

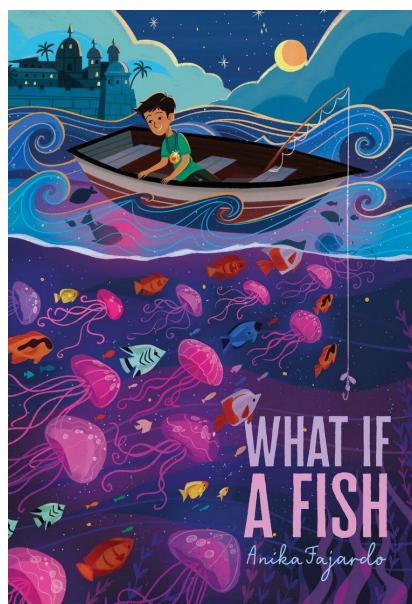


## Anika Fajardo



Anika Fajardo was born in Colombia and raised in Minnesota. She is the author of a book about that experience, *Magical Realism for Non-Believers: A Memoir of Finding Family* (University of Minnesota Press, 2019), which was a 2020 finalist for the Minnesota Book Awards and awarded Best Book (Nonfiction) of 2020 from City Pages. Her debut novel for young readers is *What If a Fish* (Simon & Schuster, 2020). A writer, editor, and teacher, she lives with her family in the very literary city of Minneapolis.

Half-Colombian Eddie Aguado has never really *felt* Colombian. Especially after Papa died. And since Mama keeps her memories of Papa locked up where Eddie can't get to them, he only has Papa's third-place fishing tournament medal to remember him by. He'll have to figure out how to be more Colombian on his own.



**RRS connection to TEKS: Please refer to TEKS for English Language Arts and Reading**

- *Comprehension skills*
- *Response skills*
- *Author's purpose and craft*
- *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*

**Vocabulary:**

- Fiction
- Migration
- Ethnicity
- Identity
- Bilingual and bicultural
- Where are you from?
- Microaggression
- Surrealism
- Magical realism
- Memories, grief, loss
- Oral history
- Community cultural wealth

**Pre-reading engagement:**

- What does an author do? Think about the title of the book? What does it tell us about the story? What do you think the story is about?
- Do you love to draw? Look at the book cover and make a prediction about the story that you are about to read. Think about the setting, characters, plot, conflict, themes, and point of view.
- What literary genre is this?
- Go to: <https://www.anikafajardo.com/> and find out more about the author of this book. Use a map to find where she was born and where she lives now.

**While/ post reading engagement:**

**Chapters 1-10**

- Read the first two chapters and make a drawing of what you see or you can imagine when reading these first chapters. Use this drawing to guide your understanding of this story.
- Start a list of characters. This is a long book with lots of people to keep track of. You can also make a drawing of Cameron and Eddie.
- Start a list of places. This is a long book with lots of places to keep track of. What regions do they mention? Find them on a map and make a drawing to see all of the places

- When does the story begin? What season? How do you know?
- Discuss the first problem that the story talks about. Do you know how to solve this problem? Can you help? Think of ideas to help the characters in this story.
- How do the characters work to solve the problem?
- More kids join the story. Don't lose track, keep adding names to your list or people to your drawing.
- Fish! Do you love to fish? Share a great fishing story with a friend.
- Look for words in Spanish. Do you recognize these words? Do you have a different word for the words in Spanish that the author uses?
- Work with a partner to make a drawing to show what happens in each chapter. You can choose a chapter you like and later put together a set of drawings that show the sequence of the events in this story.
- This story highlights Minneapolis. Have you ever visited the Midwest? Share your memories about the Midwest with your friends.
- Where are you from? Do you ever get asked this question? How does this question make you feel? Is there a better way to get to know someone?
- Chapter 5 mentions *Hispanic Heritage Month*. Talk about this celebration with a friend and add something that this celebration is missing.
- Have you experienced bullying? Take some time and write a note to this mean person who made you feel upset. After you finish the note, take a deep breath and make a drawing showing your strengths and intelligence.
- How does Mama help Eddie feel better after he experiences bullying?
- Make a timeline to show how the story progresses. What happens at the end of Chapter Six? How does this affect Eddie and his friends?
- Chapter 8: Draw Eddie's trip to Colombia and first observations of Cartagena.
- Make an anchor chart of how Eddie feels in Colombia.

## **Chapters 11-20**

- You've now read 81 pages. Don't forget to keep working on your anchor chart for this story and include: setting, characters, plot, conflict, themes, point of view
- GHOSTS! Don't miss the conversation about ghosts in Chapter 10. What do you think? Do ghosts make sense in this story? Does your family talk about ghosts?
- ¡La Playa! How is the beach different from a big lake in the Midwest?
- Leeches in the ocean? Describe this moment in the book. What do you think? Why does the author include a conversation about surrealism and magical realism in this story?
- So many family stories are shared in this book. What's your family's story? Can you draw a picture of it? Can you use magical realism to tell your story?
- Do you agree or disagree: Colombia is magical? Draw your own magical place. You can also write a poem or a few sentences to describe your magical place. Or you can just share your ideas of a magical place aloud with a friend.
- Practice your parts of speech while reading and find: noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection.

- The author uses more Spanish in these chapters. How does this style of writing make you feel? Can you copy it using your own words?
- ¡Cumbia! Use Google or YouTube to find this Colombian music.
- Eddie texts with his friends from home. Do you text with your friends? Can you start a story using your text messages? You can take turns and write a story, not a long one, but try to add a setting, characters, a problem to solve, and a solution.
- Chapters 18-19 are pretty difficult to read. If you want to skip them, you can. Draw a definition for the word LOVE instead. If you read these chapters, draw how these chapters made you feel.
- Are you a History lover? Read page 148 and select one item to research further.
- Does Eddie catch a fish on this fishing trip? Find a friend who has not read Chapter 20 and help her/him get to the end of this chapter. Be kind and encouraging!

### **Chapters 21-31**

- Back to Minnesota! Make a venn diagram to compare Eddie's multiple worlds- Minnesota and Colombia.
- If you want to, talk about grief and loss with the help of an adult you trust. Eddie talks to his mom about grief and loss in Chapter 22. Big Eddie is also processing loss. We each process loss in different ways. What would you tell Eddie during this time?
- Why is the fishing tournament so important for Eddie? What does it represent?
- Chapter 24 brings the day of the tournament and other troubles. Find a song that matches the feelings you get while reading this chapter.
- Answer the same questions presented in Chapters 26-27: Have you ever felt out of place? Would you rather be a fish or a middle-schooler? Have you ever made a stupid choice? Are you mad we didn't win?
- Why does Tito (Eddie) feel -Mad. Sad. Relieved. Worried all at once?
- Chapters 29-31 close the story. Make a storyboard of the final events of this story. Don't forget to now use Eddie's new name- Tito.
- What is fishing about? Don't miss the answer to this question! Make sure to include the end of this story in your storyboard.
- Practice your skills: Find figurative language used throughout the book (similes, metaphors, personification, etc)

### **Useful links:**

- Author's website: <https://www.anikafajardo.com/>
- Minnesota Women's Press:  
<https://www.womenspress.com/anika-fajardo-magical-realism-for-non-believers/>
- Poets & Writers: [https://www.pw.org/directory/writers/anika\\_fajardo](https://www.pw.org/directory/writers/anika_fajardo)
- Kirkus Review: <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/anika-fajardo/what-if-a-fish/>
- Latinxs in Kid Lit: <https://latinosinkidlit.com>