

LEVELED BOOK • P

Rent a Llama



MULTI
level
J•M•P

Written by Susan Lennox • Illustrated by David Miles

Rent a Llama



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Focus Question

How do Marcos's feelings about his new home change during the story? Why?

Words to Know

abuelo

care

master

ranch

squinted

stalls

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Level P Leveled Book
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Correlation

LEVEL P	
Fountas & Pinnell	M
Reading Recovery	28
DRA	28



When Marcos slept, he dreamed. His dreams were always the same. He was back in Ecuador, on horseback, tucked in behind his **abuelo** as they rode among herds of sheep and llamas. The animals clambered up rocky slopes beneath a dome of violet sky. In his dream, Marcos and his grandfather guided the animals toward the grassy fields where they would eat their fill.

Then morning would come, and Marcos would wake from his dreams and worry. His worries these days always seemed the same. Life was so different now. How would he ever fit in here in America? Were there any friends to be had in a classroom of new faces? Would he ever **master** this strange language called English?





Marcos's mother worried, too. She wanted her son to be happy in his new home. Every morning she made him a delicious breakfast and offered kind words of encouragement before sending him off to school.

One Monday, she reminded him that it was a special day for him.

"Marcos, today you are taking a trip with your class, remember?" she said gently.
"You are going to a **ranch**."

Marcos nodded. He had remembered. He just didn't believe it was anything to get excited about.

"We used to live on a ranch, Mamá," he said sadly.

"That was in Ecuador, Marcos. I am sure an American ranch will be a bit different," she said.

"Yes," Marcos sighed, "just like everything else here."





At school, the other students were very excited. They lived in the city and knew little about farm animals. To them, the trip would be a great adventure. Marcos felt lost in the hubbub as his classmates chose seat partners for the bus ride to the ranch.

Mr. Perkins noticed Marcos standing quietly by himself. “I think Marcos needs a seat partner,” he announced.

A small boy named Ben stepped forward and flashed Marcos a smile. “He can sit with me,” Ben said.



"Have you ever been to a ranch, Marcos?" asked Ben.

"Only in Ecuador," Marcos replied.

"I go to this ranch every week to **care** for my cow," said Ben.

Marcos's eyes widened in surprise. "You have a cow?"

Ben laughed. "Well, sort of. I don't really own her. I just take care of her."

Marcos was very confused.

"Don't worry. I will show you when we get there," Ben promised.



When the bus arrived and opened its doors, Marcos was hit by a wave of familiar smells. The sweet aroma of fresh hay mixed with the heavy scent of animals. Mr. Perkins organized the students and introduced the ranch owner, Ms. Vega.

“Hello, everyone,” said Ms. Vega. She smiled at Ben. “Hello there, Ben.”

The rest of the class looked at Ben, somewhat surprised that he had been singled out.



“Ben is part of the Animals for Rent program with City to Farm,” said Ms. Vega. “He cares for our cow, Mabel.”

Ben leaned over and whispered to Marcos. “That’s what I was talking about.”

“What’s City to Farm?” asked one girl.

“Maybe Ben can explain the program to the rest of the class,” said Mr. Perkins.

Ben turned around to face the group. “City to Farm is an organization for young people,” he said. “It has clubs all over the world. Grownups introduce city kids to what life is like on a farm. I am interested in farm animals, but I live in an apartment. Can you imagine keeping a cow in an apartment?”



The class laughed. “So,” Ben said, “through City to Farm, Ms. Vega ‘rents’ Mabel to me. I don’t pay to rent her. I just sign an agreement to take care of her. My mom drives me here after school three days a week.”



“Why don’t we take a walk so you can meet Mabel?” said Ms. Vega.

Ben led the rest of the students into a large barn with many **stalls**. Marcos **squinted** to see in the barn’s dim light. What he saw made him stop in his tracks.

There, in the second stall, was a llama.

Llamas

Llamas are mammals related to camels. Llamas are native to South America. They live in herds in the highlands of the Andes Mountains. People in Ecuador, Peru, and Chile raise llamas.

Llamas are sure-footed pack animals. People use them to carry loads up and down steep mountain paths. Llama wool is woven to make cloth.





Marcos began speaking softly to the animal in Spanish. As if it understood, the llama bent its long neck toward him. Marcos reached up and stroked the gentle animal's fur as it nibbled on hay.

Ms. Vega watched Marcos with interest.
“Do you like llamas?” she asked.

Marcos nodded.
“Sí. I mean, yes,” he replied shyly.
“My grandfather had a ranch in Ecuador with many llamas.”



“Paco here came from Ecuador, too,” said Ms. Vega. “He is sort of a test. We are going to try to raise llamas for wool.”

“That is what my grandfather did,” Marcos said. “He raised sheep, too.”

A Real City to Farm

A real program like City to Farm is available to students all over the world. The 4-H clubs started in Ohio in 1902. The four *h*'s stand for *head*, *heart*, *hands*, and *health*.

The 4-H clubs offer different experiences, such as the animal-leasing program. Young people from ages eight to eighteen who live in cities and towns learn about raising farm animals.



Ms. Vega looked at the boy thoughtfully.
“Maybe you could help us.”

Marcos looked surprised. “Me?”
he asked.

Ms. Vega nodded. “I could rent Paco
to you just as I rent Mabel to Ben.”

Marcos’s eyes widened. “You would let
me take care of Paco?” he asked.

Ms. Vega smiled. “Sí,” she said.

Marcos’s heart soared as he returned
to his classmates. Ranches might be
different in the United States—but
llamas were the same!

Glossary

abuelo (<i>n.</i>)	the Spanish word for “grandfather” (p. 3)
care (<i>v.</i>)	to help keep something healthy or in good condition (p. 8)
master (<i>v.</i>)	to become skilled at or very knowledgeable about something (p. 4)
ranch (<i>n.</i>)	a large area of land usually used for raising livestock such as horses, cattle, or sheep (p. 5)
squinted (<i>v.</i>)	partly closed one’s eyes, often to block out bright light (p. 12)
stalls (<i>n.</i>)	spaces in a stable or barn, used for animals such as horses or cows (p. 12)

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A Reading A-Z Level P Leveled Book

Word Count: 855

Connections

Writing

Pretend you are Marcos. Write a postcard to your family in Ecuador to tell them about your field trip to the ranch. Include details about how the trip changed your feelings about your new home.

Social Studies and Art

Draw a picture to show three kinds of communities: rural, suburban, and urban. Which type of community do you live in? Share your answer with a partner.

The logo for Reading A-Z features the word "Reading" in a large, bold, red sans-serif font. The letter "R" is stylized with a small sun-like icon above it, having rays extending from the top right. To the right of "Reading" is a large, bold, red capital letter "A-Z".

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