

Model Cultural Relevance Essay

Cultural Relevance of *¡Sí, Se Puede! Yes, We Can*

When I read *¡Sí, Se Puede! Yes, We Can* by Diana Cohn (Cinco Puntos Press, 2002), I thought about walking on the picket line with my father during the teacher's strike here in Detroit. Many of the things that the main character felt were emotions that I have felt also recently. *¡Sí, Se Puede! Yes, We Can* is a culturally relevant story for me because the characters and their experiences were very much like people and events from my own life.

¡Sí, Se Puede! Yes, We Can tells of a janitors' strike in Los Angeles. The main character is Carlitos, a young boy whose mother works as a custodian. She doesn't make enough money to support her family, so Carlitos is very worried when she tells him the custodians will go on strike. He wants to help, and joins the demonstrations with students from his classroom just like I did with my father.

Carlitos and the other characters in the story are Latinos. The story is told in both Spanish and English, so I can read the story easily in words just like I use with my family at home. Even in the English sections of the story, the story uses words like *abuelita*, *Mamá* and *Papá*. Even little details in the story were like specific things from my own life. The characters eat *los burritos*, *las paletas*, and *los churros*. The students in Carlitos' classroom are much younger than I am, but they work together and learn about things like I did when I was younger. They even learn about Cesar Chavez! My life is not exactly like Carlitos' life, but the story includes lots of things that I can identify with.

¡Sí, Se Puede! Yes, We Can is culturally relevant for me. This true story has characters whose experiences are much like those of other Latinos who live in cities. The setting and the age of the main character are different from my own, but there were enough similarities that this book was easy to relate to. Any student who wants to know more about what it's like to be in an average Latino family in the city should read this book!