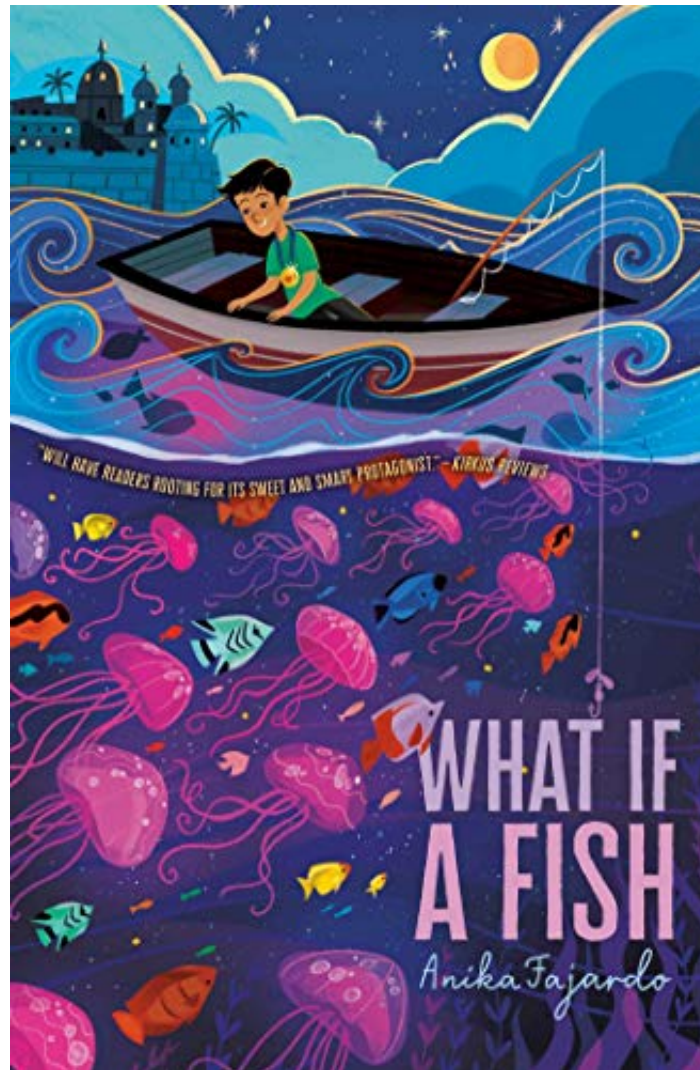


What If a Fish

by

Anika Fajardo



DOWNLOAD E-BOOK

Synopsis

A whimsical, “honest and heartfelt” (Booklist) generational story of family and identity where hats turn into leeches, ghosts blow kisses from lemon trees, and the things you find at the end of your fishing line might not be a fish at all. 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. As if by magic, the perfect opportunity arises. Eddie—who’s never left Minnesota—is invited to spend the summer in Colombia with his older half-brother. But as his adventure unfolds, he feels more and more like a fish out of water. Figuring out how to be a true colombiano might be more difficult than he thought.

Sort review

"Poetic and believable. Multilayered and convincing, the book will have readers rooting for its sweet and smart protagonist." (Kirkus Reviews May 15, 2020) "Fajardo’s honest, heartfelt text evokes sorrow and grief but also understanding, navigating the many complexities of identity, friendship, family, loss, and death." (Booklist July 1, 2020) "A whimsical and inviting #OwnVoices story of family, friendship, and identity." (School Library Journal October 2, 2020) "This is a beautifully written tale—a gentle story that explores the depths of grief, the loss of loved ones, the expanses of family, and the building blocks that make all of us human. So what does this have to do with fish, or fishing? Not a whole lot, and everything. I highly recommend you read the book to find out." (Anjali Sanghvi, Mr. Alex's bookshelf)

About the Author Anika Fajardo was born in Colombia and raised in Minnesota. She wrote a book about that experience, *Magical Realism for Non-Believers: A Memoir of Finding Family*. Anika is also the author of *What If a Fish*, which won a Minnesota Book Award and was a CCBC Choices selection, and *Meet Me Halfway*. A writer, editor, and teacher, she lives in the very literary city of Minneapolis.

From School Library Journal Gr 4–6—Life is changing rapidly for Eddie Aguado in Fajardo's middle grade debut. His Colombian father died when Eddie was only four, and he's since lived with his white, American mother in Minnesota. As Eddie navigates evolving friendships and tries to support his mother by winning a fishing contest (despite not knowing how to fish), Eddie's half-brother calls with news about his abuela in Colombia. Eddie travels to Colombia to spend time with both his brother and his abuela, with whom he forms a distinct bond despite the brevity of the relationship. When abuela passes, Eddie and his brother traverse literal and metaphorical waters to find home and family, together. Fajardo doesn't shy away from conversations about grief and racism, and provides context and support for those experiences. Among them is Eddie's struggle with racist bullying. Some ethnic slurs are used throughout, but Fajardo handles it gracefully—their inclusion feels appropriate both for the audience and within the context of the book. Slivers of

magic weave through the narrative, but this isn't a fantasy. Whether the elements are real, imagined, or something else is entirely up to the reader. Many will identify with Eddie as he struggles with his Colombian identity, and others will learn a great deal through his internal dialogue. VERDICT A whimsical and inviting #OwnVoices story of family, friendship, and identity. Recommended as a general purchase.—Taylor Worley, Springfield P.L., OR --This text refers to an alternate kindle_edition edition.Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.Chapter 1 1THE WATER by the shore smells like the bottom of the garbage pail right after I take out the trash. I scrunch up my nose and head down the wooden boards of the T-shaped dock. A dad with a small child points across the lake, while a man in a dirty Twins cap blasts country music from an old radio. Leaning my elbows on the dock's railing, I watch the gray-green fish dart and glide below me. "What are you doing?" asks a loud voice. It's the purple-haired girl I noticed at day camp this morning. "Quiet," I say. "You'll scare the fish." "Oh, and that thing won't?" She nods her chin toward the radio. She has a point. "Look." She leans close—too close—and points at a flyer stapled to the dock next to where I'm resting my elbows. The flyer has a picture of a smiling fish fishing. A speech bubble coming out of its mouth says, Catch me if you can! I recognize that fish from somewhere. "What is it?" the girl asks, as if I know. "I'm not sure—" I start to say. But then I realize I am sure. "It's a fishing contest." "You're right." She taps the words on the paper and reads aloud, "'The Fourteenth Annual Arne Hopkins Dock Fishing Tournament. Enter for your chance to win the five-thousand-dollar prize.'?" She whistles through teeth that stick out like a bunny's. "That's a lot of cash. Who's Arne Hopkins?" "No idea. I never heard of him until a couple of weeks ago when I found this." I pull a smooth disc out of my pocket. It's a medal—orangish pink, like it's trying to be bronze. Third place. On one side is a picture of the same smiling fish holding a fishing rod, and the words "2nd Annual Arne Hopkins Dock Fishing Tournament" are squeezed in around the circle. The girl leans in, and I realize that her hair isn't completely purple, just the ends. Most of it's blond, making her look kind of like a sunset. She grabs the medal from my hand and flips it over. I don't need to look at it to know that it says Eduardo Aguado León in faded engraved script. "Who's Eduardo Aguado León?" she asks, mutilating the pronunciation. "My dad." "Your dad won this contest?" The girl stares at me like I'm giving away the secrets of the universe. "I suppose." I don't feel the need to tell her that I barely remember him, much less know if he really won some fishing tournament. "You going to enter?" she asks, handing me back the medal. I snap my fingers shut around the disc. "It says you have to have a team—at least two people." "Why don't you and your dad enter?" I ignore her question. Instead I say, more to myself than to her, "If Liam were still here, he would've been my partner. But he just moved away." "I don't know who Liam is, but you're in luck," the girl says. She squints her eyes and places one hand behind her back and the other flat against her stomach. She isn't smiling, but she winks at me as she bows deeply at the waist. "I guess I moved to Minnesota just in time. I'll be your partner." Upright again, she holds out her hand like a grown-up. "Pleased to meet you. I'm Cameron." I look at her hand. The nails are bitten down, and her wrist has a stain of green marker, probably from the nametag decorating we had to do this morning.

Kamp Kids day camp—also known as summer day care—is just as pointless as I thought it would be. This morning we were forced to play name games in big circles. I wasn't in Cameron's group. Then we ate our bag lunches under trees while getting dive-bombed by flies. I'm desperately counting the minutes until my half brother arrives from Colombia and I don't have to go to camp anymore. Just seven more days. "Well?" Cameron is looking at me expectantly. "Aren't you going to tell me your name? That's what people do, you know." "People call me—" I decide I don't want to tell her what people call me. "Eddie," I say, because it's true. Short for Edward Aguado. Like my dad's name, only different. Our names aren't the only things that make us different. She squints at me. "Where are you from, Eddie?" "Here." "No. Where are you—" "Like I said, here. Minneapolis," I interrupt. "What grade are you in?" "Going into sixth. Starting Central Middle School in the fall." "Me too," I say. She pulls a phone out of her jeans pocket and snaps a picture of the flyer. I wish I had a phone. My mom and her rules. "I went to Catholic school before," Cameron says as if I had asked her. "Yep. Moving from California. Switching to public school. Life is really something, isn't it?" As a matter of fact, it really is. I pat my pocket where Papa's medal is safely tucked away. Two weeks ago I'd never heard of the Arne Hopkins Dock Fishing Tournament, and now I've seen it twice. "What do you say?" Cameron puts her phone away. "We should enter. What do we have to lose? Don't you want to win five thousand dollars?" Five thousand dollars? Last week the repair shop told Mama that something needed to be replaced in her car. Something expensive. I don't know what. She asked how long she could wait to fix the Honda. "You got a couple months, sweetheart," the mechanic said. She rolled her eyes. She hates when people talk to her like that. "Twenty-five hundred each." Cameron slaps the flyer. Two thousand five hundred dollars sure would help. I bet that would be enough for the mechanic to fix Mama's Honda. "What do you say, Eddie? Partners?" My fingers grip the medal in my pocket. I think of Papa. What if I could win a medal just like he did? "Let's fish," I say. --This text refers to an alternate kindle_edition edition. Read more

[Download to continue reading...](#)

What people say about this book

Alexandra P., "Beautiful, poignant middle grade novel. As a Colombian-American, I adored Anika Fajardo's *WHAT IF A FISH*. I saw many of the elements I loved from her memoir (*Magical Realism for Non-Believers*), but from a child's perspective. My then 12yo son devoured it, too. He loved the story, and he felt particularly protective of Little Eddie! When a book completely makes you feel part of the world and characters, it's a great one."

L.A., "Great read!. Great book! Sweet main character and excellent plot development with magic sprinkled throughout. Highly recommend!!"

[DMCA](#)