

In “Forum: Trauma and Children’s Literature” (2005) Katharine Capshaw Smith states, “experiential narratives [depicting trauma] privilege evidence of the child reader's survival ability as well as identification with a suffering protagonist...” (118), indicating that trauma in children’s literature serves the child reader as an affirmation for overcoming difficult experiences as well as a means of empathizing with people undergoing their own ordeals. Reyna Grande, a contemporary Mexican-American author, presents trauma as it connects to culture, nationality, and gender in her adapted memoir, *The Distance Between Us: Young Readers Edition* (2016). Grande shares her experience coming of age as an undocumented immigrant living in the United States with her physically and mentally abusive father.

In the paper, I argue that Grande’s presentation of trauma communicates the relationship between machismo, childhood abuse, and youth culture. In doing so, she encourages readers to empathize with those affected by machismo culture as well as the myriad of issues that undocumented immigrants face in America. In her letter to the reader Grande writes, “I hope that those who read my book would show compassion, understanding, and love toward all immigrants, especially child immigrants.” Grande’s candor in sharing her experiences with childhood trauma and triumph raise awareness of the effects of lacking an American citizenship and being a teenage girl with an oppressive father. I explore the ways in which Grande presents trauma to young readers through her use of visual and textual narrative by examining two family photos and two scenes of physical child abuse.