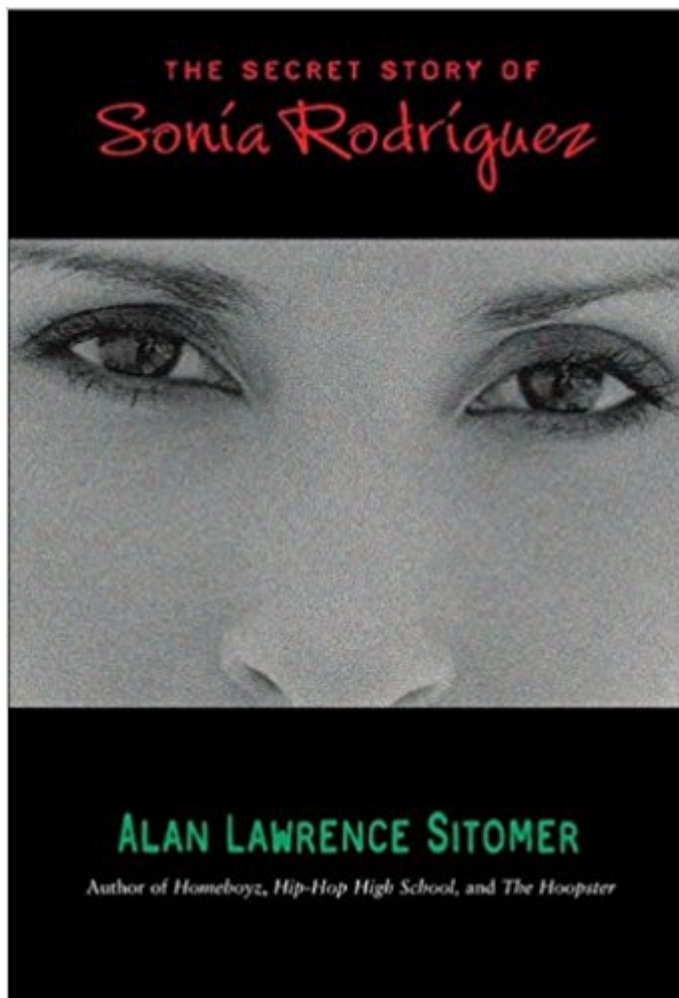


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# The Secret Story Of Sonia Rodriguez



## Synopsis

Sonia Rodriguez was born in the United States, but her parents are Mexican immigrants who came to California before she was born. Her father has three Social Security numbers, her mother is pregnant (again), and neither of them speaks English. Sonia's mother spends most of her time in bed, watching soap operas, and letting Sonia clean up after her brothers. Sonia's father works dutifully to support his family, but he knows that his daughter's dreams are bigger than making tamales for family get-togethers. When Sonia attempts to put school work before her familia, her mother decides that it's time for Sonia to visit her grandmother in Mexico to learn "the ways of the old world." While in Mexico, Sonia gets to know her wise grandmother and her cousin Maria, who teach her that while familia is important, the most important thing is to follow your heart. Sonia returns to the States determined to succeed in school, but the birth of her new twin siblings, inappropriate advances from her drunk uncle (Drunkle), and a forbidden relationship with an El Salvadorian boy push school to the back burner. If only Sonia can find the time to cook dinner, secretly meet with her boyfriend, avoid her Drunkle, AND finish her homework, she just might be able to graduate from high school. . . .

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Grade 8-10 • California-born Sonia Rodriguez, 15, the daughter of illegal Mexican immigrants, is determined to be the first high school graduate in her family. Her goal is nearly impossible to achieve when she is expected to cook, clean, and care for younger siblings while her pregnant mother lounges in bed watching telenovelas. Sonia's struggle is played out against a cast of stock characters, including her mother's obese, hyper-religious, and critical sister; her mother's

alcoholic brother ("my drunkle"), who is frequently arrested and makes inappropriate sexual advances toward his niece; and her devoted, hardworking father, who seems oblivious to his family's exploitation of the daughter for whom he has high hopes. Sonia's awareness that her family's behavior reinforces negative stereotypes many Americans have about her culture strengthens her resolve to succeed. Despite her best intentions, the help of a sympathetic school counselor, and the wisdom she gains during a summer in Mexico with her grandmother, it seems that she will be defeated by her circumstances, but a surprising twist results in an uplifting ending. Sitomer, author of *The Hoopster* (2005) and *Hip-Hop High School* (2006, both Hyperion), in which Sonia appeared as a minor character, has a gift for capturing current high school culture and teen speak. © Ginny Gustin, Sonoma County Library System, Santa Rosa, CA Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Audible Audio Edition edition.

Sonia, a 16-year-old, thinks that sunny metaphors that portray America as a melting-pot are nonsense. Her parents are illegals, driven north by poverty across the Mexican border, but she was born in the U.S. and is determined to graduate from high school. Her struggle is part Cinderella fairy tale and part contemporary immigrant realism, as she is forced to cook and clean for her family and must stay up past midnight to get her homework done. Candid about the prejudice not only toward Latinos but also within the Latino community (her gorgeous, tender boyfriend is Salvadoran, so he must be kept secret), Sonia's first-person narrative expresses her fury at her family, including her mother, who still doesn't speak English and treats Sonia as a servant; her macho brothers; and especially her drunk uncle (drunkle), who tries to rape her. But Papi works three jobs, and he is her strong support, and after Sonia visits Mexico, she gains new respect for her roots. Sonia's immediate voice will hold teens with its mix of anger, sorrow, tenderness, and humor. Grades 9-12. --Hazel Rochman --This text refers to the Audible Audio Edition edition.

As an English teacher in a predominantly Hispanic high school, I read this novel 2 years ago and just had to have my own students read it. My students (and I) immediately had issues with the author's/Sonia's use of stereotypes of her ethnicity. HOWEVER, as they continued to read, they learned that Sonia tries desperately to rise above the stereotypes that plague her ethnicity, her age group, and her gender. The more my students read it, the more they identified with Sonia. The novel does have a tendency to get a bit telenovela-ish (especially towards the end), but it is highly

entertaining, educational, and encouraging.

Every teenage girl I have given this book to take home and read has returned in a day or two with positive responses. They always give it a high rating and make comments like, "This book is so true." or "I cried at the part about her uncle." Teenage girls have so much on their plate these days. Sonia is an inspiration. If you have reluctant readers in your class, discover Alan Sitomer's amazing stories about teens surviving urban, California life. I have a whole class set of Homeboyz, another Sitomer must read. The class settles into the book and reads in silence for the rest of the in-class reading time. Reluctant readers are hooked by Sitomer's stories.

Why did I choose this rating: Because this book can inspire millions of Hispanics, Latinios, etc. This book has many lessons that come from a single person that struggled to graduate from high school. I recommend this book to the people who like Mexican, American (Chicano) culture books. This would be a great book to read and inspire yourself.

Book was in perfect shape when I got it! It was also an excellent book!

Eventhough this is not a true story, it can be anyone of my students. Sonia is a high school student with a set of conflicting educational values.

Former library book which arrived in in 2+ weeks. So this is what 8th grade level reading is?

i am always looking for novels that I can relate to. that have my cultural background woven in the words. This book is one of them.

everything as expected

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