

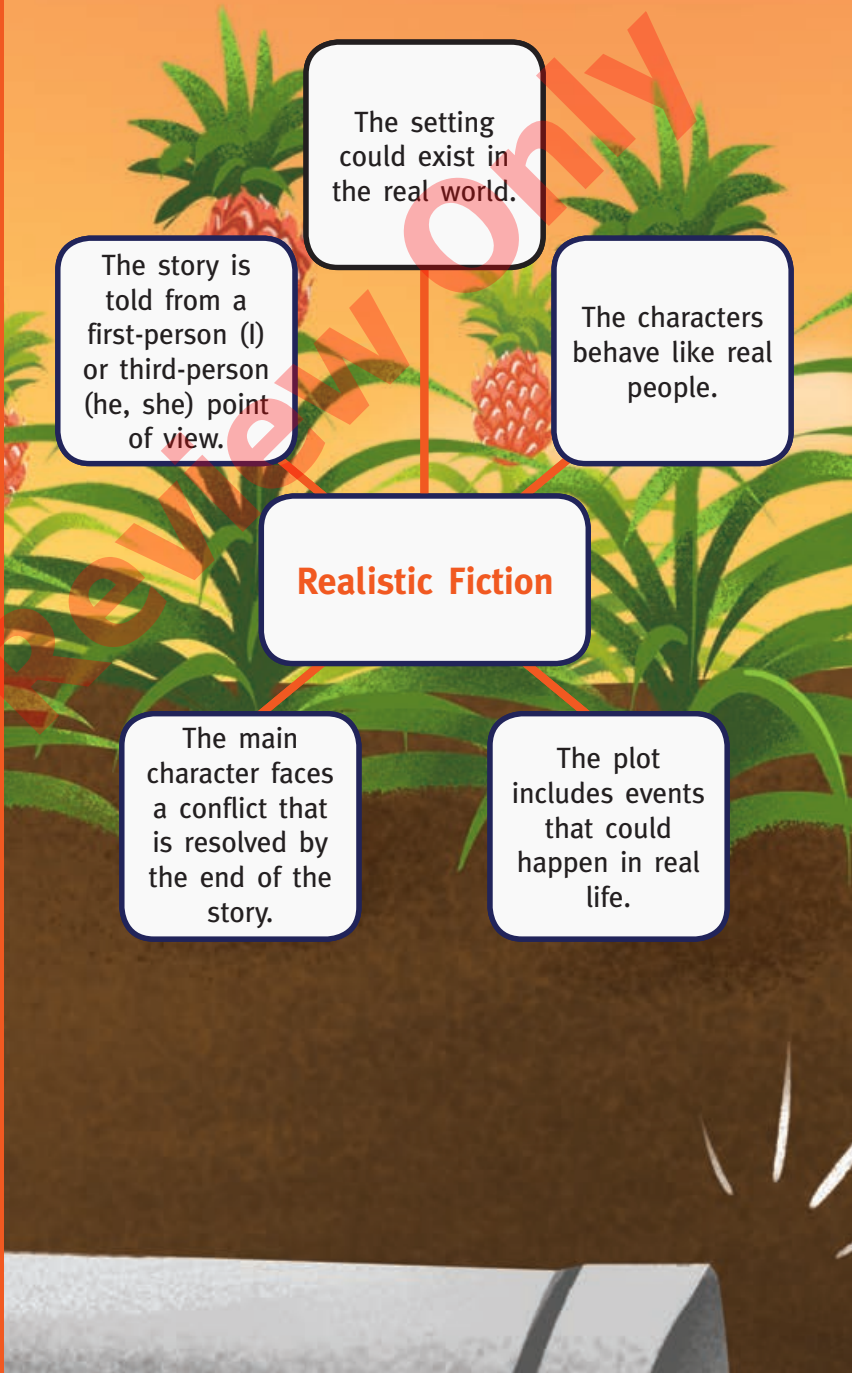
Marisol

and the Pineapple Drought



Realistic Fiction

Look for the genre features noted below as you read this book. Use the features to help you understand the text.



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In the Grove

Crack! A baseball rockets off a wooden bat, up, up, up into the hot, dry air.

The batter, a wiry girl with gleeful eyes, sprints toward first base. She kisses her fingers and holds them to the sky, shouting, “The first female big leaguer in history hits her third home run in the World Series!”

The pitcher watches the ball disappear into the pineapple grove at the edge of their ball field. “Marisol, not again!” She slams her glove down in mock disgust as the batter sprints around the bases.



“Throw faster, Caridad!” Marisol touches home plate.

“It’s our last ball!” Caridad says. “You hit them too far!”

“Maybe we can find it!” Marisol answers, jogging to the pineapple grove. As she passes the outfielder, she asks, “Odalys, can you help?”

Odalys looks at Marisol. “Go into the pineapple grove? No way, those plants are too sharp, especially when it hasn’t rained!”

Caridad yells, “Come on, Odalys, let’s get home and help Papá feed the pigs. Mari, if you find the ball, let’s play again tomorrow!”



Odalys gathers up the string mound and cloth bases, while Caridad picks up the gloves.

“You don’t have any more baseballs at home?” Marisol yells back from the edge of the field.

“No. Manny says his store won’t have any in until next month or the one after that, and you know what that means,” says Caridad.

Odalys says, sighing, “If only Manny didn’t have the only store around here. What if we had a store only for baseball stuff?”

“Dream on,” Caridad says, grabbing Odalys as they head off.

“Good night, Marisol!” Odalys and Caridad call. They all blow long-distance air kisses to each other across the field.

Marisol steps into the grove of fragrant pineapples. She stops and breathes in, closes her eyes, and listens to the wind gently stir the leaves. Then she peers under the plants, trying not to get scratched by the edges of the leaves.

She looks and looks. The ball could be anywhere. She heads home.

Swatting at a mosquito on her neck, Marisol slams the little wooden door to the farmhouse. “Papá!” she calls, as she carefully balances her glove on a peg by the door.

“Papá! I hit the ball into the grove again!
It’s gone, and now we can’t play tomorrow!”

Papá puts his book in his lap and looks at his
daughter sternly. “I told you to hit left-handed!”

“I did!”

A huge smile brightens his face. “That’s my girl!”

“It’s not funny, Papá!”



“Well, *mija*, as your grandmother always says, *No hay mal que por bien no venga*. Every cloud has a silver lining.”

Marisol sighs loudly and says, “Not another one of your *dichos*.”

“Come on, let’s look together. Sometimes you have to look with your eyes open.”

“I did!”

“Let’s go together.”

They pass by the young pineapple plants, bursting with bright red flowers. “I love this time of year in Cuba! I love when the plants are young,” Papá says. “Just think, in about a year, these pineapples will be ready to harvest and will be eaten by someone, somewhere. Maybe when they’re ready, you can plow the field?”



“In a year? I’m strong enough now!”

They search each row. “Papá, where is the silver lining in losing the ball?” Marisol asks. “Now we can’t play!”

“If you didn’t lose the ball, I wouldn’t have come out here, and maybe we wouldn’t have had this talk. We’ll borrow a ball from Manny tomorrow. And that’s another good thing! We haven’t seen him in a while! See, it’s the gift that keeps on giving. I hope you lose the ball again the next time you play!”



A Visit to Abuela

A few days later, Marisol runs into the house, holding her hand in the air. A dirty cloth is wrapped around it, a bit of blood seeping through. In her other hand, she holds a baseball.

“Papá, do you want the good news or the bad news?”

“Let’s start with the bad news, *mija*!” he says as he puts his book down. His smile fades when he sees her hand.

“Those pineapples are even sharper since this drought!” Marisol says. “I cut my hand on a pineapple quill. Those leaves are sharp! It’s bleeding a lot. I think I’m going to die.”

Papá’s face relaxes a tiny bit. “The drought has nothing to do with the sharpness of the quills, just the size of the fruit. What’s the good news?”

“I hit another home run, and this time, I found the ball!” She holds it up triumphantly.

“Well, Mari, *no hay mal que por bien no venga*.”

“Papá! What’s the silver lining in me cutting my hand and possibly bleeding to death?”

He says, “It might be hard to figure that out now, but we’ll see. Are you okay?”

“Yes, just sore. And it’s bleeding quite a bit.”

“Let’s visit your *abuela*. She’ll be able to fix that right up.”

They walk down the road to a smaller house. An ancient-looking woman wraps Marisol and Papá in a hug.

“Abuela! Can you patch me up?” Marisol asks.

“Again?” Abuela asks. “That’s all I do these days. I blame your father.”

Papá looks at his mother, a twinkle in his eye. “I blame you, Mima. You taught her how to be fierce.”

