



Return to Sender

By Julia Alvarez

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After Tyler's father is injured in a tractor accident, his family is forced to hire migrant Mexican workers to help save their Vermont farm from foreclosure. Tyler isn't sure what to make of these workers. Are they undocumented? And what about the three daughters, particularly Mari, the oldest, who is proud of her Mexican heritage but also increasingly connected her American life. Her family lives in constant fear of being discovered by the authorities and sent back to the poverty they left behind in Mexico. Can Tyler and Mari find a way to be friends despite their differences?

In a novel full of hope, but no easy answers, Julia Alvarez weaves a beautiful and timely story that will stay with readers long after they finish it.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 4–7—Sixth-grader Tyler Paquette lives in a dairy-farming community in Vermont. His father was injured in a tractor accident and must now turn to undocumented Mexican laborers to run the farm. Thus, a trailer on the property soon becomes home to the Cruz family—sixth-grader Mari, her two younger sisters, father, and two uncles, all needing work to survive and living with fear of *la migra*. They have had no word on Mari's mother, missing now for several months. Tyler and Mari share an interest in stargazing, and their extended families grow close over the course of one year with holiday celebrations and shared gatherings. Third-person chapters about Tyler alternate with Mari's lengthy, unmailed letters to her mother and diary entries. Touches of folksy humor surface in the mismatched romance of Tyler's widowed Grandma and cranky Mr. Rossetti. When "coyotes" contact Mr. Cruz and set terms for his wife's freedom, Tyler secretly loans the man his savings, then renegotiates a promised birthday trip in order to accompany Mari to North Carolina to help rescue her abused mother. When immigration agents finally raid the farm and imprison both Cruz parents, it signals an end to the "el norte" partnership, but not the human connections. This timely novel, torn right from the newspaper headlines, conveys a positive message of cooperation and understanding.—*Susan W. Hunter, Riverside Middle School, Springfield, VT*
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From [Booklist](#)

With quiet drama, Alvarez tells a contemporary immigration story through the alternating viewpoints of two young people in Vermont. After 11-year-old Tyler's father is injured in a tractor accident, the family is in danger of losing their dairy farm. Desperate for help, Tyler's family employs Mari's family, who are illegal migrant Mexican workers. Mari writes heartrending letters and diary entries, especially about Mamá, who has disappeared during a trip to Mexico to visit Mari's dying abuelita. Is Mamá in the hands of the border-crossing "coyotes"? Have they hurt her? Will Homeland Security (*la migra*) raid the farm? The plot is purposive, with messages about the historical connections between migrant workers today and the Indians' displacement, the Underground Railroad, and earlier immigrants seeking refuge. But the young people's voices make for a fast read; the characters, including the adults, are drawn with real complexity; and the questions raised about the meaning of patriotism will spark debate. Grades 6-9. --Hazel Rochman

About the Author

Julia Alvarez is the author of several novels for young readers including *How Tía Lola Came to Visit Stay*, *Finding Miracles*, and *Before We Were Free*, winner of the ALA's Pura Belpré Award. Her books for adults include *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, *In the Time of the Butterflies*, and *Once Upon a Quinceañera*. She is a writer-in-residence at Middlebury College in Vermont.

From the Hardcover edition.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Joshua Johnson:

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