writing in the Arctic and married the pen pal that she'd been writing to since she was fourteen. She lives in Victoria, British Columbia. For more information about Michelle and her books, please visit her website at www.michellemulder.com

Curricular Integration

Themes: refugees, English as a Second Language, Mexico, Canadian tourism, harvests, migrant farm workers, kids making a difference.

Language Arts

- As a new immigrant learning English, Rosario felt lonely and misunderstood. Have students brainstorm ways in which they could make her feel welcome. Write short skits or public service announcements sharing this information with other people in the school.
- At the beginning of the book, Rosario wants a “Normal Canadian Kid Adventure.” What kinds of things might she like to do? Write a journal entry of her perfect day.
- Rosario’s life in Canada is very different from her life in Mexico. Have students write letters from Rosario to Analía, describing her home, school, friends, or another aspect of her life in Canada.
- Near the end of the book, Rosario no longer worries about the bully that she faces at school. Have students discuss what has changed and why she feels more confident.

Social Studies

- Rosario and her father were excited about exploring the province in which they live. Have students research the geography and tourist attractions of their home province, plan an imaginary trip to visit several places within the province, and present their plans to the class.

- Invite to the classroom someone who is from (or has lived in) Mexico to talk about the country. You might also have kids explore their own ethnic backgrounds and share a few of their cultural traditions with the class.
- In the first chapter, Robbie calls Rosario a “government leech.” Have students discuss what he means and why he might say that. Discuss the concept of “refugee” and reasons why someone might leave everything behind to move to a new country, like Canada.
- Lately, supermarkets are offering food that is grown locally and/or organically. With *After Peaches* in mind, what other things might we consider when buying our food? Is it possible to have “just” food (ie, food that is just)? What are some reasons why supermarkets might not advertise “just” food in the same way that they advertise local or organic produce?

Art

- As a follow-up to planning imaginary trips around the province, have students create tourism posters or poster-sized maps showing where their trip would take them. They might look at a book like *Wow Canada!* for inspiration.
- Rosario wants to climb a cherry tree to see what the view is like from up there. Have students brainstorm places where they'd have an unusual view of a familiar place. Challenge them to draw a scene from two different vantage points.

Science

- José suffers from pesticide poisoning. Have students discuss ways in which this could have been avoided.

- Have students trace the life-cycles of various fruits such as strawberries, cherries and peaches. Strawberries grow relatively quickly, and students might even try their hand at growing their own.

Drama

- Encourage students to rewrite a scene from the book as a short play. They may perform with or without props and costumes. In the latter case, encourage them to explore language and student voice to shape the work.

Suggested Resources

Fiction

Altman, Linda Jacobs. *Amelia's Road*.

Dorros, Arthur. *Radio Man*.

Skarmeta, Antonio. *The Composition*. (Takes place in Chile, but provides an excellent child's view of life in a country where it's dangerous to speak one's mind)

Non-fiction

(Dewey Decimal Classification Numbers appear in parentheses where applicable.)

Bowers, Vivien. *Wow Canada!* (917.1)

Burger, Leslie and Debra L. Rahm. *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees : making a difference in our world* (362.87)

Dineen, Jacqueline. *Fruit : the world's harvest* (634)

Hoose, Phillip. *It's Our World, Too! : Stories of Young People Who Are Making a Difference*. (302.14)

Hoose, Phillip. *It's Our World, Too! : Young People Who Are Making a Difference: How They Do It - How YOU Can, Too!* (361.37)

Milord, Susan. *Mexico! : 40 Activities to Experience Mexico Past & Present*
(917.2)

Senker, Cath. *Why Are People Refugees?* (305.9)

Sheen, Barbara. *Foods of Mexico* (641.5972)

Slade, Suzanne. *Cesar Chavez : champion and voice of farmworkers* (331.88)

Online

Information for Kids, Students and Teachers – Pesticides – US EPA
<http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/kids/>

Introduction – The Kids' Site of Canadian Settlement – Library and Archives
Canada
<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/settlement/kids/index-e.html>

Lesson Plan – Refugees and Children in Our World
<http://learningtogive.org/lessons/unit189/lesson4.html>
(This is a bit advanced for the audience, but it might give teachers some good accompanying resources.)

Where to Find Pick-Your-Own Fruit and Vegetable Farms
www.pickyourown.org

Film

Al Otro Lado (To the Other Side), Unicorn 2004.
(This excellent film contains subtitles and is therefore a more appropriate resource for teachers than for young readers. For more information, please see
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0419424/>)

A Few Words from the Author

Dear Readers,

When I was growing up, my mother often told stories about being a new immigrant to Canada. She arrived here from Germany when she was seven years old. She didn't know a word of English, and kids at her school assumed she was "stupid" because she couldn't communicate. The harder she tried, though, the more the other kids teased, until finally she refused to speak English again unless she could do so perfectly. She didn't open her mouth to talk at school for an entire year!

I've always remembered that story, but I never imagined I would include it in one of my books. Even when I started writing *After Peaches*, I didn't know I would be telling my mother's story.

I first began imagining Rosario when I was talking to a school nurse. She told me about kids she knew who spent some of their time in the fields, picking fruit alongside their parents, and I wondered what it would be like to be one of those kids. I started to research life in the fields and learned about migrant workers who come to Canada every year to make money to support families back at home. I thought that was interesting, so I added a few migrant workers to the story, too.

As you know, Rosario is a Mexican refugee living in the present day. As I wrote, though, I kept thinking about my mother's story, and at first, that seemed strange: what does a present-day Mexican refugee girl have to do with my German mother at age seven?

A lot, I decided, in the end. Both girls moved to a new country and learned another language, and those things are challenging for everyone, no matter who you are or where you're from.

After Peaches is a work of fiction, but it's fiction with many true stories in it. Rosario's experiences as a refugee are common to many refugees, and the stories of the migrant workers are a combination of many migrant workers' experiences in Canada. By blending fact and fiction, I tried to write a good story about interesting, real-life situations. I hope you enjoy reading the book as much as I enjoyed writing it!

Sincerely,

Michelle.