Elena
by Diane Stanley

Elena and her four sisters are as delicate as flowers, their lives revolving around gentle pursuits: sewing, singing, dancing. Restless and unfulfilled, Elena is determined to learn to read and to marry the man she loves, an Indian named Pablo. Strong-willed Elena gets her way, but her happiness is soon shattered by Pablo’s death and the Mexican Revolution. Muster ing all her courage, Elena sacrifices everything to save her family. She and her children escape from Mexico and start a new life in California.

Selected Award
- Americas Award for Children’s and Young Adult Literature

About the Author
Award-winning author and illustrator Diane Stanley first heard Elena’s story from her grandmother. When Stanley grew up, she asked the real Elena, her grandmother’s lifelong friend, if she could write her family’s story. The result is Elena. The stories and deeds of strong, independent women have been important to Stanley throughout her life and have inspired her writing. Included among these are the biographies of four great female leaders: Cleopatra; Good Queen Bess: The Story of Queen Elizabeth I of England; The Last Princess: The Story of Princess Ka’iulani of Hawaii; and Joan of Arc.
**Think About What You Know**

**Sacrifices** Elena made many sacrifices to save her children and to give them a good life. To prepare students for understanding what it means to give up things for a higher purpose, work with them to complete a vocabulary map.

**Sacrifice**

**Meaning**
An act of goodness. Giving up something for a more important purpose.

**Examples**
- helping at home instead of playing with friends
- •

**What is it?**
- a good act
- not having or doing something
- •

After completing the map with students, have them use Student Journal, page 3 to tell about a sacrifice they have made.

**Preview and Predict**

Have students look at the front cover, read the title, and then read the summary on the back cover. Say:

- **What do you think Elena sacrifices for her family?**

Then point out The Exchange question on the title page: *How much should people sacrifice for their families?* Explain that when they finish reading, they’ll share their ideas about this and other questions with a group.

Next, have students complete Student Journal, page 3 to preview the book and make predictions about Elena.

As students page through the book, explain that:

- The map shows places mentioned in the story.
- The Author’s Note tells why Diane Stanley wrote the story and who the real Elena is.
- The Historical Note talks about the Mexican Revolution, which is when part of the story took place.
- The Glossary gives definitions of Spanish words in the story.

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*Prepare to Read*

Think About What You Know
Tell about a sacrifice you have made. What did you give up? Why?

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Preview and Predict
- Look at the front cover.
- Read the book summary on the back cover.
- Read The Exchange question on the title page.

1. Elena wants to read books and marry the man she loves. Why do you think it will be hard for her to do those things?

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2. Page through the book. What do you see before the story begins and at the end of the book?

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Use a Reading Strategy

**Story Map** Preview the graphic organizer on Student Journal, page 4 with students. Explain that as they read *Elena*, they can fill in the Map to show the events of Elena’s life. Have students add to their Maps after they finish reading each section.

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**Use a Reading Strategy**

**Use a Story Map**

As you read *Elena*, use a Story Map to show the events in Elena’s life.

**Beginning**

1. Elena and her sisters grew up in Mexico.
2. Elena wanted to study and learn.
3. Elena fell in love with Pablo.
4. Papá refused to let Elena marry Pablo.

**Middle**

1. Papá allowed Elena to marry Pablo.
2. They had children and were happy.
3. Pablo died, and Elena was filled with grief.
4. The Mexican Revolution began; soldiers came to Elena’s town.
5. Elena gave Pancho Villa Pablo’s last sombrero; his army guarded her house.

**End**

1. Elena and her children left Mexico; they made it safely to the United States.
2. Elena worked hard for her children; she gave them a good life.
Read the Book

Form the group that will read *Elena*. Plan how the group will read and respond. Some options are:

- **Read with a Partner**  Have students switch roles every few pages as they read the book aloud. One partner reads Elena’s dialogue and the other reads the parts of the narrator and the other characters. Have students complete the *Student Journal* page after each chapter. Encourage them to plan their reading sessions, using the planner on *Student Journal, page 2* to establish meeting times.

- **Read Independently**  Group members read the book on their own and then meet for *The Exchange*. The group can use the planner on *Student Journal, page 2* to establish the meeting time.

- **Guided Reading**  Read aloud the summary at the beginning of each chapter to give students an overview of the chapter. Use the *Before You Move On* questions to check comprehension as students read. Use *Look Ahead* to set a focus for reading the next set of pages. At the end of each section, assign the appropriate *Student Journal* page. Discuss the page before starting the next section. Establish a date for *The Exchange* and record it on the planner.

Whichever option you choose, use pages 5–7 for an at-a-glance view of *Student Journal* pages, as well as answers to the *Before You Move On* questions.

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**Student Journal, page 2**

**Plan Your Schedule**

My group members are: ___________________________

We plan to read *Elena* and meet on these dates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapters</th>
<th>Date We Will Finish Reading</th>
<th>Date We Will Discuss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author's Note</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Chapter 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Historical Note</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Our Exchange meeting will be on this date: _______________*
Elena

Author’s Note and Chapter 1

ANSWERS TO “BEFORE YOU MOVE ON”

PAGE 6
1. **Author’s Purpose** Why did the author write this story?
   Her grandmother had told her the story many times; she wanted to share the story with others.

2. **Viewing** Look at the map on page 4. What is the name of the town where Elena lived?
   Degollado

PAGE 10
1. **Comparisons** Elena had four sisters. Reread page 9. How was Elena like her sisters? How was she different?
   She sewed, sang, danced, and helped in the house like her sisters, but she also wanted to travel, study languages, read, and do mathematics.

2. **Setting** Describe Elena’s home in Jalisco, Mexico. Tell what she and her sisters did there.
   Her family had a big, cool house in the mountains; Elena and her sisters sewed, sang, and took dance lessons; they helped their mother around the house.

PAGE 13
1. **Conflict** Why didn’t Elena’s parents want her to learn reading and mathematics?
   They didn’t think girls needed to learn to read or understand mathematics.

2. **Paraphrase** Reread pages 11–12. What did Elena mean when she said “God has put it into my heart”? She meant that her wish to study and learn came from a higher force and was a part of her.

PAGE 16
1. **Cause and Effect** Elena’s father did not want her to marry Pablo. Why?
   Pablo would not inherit money or land; he was the son of a poor Indian, not the hacendado’s real child.

2. **Paraphrase** Reread page 16. What did Papá mean when he said, “For he is nothing to me, and he can be nothing to you”? He does not want Elena to marry Pablo, so she should forget him.
Chapter 2

ANSWERS TO “BEFORE YOU MOVE ON”

PAGE 19
1. Cause and Effect Papa fi
nally agreed to let Elena marry Pablo. How did this affect Elena?
She was very happy; she filled her patio with flowers and songbirds; she and Pablo had a good life together with their children.

2. Narrator On page 18, a new person starts telling the story. Who is it? How can you tell?
Elena’s daughter; she calls her mother Elena, Elena’s papá grandfather, and her father Pablo.

PAGE 23
1. Cause and Effect How did Pablo die?
He fell down a ravine with his horse.

2. Character Reread pages 22–23. How did Elena show her sadness?
She knocked down her flowers and freed the birds; she grew quiet.

PAGE 28
1. Plot Why did Pancho Villa order soldiers to guard Elena’s house?
He admired the sombreros that Pablo made; Elena sold him one, and he was grateful.

2. Character Reread page 25. What makes Elena good at solving dangerous problems?
She was strong, courageous, and determined.
Chapter 3 and Historical Note

ANSWERS TO “BEFORE YOU MOVE ON”

PAGE 32

1. Character’s Motive Why did Elena leave her home even though everyone told her not to?
   She wanted to protect her family; she remembered what Pablo had said about the soldiers before he died.

2. Plot Reread pages 31–32. Why did Esteban cross the border with the fruit seller?
   They had to hide Esteban so that the soldiers wouldn’t take him.

PAGE 37

1. Comparisons How was the family’s life in the United States different from their life in Mexico?
   Esteban got a job picking fruit; he didn’t laugh and play the way he used to; Elena worked harder; the girls helped her and went to school.

2. Summarize Reread page 35. How did Elena feel about work?
   Work was useful. It brought in money and kept her busy.

PAGE 40

1. Generalization What did Rosa learn from Mamá about solving problems?
   You must look inside yourself to find the answers.

2. Paraphrase Reread page 39. What did Rosa mean when she said Mamá had been bigger even than a war?
   She had the strength to bring her family through all kinds of dangers, even a war.

PAGE 44

1. Summarize What started the Mexican Revolution?
   Porfirio Díaz was a dictator who favored the rich and stole from the poor; the Mexican people were miserable, so they rose up to make Diaz leave office.

2. Inference Reread pages 43 and 44. Then look at the map on page 4. Why do you think so many Mexicans traveled to the United States?
   It was close and easy to get to; they could be safe and make a good life there.
Allow time for groups to meet for The Exchange. If you plan to participate, use these tips for guiding students in discussing the big question:

**How much should people sacrifice for their families?**

- **How do you think Elena would answer this question?**
  Elena would say that people should sacrifice as much as they can for their families; she would say that family is the most important thing.

- **Talk about the people in the story who need Elena and how she helps them.**
  Then tell about a time when someone relied on you.
  Pablo needs Elena because he loves her; Elena marries Pablo; they build a happy life together. Elena's children need her more than ever after Pablo dies; Elena is clever and brave for her children; she works hard to provide for them; she teaches them about life.

- **Elena finds courage when she thinks about great people like Queen Elizabeth and Joan of Arc. She also gains courage when she thinks about Pablo. Give examples of people who give you courage.**

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**Extend the Reading**

**Write a Letter**
Students can pretend that they are Elena and write a letter to her sisters in Mexico. Have them describe Elena's life in California and tell what she misses about Mexico. Then students can exchange letters with a classmate.

**Perform a Skit**
Have partners create a skit in which the real Elena tells her story to Diane Stanley's grandmother. Students should write a script and rehearse their lines before performing for the class.

**Create a Mural**
Have groups create a mural showing the three main parts of Elena's life: before she married Pablo, her marriage and the time after Pablo died, and her new life in the United States. Each group can present its mural along with commentary.