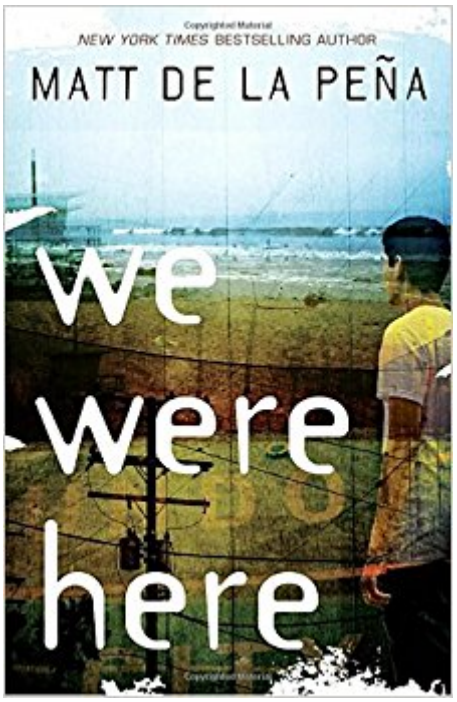
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We Were Here



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Synopsis

Newbery Award-winning author Matt de la PeÃƒÂ a's We Were Here is a "fast, funny, smart, and heartbreaking" novel [Booklist].Ã Â Ã Â When it happened, Miguel was sent to Juvi. The judge gave him a year in a group homeÃ¢â ¬â •said he had to write in a journal so some counselor could try to figure out how he thinks. The judge had no idea that he actually did Miguel a favor. Ever since it happened, his mom canÃ¢â ¬â„¢t even look at him in the face. Any home besides his would be a better place to live.Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â But Miguel didnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t bet on meeting Rondell or Mong or on any of what happened after they broke out. He only thought about Mexico and getting to the border to where he could start over. Forget his mom. Forget his brother. Forget himself.Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Life usually doesnÃ¢â ¬â„¢ t work out how you think it will, though. And most of the time, running away is the quickest path right back to what youÃ¢â ¬â„¢re running from.Ã Â Ã Â From the streets of Stockton to the beaches of Venice, all the way to the Mexican border, We Were Here follows a journey of self-discovery by a boy who is trying to forgive himself in an unforgiving world."Fast, funny, smart, and heartbreaking...The contemporary survival adventure will keep readers hooked."-Booklist"This gripping story about underprivileged teens is a rewarding read."-VOYA"A furiously paced and gripping novel."-Publishers Weekly"A story of friendship that will appeal to teens and will engage the most reluctant readers."-Kirkus ReviewsAn ALA-YALSA Best Book for Young ReadersAn ALA-YALSA Quick Pick for Reluctant ReadersA Junior Library Guild SelectionFrom the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

Grade 9 UpÃ¢â ¬â •Miguel struggles to forgive himself for a tragic event that changed his life and his family forever. He willingly accepts his one-year sentence to a juvenile detention center and the requirement that he keep a journal. De La PeÃƒÂ a uses the conceit of the journal to tell the story in Miguel's words. At the center, Miguel befriends Rondell, a mentally challenged teen prone to violent outbursts, and Mong, a troubled boy with myriad physical and emotional problems. Mong organizes an escape, and with little apparent thought, Miguel and Rondell agree to join him. The boys' convoluted travels take them up and down the California coast and are recorded in Miguel's journal, along with his personal journey of self-discovery. It is frustrating that the salient event, the one that led to Miguel's incarceration, is kept from readers, and most other characters, until the end of the book. Once the truth of what happened is exposed, it is difficult to comprehend the callousness shown to Miguel by other family members; in fact, readers may question why he was imprisoned at all. The premise of juvenile delinquents on the run, camping out, and trying to survive and to find themselves will appeal to teens, but the story is just too drawn out to hold the interest of most of them.Ã¢â ¬â •Patricia N. McClune, Conestoga Valley High School, Lancaster, PA
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"Fast, funny, smart, and heartbreaking...The contemporary survival adventure will keep readers hooked."-Booklist"This gripping story about underprivileged teens is a rewarding read."-VOYA"A furiously paced and gripping novel."-Publishers Weekly"A story of friendship that will appeal to teens and will engage the most reluctant readers."-Kirkus ReviewsAn ALA-YALSA Best Book for Young ReadersAn ALA-YALSA Quick Pick for Reluctant ReadersA Junior Library Guild SelectionFrom the Hardcover edition.

`People always think there's this huge hundred-foot-high barrier that separates doing good from doing bad. But there's not. There's nothing. There's not even a little anthill. You just take one baby step in any direction and you're already there. You've done something awful. And your life is changed forever.' ~ Matt de la PeÃƒÂ a, We Were HereThis is one of the best young adult books I have ever read. Scratch that. This is one of the best books I have ever read.At the onset of We Were Here, we get acquainted with Miguel, the narrator of the story as he is transferred from juvi to a halfway house. Miguel has a mindset that he has absolutely nothing to lose, and that he will never again have anything to gain. We are aware that he has done a bad thing--a terrible thing--but we are

not quite sure what it is. We only know that he never wants to forget the burden of his guilt...that he wants to carry it with him forever and feel the extreme pain of his suffering.This is the story of three troubled teens. Miguel, Rondell and Mong are a very unlikely trio. Miguel's first encounter with the other two boys are violent. There is spitting and punching and a painful pinning to the ground. All of these things make the reader think Rondell and Mong will both soon be left in the dust of the story. But they would be wrong. The three eventually devise a plan to escape the halfway house together and make a run for freedom in Mexico.Once they are out in the wilds of California, and heading for the ocean so they can travel south to Mexico, the story really takes off! Along the way, the reader is treated to a wealth of self-reflection from Miguel's ongoing journal writing. We discover that he is a compassionate, thoughtful and intelligent young man. And we get to find out the back-stories of each of his traveling companions as Miguel sets off one night by himself to read the boys' files, which he stole while preparing to leave the halfway house behind him.It is also Miguel who allows the reader to see the good in the other two boys. Rondell, we are quick to learn, is not a bad kid...but a simple one. He believes in Jesus Christ and puts all his faith into a bible he cannot read but carries around with him all the same. Mong, who appears to be a psychotic hopelessly lost soul, turns out to be an overwhelmingly sad case. Nobody should endure the heartache and soul-breaking that Mong has been through in his young life. When he declares Miguel his best friend, it will baffle both Miguel and the reader...but it is such a pivotal moment in the story. Heartrending.I love when authors namedrop books. I always have. In We Were Here, Miguel has a penchant for reading. Throughout the course of the story, he spends time with Salinger's Catcher in the Rye and Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men. The reader cannot help but see Miguel as a modern day Holden, and Rondell as a modern day Lennie. At one point I found myself thinking, `Oh please, please, please...mention Camus's The Stranger. You have to!' And sure enough, the name was eventually dropped. Miguel's second travel companion, Mong, is without a doubt Camus's Meursault! This book is an homage to all three of these wonderful stories, but it is also SO much more than that. It is a story that, in itself, will definitely become a classic.The potential reader of We Were Here will just have to take my word for it when I say this is one of the best books I have ever read. I don't want to give away too much of it here. I can only say that it unfolds with a beauty I have not seen in a while. The reader will grow so close to these three boys, they will want to protect them from both themselves and the world around them as they set out on the journey of their lives. The journey they take makes men of boys, and makes each of them realize the wealth they carry inside. Your heart will break and strengthen and break again as you take every step alongside Miguel and his broken friends. And when you hope beyond hope that they do the right thing, they might even

hear you.This was a beautiful story. Be prepared to feel all of the emotions you carry...and some you didn't know you had. I will be re-reading this every now and again...it's one of those books you want to hug close to you when you're finished.

A great pick for our Februrary book discussion this month with my librarian friends! I just loved Matt's other book, Mexican White Boy Mexican WhiteBoy and We Were Here is just as compelling. Miguel is in juvi for a crime he doesn't reveal but he is totally guilt ridden about. He gets into an argument with Mong, an Asian with a severely scarred face, many other problems and health issues---scary, scary kid. When Rondell arrives; Miguel already knows him there is more of a flow to his daily life. Miguel reads lots of books, records in his journal (judge's orders) hangs out with(and makes fun of)Rondell. It is when Mong breaks them out to escape to Mexico and get jobs, that life totally changes for the three escapees. Miguel acts hardcore but he is hiding a lot behind his Mexican bravado. As they travel (and hide) to Mexico, there will be life lessons Miguel (and Mong and Rondell) work through as they come to terms with themselves, family, and their place in the world. A riveting, adventure with Miguel and friends. Reluctant readers (and teens who enjoy urban fiction) will relate to all three characters and their dilemmas.

This is a great YA novel which addresses some very adult themes. I think adults would also get something out of reading this book.

This was a summer reading assignment for upcoming 9th graders. This was a good book. It has some language and sexual content but no more than what kids would find on the internet. This was a page turner and kept me interested. My child quickly became engaged in the book and then I no longer had to mention to him that he needed to read. I would recommend the book and I think this was good story for boys who may not necessarily like to read to help them become interested in reading.

Awesome read for anyone!

We Were Here is Matt de la PeÃƒÂ a's latest book and it's a clear winner. The characters are great, funny and sad adventures, and a great storyline that keeps you hanging on until the end.I don't want to give away most of the story; but, it's about Miguel, his developing friendship with two other boys from the group home and their adventures and mis-adventures, and his relationship with

his brother and mother. There are some twists and turns that the reader does not see coming and the mystery of Miguel's past keeps the reader hooked to the end. The characters were so believable and he nailed their personalities perfectly. I laughed, I cried, and couldn't put the book down.Very satisfying read and a great ending. This book for young adults would be great for all readers including relunctant readers.

This book was so amazing. Found myself crying at the realness of the characters! Great insight into the teenage mind.

I am a social worker who has worked with kids featured in this book. Its a great read and the author truly captured the complicated lives we see with youth involved in the system. Highly recommend this book

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