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Sofia
ESPERANZA
JOSÉ
Pura
Candela!

ALMA

and How She Got Her Name

Juana Martinez-Neal

What's in a name? For one little girl, her very long name tells the vibrant story of where she came from—and who she may one day be.

Use *Alma and How She Got Her Name* in your classroom to explore family history and cultural naming conventions.


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Our names are a very important part of our identities. Having students consider the origin of their own names is a good way to introduce the concepts of cultural and historical research.

- Have children research the origin of their own names by using a baby name book (or online name resource) and by asking their parents.
- Pose these questions to get students thinking about their names: How did your parents choose your name? Is your name a family name? If so, who else in your family has the name? What would your name have been had you been born a boy/a girl? Do you have a nickname? What do you like about your name? Ask students to use these same questions to interview a relative about the origin of their name.
- Research and discuss naming conventions from other cultures. For instance, in China the family name comes before the given name. Native American naming conventions are varied and fascinating.
- Have students write and illustrate the story of their own name or that of someone in their family.