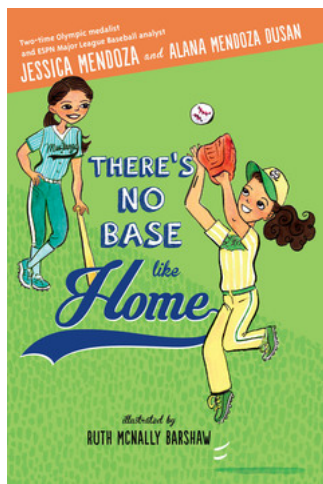




Jessica Mendoza is a Major League Baseball analyst for *Sunday Night Baseball* on ESPN. She is the first female analyst in MLB postseason history and ESPN's first-ever female MLB analyst. Jessica also serves as a contributor on ABC's *Good Morning America*. She won gold & silver Olympic medals in 2004 and 2008, respectively, as a member of the US Women's Softball Team.

Alana Mendoza Dusan was a Division 1 softball player at Oregon State University. She currently teaches high school English and lives in Bend, Oregon, with her husband and two children.



This will be twelve-year-old Sophia Maria Garcia's best year ever: she's trying out for the same championship softball team her sister played on at her age, and she's starting middle school. New school, new team, new Sophia! But all does not go according to plan. Sophia does not make the Waves softball team and her best friend is suddenly more interested in boys than Sophia. As the middle school blues set in, and her family is pulled in different directions, Sophia must reach deep down and find a little UMPH—the difference between being good and great—to figure out her own place, on and off the field.

ESPN Major League Baseball analyst and two-time Olympic medalist Jessica Mendoza teams up with her sister Alana Mendoza Dusan for their first highly-illustrated novel for young readers, based on their own childhood softball adventures.

Relevant Vocabulary:

- Middle-grade fiction
- Realistic fiction
- Stages of Plot
- See glossary pages 218-219
- Conquistador
- Sayings

RRS connection to TEKS (4-5th grade): Please refer to TEKS for English Language Arts and Reading:

- **Comprehension skills:** listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts.
- **Response skills:** listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts.
- **Author's purpose and craft:** listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts.
- **Composition I:** listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts--writing process.
- **Composition II:** listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts—genres.
- **Inquiry and research:** listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts.

Pre-reading reflection and dialogue:

- What does an author do?
- What does an editor do?
- What does an illustrator do? Scan the book. Do you like the illustrations?
- Think about the title of this book? What does it tell us about the story? What do you think the story is about?
- What do you know about fiction, middle grade books? Talk to your librarian and ask her to show you more examples of this genre.
- Think about the author's use of Spanish in her storytelling. What do you think of this way of writing a story? How does this writing style make you feel?
- What do you know about fiction, middle grade books? Talk to your librarian and ask her to show you more examples of this genre. You can also explore Realistic Fiction.
- Look for information about Alana Mendoza Dusan.

While-reading engagement:

Introduction & August:

This sections introduces us to the Garcia family. Start a character chart to keep track of the people in the story. You can also make a drawing of the Garcia family and drawing your own family. Sophia provides a description of her family- you can add these details to your chart. She also shares her dad's saying- what does he tell them to help motivate them to work harder. Does your family use any special sayings to encourage you during tough moments? Collaborate with your friends to compare and contrast Sophia and Ellie. Sophia's dad also helps them practice their softball skills. Do you have a favorite sport to play? Make a list of the qualities that a coach should have. You can also create a timeline to keep track of the events that Sophia shares. Sophia feels nervous about the upcoming softball tryouts. Do you sometimes feel nervous? What makes you feel nervous? Make a list of things that Sophia can do to feel better. You can also make a drawing of the tryouts and don't forget to keep adding characters to your chart plus add important events to your timeline. Look at the illustration on page 32, copy the style and illustrate how Sophia feels at the end of the tryouts. Do you think she will make the team? Make a prediction of what will happen next.

September:

Sophia does not make the softball team and feels very sad. She begins her September chronicles by describing her friendship with Casey. Make a drawing about their friendship and compare/contrast Casey to your own best friend. Do you have a best friend? Make a character chart for Casey and describe her best friend qualities. Sophia mentions the word, “querencia.” Define this word and think about the place that makes you feel most at home. What happens next? What do you think Sophia will decide? Have you even had to make a difficult decision? Think about decision-making and list important things we should consider when making a decision. Sophia always describes her mom’s breakfast dishes. What’s your favorite breakfast? Ask your classmates about their favorite breakfast and chart their responses.

First day of school fun! Describe how you feel on the first day of school. Think about middle school- what questions do you have about going to a new school? Sophia’s life changes a bit. Make sure to update your story timeline and note how her life changes in middle school.

Identity crisis: Think about what Sophia shares on page 65, define identity, and share why you think this feels like a crisis for her. What’s her cultural background? What’s your cultural background? Talk about the questions that make you feel uncomfortable and how you wish others asked you about your cultural background? Make a list of words that you do not like to describe cultural identity.

Sophia is now part of the Quakes. How do you think she feels? Is this a good team for her?

October:

Tamale Party! Make a drawing of abuelita’s tamale party. You can also make a drawing of your favorite family party. Google: Carmen Lomas Garza and learn more about her artwork. She makes the best paintings of Mexican American parties. Use the illustration on page 78 to guide your own drawing. Do you eat traditional Mexican food? Ask your family about a favorite recipe and share it with your classmates. Pretend to be a sportscaster and give play by play summary of the Huntington Beach tournament. Sophia has to adjust to a new position on the field. Describe how she feels- what emotions does she have to process. Write her a note of encouragement. The Quakes play against the Waves next. What do you think will happen? Talk to your classmates about your predications. You can create a drawing about the game or you can describe the game to your classmates. The family celebrates Halloween and Día de los Muertos. Do you celebrate these too? Talk about how you celebrate each. You can also add this event to your story timeline.

November:

The November section describes a typical game weekend for the Garcia family. The family has to balance work responsibilities and softball duties. What does Sophie have to do to keep up with her softball schedule? How do her parents help her thrive on the field? Sophie’s family is also very supportive. Make a drawing of her aunts, uncles, and cousins cheering her on. Tell what happens on November 14- you can make a drawing or write a summary. You can also just share the information aloud with a friend. Why is Sophie upset? What does she do to feel better?

December:

Describe the last tournament of the season- Emerald tournament. Complete your character chart or create a story board of the main events of the story. You can also make a prediction of how the story will end. Sophie gets a surprise invitation – what do you think she will decide? Do you think she made the right decision?

Post-reading and wrap-up:

- Discuss the take-home message and form your own opinion. With your teacher’s help, look for reviews of this book. For example, Publisher’s Weekly and Kirkus Reviews. Do you agree or disagree with the reviews? Write, draw, or share your thoughts.
- Provide recommendations for future readers: Should other 4-5th graders read this book? What do you think?
- Make a welcome banner for Alana Mendoza Dusan! Decorate it with photos and drawings of you playing your favorite sport.
- Prepare three questions you would like to ask Alana Mendoza Dusan during her campus visit.

Useful links:

- Publisher’s website: <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/there-s-no-base-like-home>
- GMA Interview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CV0shVhZD4k>
- History of softball: <https://www.teamusa.org/usa-softball/about-usa-sb/history>
- History of ASA softball: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNsPeZrfOOE>
- The rules of softball: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DwVYejPGS-k>