Resources for Teaching with *Diary of a Reluctant Dreamer*

English FYWP Courses

Genre – what is the genre of this text?

- “Hybrid memoir”
- Memoir: “A history or narrative composed from or stressing personal experience and acquaintance with the events, scenes, or persons described” (Merriam Webster’s Encyclopedia of Literature)

Other forms present include: Graphic narratives, collections of vignettes, serial comics, personal narratives, an essay, a speech. The types of writing and their tone vary widely in this text.

In the text, Ledesma communicates his experience being undocumented.

- “I tried focusing on representing the real drama I had experienced as an undocumented kid as best I could” (p. 19).
- “…these vignettes, cartoons really, are able to communicate complex moments much more efficiently and effectively, compared to long essays. I have been able to explore a wider spectrum of my undocumented experience, everything from romantic relationships to the terror of seeking financial aid” (p. 105).

Some recurrent themes include:

- Becoming “hyperdocumented”: “Desire to show that we are more than our legal status is what drives so many undocumented students to excel academically.” (p. 4)
- Impostor Syndrome: “Being an undocumented student at a prestigious university often provoked bouts of extreme insecurity and perfectionism in me…I was also convinced that if I had advanced, it was only because I had tricked the system…” (p. 104)
- Identity (public vs. private, transitional states and the college experience, parent-child relationships).
- A Space for the Immigrant Experience (or lack thereof in society, academia, etc).

The speech (p. 101) could be a good way to introduce/discuss the rhetorical situation. Author – text – audience. The way we write (form) and what we write about (content) are linked to the audience and to our intention as a writer. For example: Who was the audience of this speech? Answer: Chicano/Latino Alumni Association, Scholarship Brunch. Latinx students who are scholarship recipients at UC Berkeley, plus alumni/faculty/staff. What is the tone? Formal (most of the other content is informal). What was the speaker’s goal? To communicate the need for self-amnesty. To support and persuade students. “I believe that only by communicating the triumphs and stresses of our experience without self-judgement, only by initiating a public dialogue about what being undocumented means that is free from self-accusation, will our society finally accept that having been undocumented is just another kind of American experience.” (p. 105)

Another potential discussion would be to explore the function of/expectation in college writing classes. How is college writing different from other types of writing? Ledesma talks about how he was very afraid in writing classes (p. 40). Take care not to require students to tell their stories about being a dreamer. Keep assignments broad and offer options. A sample writing activity would be to have students choose a theme and write about it.

There are several books on reserve for 2-hour and 7-day loans. More information about the book, author, upcoming events, and the Dreamers Center: [http://calstatela.libguides.com/ocob](http://calstatela.libguides.com/ocob)