



My Name Is Maria Isabel

By Alma Flor Ada

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A third grader realizes the importance of her name in this classic story of heritage and self-identity.

For María Isabel Salazar López, the hardest thing about being the new girl in school is that the teacher doesn't call her by her real name. "We already have two Marías in this class," says her teacher. "Why don't we call you Mary instead?" But María Isabel has been named for her Papá's mother and for Chabela, her beloved Puerto Rican grandmother. Can she find a way to make her teacher see that if she loses her name, she's lost the most important part of herself?

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My Name Is Maria Isabel By Alma Flor Ada Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Armed with her new blue bookbag, Maria Isabel bravely faces her first day at a new school. But when she meets her new teacher, she is told there are already two other Marias in the class. "Why don't we call you Mary instead?" her teacher suggests, unaware that Maria was named for both her grandmothers, a grandfather and her father. Maria's inability to respond to "Mary" leads to more problems. Simply told, this story combines the struggle of a Puerto Rican family's efforts to improve their life with a shared sense of pride in their heritage. The author's carefully drawn characterizations avoid stereotypes, thus increasing their appeal and believability. An essay involving a wish list gives Maria a chance to reclaim her name, and allows her teacher to make amends. Abetted by Thompson's straightforward black-and-white drawings, this contemporary tale serves as a good reminder that no two names are really alike. Ages 7-10.

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From School Library Journal

Grade 3-4-- This gentle story tells of Maria Isabel Salazar Lopez, who finds herself dubbed "Mary Lopez" when her family moves and she is placed in a class with two other Marias. Maria Isabel finds it hard to respond to a name that does not seem like hers. Her teacher doesn't understand why it is so difficult for her to answer to "Mary" until the child is inspired to address her paper on "My Greatest Wish" to the topic of her name. The result is not only a happy ending, but also an affirming study of heritage and how it is integrally bound up in an individual's sense of self. The brief text, adequately extended by line drawings, reads aloud well and could certainly be used in conjunction with Gary Soto's *The Skirt* (Delacorte, 1992) to illustrate the Hispanic culture that is part of the lives of many contemporary children. --Ann Welton, Terminal Park Elementary School, Auburn, WA

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From Kirkus Reviews

When Maria Isabel Salazar Lopez's family moves, there are already two Marias in her new class, so the teacher decides to call her Mary Lopez. Since she doesn't readily recognize this new name, Maria Isabel is continually scolded for being inattentive; worse, her pride in being named for her grandmothers is dishonored. Maria Isabel's reluctance to assert her wish to be called by her full name involves her in an apparent web of deception when she doesn't get a part in a pageant (she doesn't recognize her name when the teacher is assigning roles) but lets her parents believe she'll participate. Fortunately, an essay assignment provides a solution: she finds the courage to write that her "greatest wish is to be called Maria Isabel Salazar Lopez," clearly explaining her reasons; and her teacher responds generously to her plea. Cuban author Ada (The Gold Coin, 1991) captures the authentic flavor of Latino culture in this warm, yet never sentimental, story: an entire family genealogy is encapsulated in a Latino name, as well as special connections between its bearer and the relatives for whom she was named. Presented in realistic terms, Maria Isabel's struggles will ring true to many children in the US. Pair this with Barbara Cohen's *Molly's Pilgrim* (1983) for a fine multicultural comparison. (Fiction. 7-10) -- Copyright ©1993, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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