Ana Rosa’s world is filled with unexpected events—some wondrous and exciting, others terrifying and sad. She is inspired to write by the beauty and music of the Dominican Republic, but also by Papi’s drinking and the discovery that he’s not her real father. With a poem, she assures her family that Papi is her only father, good or bad. When the government threatens to take their land, she and her brother Guairo protest. But, the soldiers come and Guairo is killed while protecting her. In her grief and guilt, Ana Rosa refuses to write again until she realizes she has the power of words to tell the story of her brave brother.

Selected Awards
- Américas Award
- Jane Addams Children’s Book Award
- NCTE Notable Children’s Book

About the Author
A native of the Caribbean island of Trinidad, Lynn Joseph has written many picture books about her island home including the collection of stories A Wave in Her Pocket. The Color of My Words is her first book set in the Dominican Republic. Joseph is also an attorney for the City of New York.
Think About What You Know

Ways to Use Words  In this book, a young girl writes to express herself, to describe events, and to help her cope with life’s challenges. To prepare students for understanding how words can be used for many different purposes:

• Say: There are many ways to use words. Some words tell us how to get somewhere. Others tell us how to do or make things. What other ways do we use words?
• Have students form teams. Give teams fifteen minutes to make a list of as many ways to use words as they can. (For example: to give directions, to persuade, to make someone laugh or cry, to warn about something dangerous, etc.) Then invite teams to discuss and share their lists.
• Next, have students think about the ways they used words this week and list them on Student Journal, page 3.

Preview and Predict

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

• Look at the cover. What do you think Ana Rosa is writing about? Do you think that will change when she hears about the government’s plan? How?

Then point out The Exchange question on the title page: Can words change people? How? 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 Ana Rosa’s experiences.

As students page through the book, point out the poetry that begins each chapter. Explain that the poems are like previews of what will be described in that chapter and if the mood is happy, sad, or frightening.

Prepare to Read

Think About What You Know
Think about what you did this week. How did you communicate with others? Describe three ways you used words.

1. ____________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________
3. ____________________________________________

Preview and Predict
• Look at the front cover.
• Read the summary on the back cover.
• Read The Exchange question on the title page.
• Read page 3 and the “Wash Day” poem on pages 4-5.

1. In this story, Ana Rosa tells about her own life. How do you know?

2. Page through the book. Read the chapter titles and the first verse of each poem. What do you think you’ll learn about Ana Rosa?
Use a Reading Strategy

Character Description Chart

Preview the graphic organizer on Student Journal, page 4 with students. Explain that as they read The Color of My Words, they can complete the Chart to show what the characters say and do, and what this shows about those characters. Have students add to their Charts after they finish reading each section.

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Use a Reading Strategy

Use a Character Description Chart

As you read The Color of My Words, use a Character Description Chart to show what the characters say and do, and what this tells you about them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>What the Character Does</th>
<th>What This Shows About the Character</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ana Rosa</td>
<td>stole her brother’s notebook to write in, but she felt bad</td>
<td>she wanted to be a writer even though stealing is wrong; she loved her brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mami</td>
<td>told everyone that Ana Rosa should write the sea monster story</td>
<td>she believed Ana Rosa was a good writer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papi</td>
<td>taught Ana Rosa to dance even though she was bad</td>
<td>he was patient, liked to dance, and loved Ana Rosa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angel</td>
<td>talked to Angela all night at the Christmas party</td>
<td>he liked Angela</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ana Rosa</td>
<td>decided Papi was her real father</td>
<td>she realized she could decide what was real in her life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guario</td>
<td>fought for the neighbors and died while protecting Ana Rosa</td>
<td>he was brave, strong, loved the neighbors, loved Ana Rosa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ana Rosa’s Friends and Family</td>
<td>bought her a typewriter and paper for her birthday</td>
<td>they loved Ana Rosa and wanted her to keep writing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Read the Book

Form the group that will read *The Color of My Words*. Plan how the group will read and respond. Some options are:

- **Read with a Group** Group members read an agreed-upon number of pages, complete the corresponding *Student Journal* page(s), and meet to discuss. When they finish the book, they meet again for **The Exchange**. The group can use 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 5–11 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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**Plan Your Schedule**

My group members are: ________________________________

We plan to read *The Color of My Words* 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>Wash Day and Words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gri Gri Tree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merengue Dream</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Brother’s Friend</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Sunday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Colors of Power</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Color of My Words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Our Exchange Ideas meeting will be on this date:___________.**
The Color of My Words

Wash Day and Words

ANSWERS TO “BEFORE YOU MOVE ON”

PAGE 10
1. Setting The Dominican Republic is on an island. What else can you tell about the setting?
The weather is warm. The people speak Spanish. It is a dangerous place to write.

2. Character’s Motive Reread pages 9–10. Why did Mami tell Ana Rosa to keep her thoughts inside for a while?
Mami doesn’t want Ana Rosa to get hurt because she writes. She wants Ana Rosa to leave the Dominican Republic and write when she is gone.

PAGE 16
1. Cause and Effect Why did Ana Rosa steal Guario’s notepad?
She desperately wanted a notepad for writing but couldn’t afford to buy one.

2. Inference Reread pages 15–16. Everyone helped look for the notepad. What does this tell you about the family?
They care about each other. They were upset; they didn’t want Guario to lose his job.

PAGE 21
1. Character’s Motive Why did Ana Rosa tell Guario that she took the notepad?
She felt guilty. She loved her brother. Mami knew and wanted Ana Rosa to tell him.

2. Details Guario knew how it felt to really want something. What did he want?
A future.

Respond to Wash Day and Words

Character Description Chart
Review what happened in the chapters. Fill in the Character Description Chart on Journal page 4.

Think It Over
Think about what you read and answer these questions.

1. Personal Response Ana Rosa and Guario both had dreams for the future. What is a dream or goal that you have for the future? What will you do to get that dream?

2. Author’s Style The author began each chapter with one of Ana Rosa’s poems. Why do you think she did this?
The first poem added to the setting by describing Ana Rosa’s daily life; the second poem showed how important writing was to her.

3. Plot Ana Rosa had a problem—she needed paper. She got paper, but that created another problem. What was the second problem? Did she solve it? What would you have done?
She took Guario’s notebook and used all the paper. She apologized to Guario and he forgave her.
The Color of My Words

The Gri Gri Tree

ANSWERS TO “BEFORE YOU MOVE ON”

PAGE 27
1. Setting Why did Ana Rosa love sitting in the gri gri tree? She liked to look around and think about writing. She could see many things from the gri gri tree.


PAGE 31
1. Cause and Effect At first no one believed Ana Rosa. What caused them to change their minds? They saw it in the sea with their own eyes. Then they believed Ana Rosa.

2. Paraphrase Reread the last paragraph on page 31. How did Ana Rosa feel about the fuss over the sea monster? She didn’t understand all the fuss and felt sorry for the sea monster.

PAGE 35
1. Conclusions Why did Señora Perez think a story should be written about the sea monster? She thought a story would help bring tourists to the town.

2. Character Reread pages 34–35. How were Ana Rosa and the sea monster the same? No one wanted to play with them. They looked strange. They both wanted a friend.

PAGE 38
1. Inference Reread pages 36–37. How do you know that Guario liked Ana Rosa’s story? He said he would buy her notebooks so she could write more.

2. Cause and Effect Reread page 37. Why did Ana Rosa say this was the happiest night of her life? She was recognized as being a writer.

Respond to The Gri Gri Tree

Character Description Chart

Review what happened in the chapter. Fill in the Character Description Chart on Journal page 4.

Think It Over

Think about what you read and answer these questions.

1. Personal Response Mami encouraged Ana Rosa to write. Who in your life encourages you? What do they encourage you to do? Why?

2. Setting Why was the gri gri tree so important to Ana Rosa? Do you have a special place? What is it? She loved the gri gri tree because she could see all around the island when she was in it. It was her very own special place.

3. Confirm Word Meaning Reread page 31. Look at the word debate. A debate is when people have a discussion or an argument about something. Describe two things you can do to confirm the word’s meaning.

   I can look in the dictionary or encyclopedia for the definitions and describe what I think a debate is to the teacher and ask if I am correct.
Merengue Dream

ANSWERS TO “BEFORE YOU MOVE ON”

PAGE 45
1. Character’s Point of View  Reread page 42. Why did Ana Rosa love and hate the fiestas?
   She loved them because people were nice to her; there were no problems on those days. She hated them because she couldn’t dance.

2. Comparisons  Reread pages 43–44. How was Papi different at the fiestas than at other times?
   At the fiestas, he was laughing, fun, magical, and a dreamer. At other times he was loud, sitting on the porch chair, and a drunk.

PAGE 51
1. Setting  Why was the sea a good place for Ana Rosa to learn how to dance?
   She loved the beach. The sea sounded like music to her. It was easier to dance there.

2. Conclusions  Why did Papi want Ana Rosa to learn to dance?
   Because he loved dancing; he knew she wanted to dance.

Respond to Merengue Dream

Character Description Chart
Review what happened in the chapter. Fill in the Character Description Chart on Journal page 4.

Think It Over
Think about what you read and answer these questions.

1. Personal Response  Papi taught Ana Rosa to dance. Tell about something a friend or family member taught you to do. Was it easy or hard to learn? Explain.

2. Metaphor  A metaphor makes a comparison by saying one thing is another thing. When Ana Rosa said, “I was a balloon finally free of its string,” what two things was she comparing? Find other metaphors in the chapter and tell what they compare.
   Ana Rosa was comparing herself dancing to a free balloon. Ana said Papi was the angel of dance and the blue moon shimmering. She was comparing Papi to an angel who can dance perfectly and a beautiful moon lighting up the sky.

3. Character  Ana Rosa did not like everything about Papi’s character. What do you think Papi would have been like if Ana Rosa could have changed him?
   He would not be a drinker. He would have a job. He would still dance a lot.
My Brother’s Friend

ANSWERS TO “BEFORE YOU MOVE ON”

PAGE 60
1. Similes Ana Rosa was in love with Angel. Reread page 54. Why did she compare him to a book? Ana Rosa loved books, but she knew she couldn’t have them.

2. Foreshadowing Reread pages 57–58. Why was Angela preparing early for the fiesta? Angela liked Angel. She wanted to look nice at the fiesta for him.

PAGE 66
1. Cause and Effect Angel didn’t dance with Ana Rosa. Reread page 64. How did this make her feel? She felt like she couldn’t breathe. She felt sad.

2. Character’s Motive Reread page 65. Why didn’t Guario move away from the family? He wanted to stay with his family, with Ana Rosa.

Respond to My Brother’s Friend

Character Description Chart
Review what happened in the chapter. Fill in the Character Description Chart on Journal page 4.

Think It Over
Think about what you read and answer these questions.

1. Personal Response Guario helped Ana Rosa feel better when she learned that Angel liked Angela. Have you ever helped someone feel better? What was the problem? How did you help?

2. Similes A simile is a comparison with like or as. What are your favorite similes in “My Brother’s Friend”? Tell what two things are being compared.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Simile</th>
<th>What’s Being Compared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>My dark eyes trailed him like a line of hot soot….</td>
<td>1. watching someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. trail of soot from a candle or fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Dark green skirt flowed like ripples in a river pool.</td>
<td>1. dark green skirt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. water rippling in a river pool</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Mood On pages 61–62, the mood of the chapter changed from happy to sad. Tell why. Find some examples of words the author used to show the happy and sad moods.

Ana Rosa learned that Angel was not in love with her. Happy: excitement, laughter, smile. Sad: trailing, soul-sad, concrete.
One Sunday

ANSWERS TO “BEFORE YOU MOVE ON”

PAGE 71
1. **Cause and Effect** Reread pages 68–71. Why were Sundays good and bad? Explain.
   Sundays were good because Ana Rosa got to go to the beach and play with her friends and family. Sundays were bad because Papi got drunk.

2. **Inference** Reread page 70. How did Mami feel about Papi when he was drunk?
   She didn’t like it. She ignored him.

PAGE 76
1. **Character** Reread pages 75–76. How did Ana Rosa feel when she learned the stranger was her father?
   She was confused and upset.

2. **Setting** Why did Ana Rosa go to the beach after she got the news?
   She was looking for quiet.

PAGE 79
1. **Character** Reread the poem on page 78. How did Ana Rosa feel about Mami?
   Ana Rosa still loved her mother. She thought they should stick together. She knew Mami was confused, too.

2. **Summarize** Reread page 79. How does Ana Rosa think writing will help her deal with her feelings about Papi?
   Ana Rosa thinks she can write poems or stories to make Papi her real father.

Respond to “One Sunday”

Character Description Chart
Review what happened in the chapter. Fill in the Character Description Chart on Journal page 4.

Think It Over
Think about what you read and answer these questions.

1. **Personal Response** Ana Rosa was confused and upset when she learned that Papi was not her father. How would you feel? Tell why.

2. **Paraphrase** After finding out about her father, Ana Rosa said, “I would never be the same Ana Rosa Hernandez again.” Use your own words to tell what she meant.
   Ana Rosa meant that she would not be the same because she had always thought of herself as Papi’s daughter. She had that last name because it was Papi’s. Now it was not really her last name. She was someone else’s child.

3. **Inference** Ana Rosa said that being a writer gave her power. What kind of power did it give her? Explain your answer.
   Writing gave Ana Rosa the power to make herself feel better through her writing. She could change how she felt about things by writing about them.
**The Color of My Words**

**Pages 80–107**

**The Colors of Power**

**ANSWERS TO “BEFORE YOU MOVE ON”**

**PAGE 86**

1. **Plot** Reread page 82. Why were the people upset that the government wanted to buy their land?
   - The people didn’t want to leave because they had lived there for a long time. It was their home.

2. **Paraphrase** Reread page 83. In your own words, tell what Guario said about the land.
   - The people have lived on the land long enough to own it. The government can’t sell it without the people’s permission because that is the law.

**PAGE 93**

1. **Plot** Reread page 89. What did the government want to do with the land?
   - They wanted to sell it to someone who would build hotels there.

2. **Inference** Reread page 92. Why was Mami worried about Guario?
   - She was worried that if the government found out he was behind the protest, they might punish him.

**PAGE 101**

1. **Character** Reread page 99. What tells you that Guario was the leader again?
   - He was tall and strong. The neighbors stood before him.

2. **Generalization** Reread page 97. Why weren’t Ana Rosa’s and Guario’s words enough to save the land?
   - Words are not as powerful as money, contracts, and guns. People will do bad things even when you try to make them stop with your words.

**PAGE 107**

1. **Summarize** Reread pages 104–105. How did Ana Rosa’s family and the neighbors react to the bulldozers?
   - They shouted and pushed the guardia. They threw things at the bulldozers.

2. **Cause and Effect** Guario was killed under the gri gri tree. What caused his death?
   - He died because he believed in what he was doing. He also died because he was protecting Ana Rosa. He did not want her to get hurt.

---

**Respond to The Colors of Power**

**Character Description Chart**

Review what happened in the chapter. Fill in the Character Description Chart on Journal page 4.

**Think It Over**

Think about what you read and answer these questions.

1. **Personal Response** Guario was named after a Taíno fighter. Tell about your name or names in your family. Were you named after another person? What is a name you would pick for yourself? Why?

2. **Conflict** Reread page 97. What did Guario mean when he said, “words aren’t enough”? Why weren’t words enough to help the family and neighbors? The government did not listen to his words. Guario thought that he could not save the neighborhood with words. He would have to use violence or give up.

3. **Character** Why was Guario a good leader? What qualities do leaders have? Guario was a good leader because he cared about his neighbors and they respected him. He was not afraid to talk to the government or fight them. He was brave. Leaders need to be strong, brave, and smart.
The Color of My Words

ANSWERS TO “BEFORE YOU MOVE ON”

PAGE 112
1. Cause and Effect Reread pages 110–111. Why did Ana Rosa stop writing?
   She blamed herself for Guario’s death; she wanted to punish herself; because it was too painful to write.

2. Metaphor Reread page 110. Why did Ana Rosa say the color of her words was red?
   Guario was killed and Ana Rosa blamed herself.

PAGE 118
1. Cause and Effect What did Guario do before he died to help Ana Rosa get a typewriter? Why did he want her to have one?
   Before he died, he told the family that Ana Rosa must get a typewriter. He said it was for her future.

2. Character’s Motive Reread pages 117–118. Why did Ana Rosa decide to write again?
   She believed her brother had forgiven her. She believed it was important to tell his story.

Student Journal, page 11

Respond to The Color of My Words

Character Description Chart
Review what happened in the chapter. Fill in the Character Description Chart on Journal page 4.

Think It Over
Think about what you read and answer these questions.

1. Personal Response Angel stayed with Ana Rosa at the gri gri tree to make her feel better. Tell about a time a friend or family member made you feel better. What did they do or say to help you?

2. Conclusion: Why did Ana Rosa feel it was important for people to remember Guario? Explain your answer.
   When people read what she wrote, they will remember Guario as a true Dominican hero and leader who did not want power but a better future for the people.

3. Opinion What do you think Ana Rosa will do in her future? Do you think she will write books? Explain what you think she will do with her life.
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:

### Can words change people? How?

**What would Ana Rosa say about this question? Describe how Ana Rosa would explain the power of words.**

Ana Rosa would say that words can change people. She would say that words change people's minds, hearts, and lives. She would say that words can kill people or give them new lives.

**Guario dies. How do words affect his life? How do they cause his death?**

Words could not save him. Words made him strong and he used them to fight. But they could not save his life. Words caused his death because he believed in what he was saying, but the government did not. Their words and actions killed him.

**How does Ana Rosa's love of writing change her? When have words changed you?**

Ana Rosa was able to express herself better and deal with her problems by writing. Words made her stronger.

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**Extend the Reading**

**Write a Poem**

Have students choose an experience from their own lives to write about. Invite them to describe an event or dream, or express their feelings about something using free verse, a haiku, or a rhyming poem. Students can illustrate and display their poetry.

**Poetry Reading**

Invite eight students to each select a poem from the book to read aloud. Before presenting the reading to the class, have them practice their poems for each other, using the appropriate pacing, tone, volume, and expression.

**An Island Getaway**

Groups can find out more about the Dominican Republic from the Internet, encyclopedias, or geography books. After taking and sharing their notes, students can select which details to use for a travel poster to post in the school hallway.