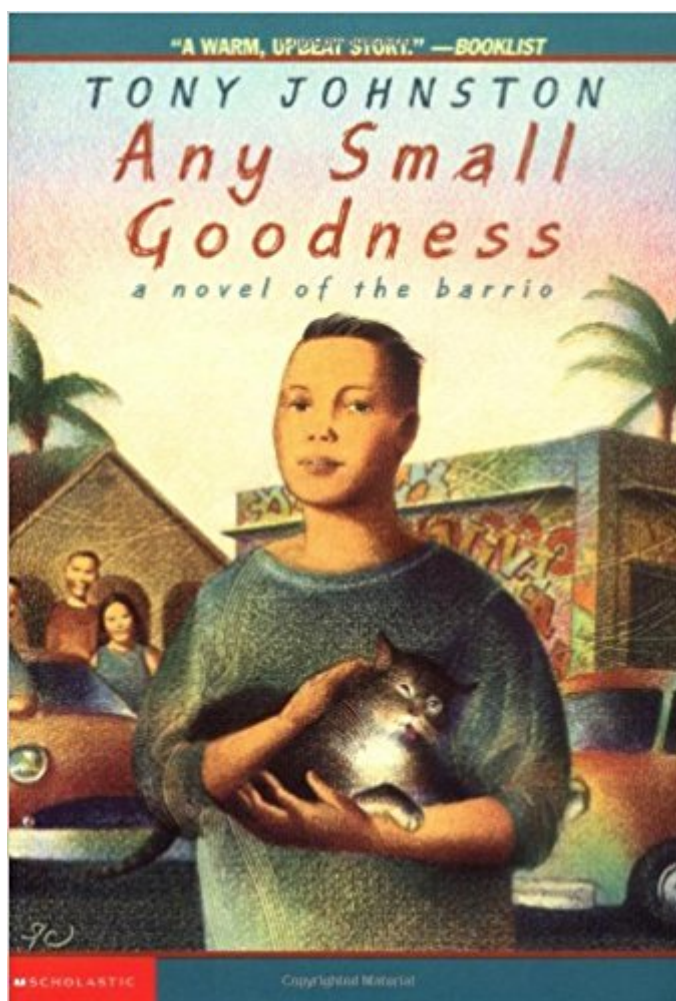


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Any Small Goodness: A Novel Of The Barrio



Synopsis

Award-winning picture-book author Tony Johnston presents the poignant story of a loving Mexican-American family in East L.A. in her first novel for young readers. Los Angeles is a place of movie stars and fast cars and people who are too rich and people who are too poor. An area of freeway chases and drive-bys and death. But there's another L.A., one where warmth and humor and humanity pervade. Where a tacqueria sign declares: "One cause, one people, one taco." This L.A. is a place where random acts of generosity and goodwill improve the lives of the community. Any Small Goodness is a novel filled with hope, love, and warmth.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 600 (What's this?)

Paperback: 128 pages

Publisher: Scholastic Paperbacks (June 1, 2003)

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Product Dimensions: 0.5 x 5.2 x 7.5 inches

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Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 17 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #124,457 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #144 in Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Multicultural Stories > Hispanic & Latino #3738 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life #6617 in Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction

Age Range: 7 - 10 years

Grade Level: 2 - 5

Customer Reviews

Gr 4-7-This novel set in East Los Angeles provides a glimpse of the daily life of an extended Mexican-American family rich in relationships, if not in material possessions. Rather than a linear plot, the vignettes introduce readers to 11-year-old Arturo's family, school life, neighborhood occurrences, and holiday celebrations. Spanish words and phrases are sprinkled throughout as are descriptions of mouth-watering dishes constantly prepared by the boy's Mami and Abuelita. The characters are likable and warm, even if the voice of Arturo seems to be a bit too adult for his years. The message is positive and the episodes, while occasionally serious, are more often humorous

and gratifying. Sharon McNeil, Los Angeles County Office of Education Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Gr. 4-7, younger for reading aloud. In her first novel, popular picture-book author Johnston tells a warm, upbeat story of a Mexican family newly arrived in Los Angeles. The narrator is Arturo Rodriguez, 11, whose present-tense account is filled with Spanish expressions and the physical details of daily life at home, at school, and in the barrio. The first chapter will touch many immigrant kids: the children are tempted to assimilate after their teacher anglicizes their names, but Arturo's abuelita persuades them to hold on to who they are and take their names back. At times Johnston overdoes the local color with too many similes, and some characters are sentimentalized (not that anyone will object to the "angel" librarian). There's a scary gang and a drive-by shooting, but order is restored and the climax is the family celebration of navidad, "warm and sweet and silly, glowing in the candlelight." The small size of the book is inviting, with clear, spacious type and a small illustration at the head of each chapter. Hazel Rochman Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

My students have been reading this in class. They are really enjoying finding out more about Arturo's life. They are disappointed when we have to stop reading.

One of the best books for children and adults that I have read in years. A beautiful portrayal of a Mexican American family and a positive view of the people living in the barrio. The stories are simple but moving and socially-uplifting. A must-read for students 5th grade to 12th grade because of the positive and inspiring content. There is a "need" for this story to be read both in the schools and at home because being tough is not nearly as important or life-sustaining as the human need to experience goodness and kindness, no matter how small. After a day of encountering rudeness from almost every corner, I read this story in one sitting. The examples of what "goodness" is possible if we celebrate and teach the need to consider others, outside of the obvious, was healing to me.

Wonderful story for 5th-8th grade students! Our book club really enjoyed it!

A beautiful book about cultural differences. To see the insight of a child that lives in the lower class and the situations he deals with, yet he still learns kindness. I read this for my ESL (English as a

second language) class and was a great read for any aged reader. Young ones can follow along and grasp the plot while there is enough to teach adults a lesson too. Anyone who reads this will come away benefiting.

As advertised

This book is written on a 2nd grade reading level, however it is an eye opening book about what it's like to be of a non-English speaking or very little English speaking family and what it's like to grow up that way.

thanks

The reviews on the inside cover of this book describe Arturo, the protagonist, as 'a Latino Holden Caulfield'. Well, no. After reading a few Hispanic American novels, I am beginning to see some similarities. They have all been family based, family oriented. They each include a glossary to help readers with the Spanish words and phrases sprinkled throughout the text. They are life affirming and tell an uplifting tale. Any Small Goodness runs along the same lines. The title comes from what Arturo's father tells him: "In life there is bueno and there is malo. If you do not find enough of the good, you must yourself create it ... Remember this thing - any small goodness is of value." To this end, Arturo and his friends form the Green Needle gang. In the Los Angeles barrio that is their home, they must deal with real street gangs. But the Green Needle gang sneaks up to people's houses and leave Christmas trees and gifts on the porch. This is only one of the ways they concoct to make their lives and neighborhood better. Arturo and his friends resist their teacher's efforts to Americanize their names (Arturo, Jaime, Alicia, Raul become Arthur, James, Alice, and Ralph, but only briefly). They are proud of their Hispanic heritage and look to Arturo's grandmother as a touchstone to the traditional ways. She cooks Mexican food, uses old time utensils, and speaks Spanish. Arturo is both proud of his grandmother and embarrassed by her - in the fashion of all teens. But they are Americans, after all, and participate in all that is American. Some of the characters that walk on are an ex-NBA player who volunteers to coach at their school, a media specialist with a flair for choosing the perfect book, and a do-gooder piano teacher who keeps candy atop the piano to stave off sinking spells. While this is a worthwhile and enjoyable book, each chapter is a little story unto itself. There is not as much continuity of story as in an ordinary book. Some of the story does spill over into the culminating formation of the Green Needle gang at the

end, thus bringing the message home.

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