

PS 39 Diversity and Inclusion Book of the Month: September

Theme: Multiculturalism

Book Title: Alma and How She Got Her Name
By Juana Martinez-Neal

Grade Level: K / 1st

Book Summary:

If you ask her, Alma Sofia Esperanza José Pura Candela has way too many names: six! How did such a small person wind up with such a large name? Alma turns to Daddy for an answer and learns of Sofia, the grandmother who loved books and flowers; Esperanza, the great-grandmother who longed to travel; José, the grandfather who was an artist; and other namesakes, too. As she hears the story of her name, Alma starts to think it might be a perfect fit after all — and realizes that *she* will one day have her own story to tell. In her author-illustrator debut, Juana Martinez-Neal opens a treasure box of discovery for children who may be curious about their own origin stories or names.

Discussion Questions:

- In the author's note for this book, Juana Martinez-Neal shares the history of her name and invites readers to share the story behind their own names. What do you know about how your name was chosen? Do you have a nickname? Did you choose it? Do you have another story about your name?
- Is a name just another word, or it is something more?
- How closely is one's identity connected to one's name?
- Is your name connected to your family? How?
- What is the purpose of names? Why do we have them?
- Think about how namings are part of larger cultural traditions and how name-giving practices vary from culture to culture. Does your name help to make you who you are? Why or why not?
- Would you ever want to change your name? What new name would you choose?
- How would you feel if someone else decided that you would change your name?