

# Miss Quinces

AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR  
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RECOMMENDED FOR: Mid to Upper Primary



## SYNOPSIS

Sue just wants to spend the summer reading and making comics at sleepaway camp with her friends, but instead she gets stuck going to Honduras to visit relatives with her parents and two sisters. They live way out in the country, which means no texting, no cable and no Internet! The trip takes a turn for the worse when Sue's mother announces that they'll be having a surprise quinceañera for Sue, which is the last thing she wants. She can't imagine wearing a big, floofy, colourful dress! What is Sue going to do? And how will she survive all this 'quality' time with her rambunctious family?

## ABOUT THE CREATOR

Kat Fajardo is a Honduran Colombian award-winning cartoonist and illustrator from the lively and magical place of Loisaida, New York City.

They are the creator of *Miss Quinces*, which was a National Indie Bestseller, received two starred reviews, and was selected as a summer reading pick by Entertainment Weekly, Publishers Weekly, The Horn Book and the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. It was the first Graphix title to be simultaneously published in English and Spanish (as *Srta. Quinces*).

They are a graduate of the School of Visual Arts, and their work has been recognised by online publications such as *Remezcla*, *El Hispanic News*, *School Library Journal*, *Huffington Post*, *Latino Voices* and more. Kat loves to create playful and colourful work about self-acceptance and Latine culture

When they aren't making comics, you might find them collecting small junk for scrapbooking, listening to spooky podcasts, or chasing after their sock-stealing pups, Mac and Roni. Kat lives in Austin, Texas.

Visit them online at [katfajardo.com](http://katfajardo.com).

## STUDY NOTES

- Before reading the story, as a class discuss the book cover and title. Some things to include in your discussion could be:
  - What age group do you think this book might be written for? Why do you think this?
  - What can you see happening on the front cover?
  - Where do you think this book might be set, and why?
  - Who do you think might be the main character?
  - What can you tell about the person on the front cover—do they look happy?

- What are some of the things that you think are likely to happen in the story? What about the cover illustrations leads you to think this?
- At the start of the book, Sue and her friends are talking about their assignment to make a diary comic or travelogue comic. Sue eventually makes a travelogue comic sharing her time in Honduras. Create a (short) diary or travelogue comic of your own based on either the last school holidays, or an exciting trip you have been on. Alternatively, create an entirely fictional one based on a trip you hope to take one day.
- The story is written almost entirely in English, but Sue’s family speaks both Spanish and English at home, and her mother, and family in Honduras speak very little English. How does the author indicate which language is being spoken by whom?
- How many different languages are spoken and/or understood by members of your class and their families? Survey the class as a whole, and write down all the different languages that they, or their parents or grandparents, can understand. Include people like Sue and her mother who can understand a language well even if they sometimes struggle to speak it fluently themselves. Use your information to make an infographic or chart showing all the family languages understood by your class community. In pairs or small groups, choose one language from the list, and research one fact about it to include on the class infographic display. Your fact might be where it is spoken the most, how it is written, how many speakers it has, or even some interesting vocabulary items!
- Why is it important to Sue that she be able to speak Spanish as well as speak English?
- What is a quinceañera (quinces), and why is Sue so upset about finding out her mother has planned for her to have one?
- Sue and her family are visiting her mother’s family in Honduras. Where is Honduras, and why do they speak Spanish there?
- When shoe shopping Sue falls in love with a pair of pink-laced construction boots. What is your absolute favourite pair of shoes that you have ever seen or imagined and would love to own? Draw and colour a picture of your imaginary favourite shoes, and write a description of all the details about them that you love.
- Both Sue and her Abuela had their dresses chosen for them by their mothers—and both of them disliked the chosen colour and style. If you had to choose a fancy party outfit for someone else, how would you go about doing so? In pairs, discuss all the different questions you should ask someone about their likes and dislikes before choosing clothing for them. Once you have made a list of questions, ask your partner to answer them, and use their answers to help you design a party outfit. Once you have finished, share your design with your partner, and discuss what they do and don’t like about it. After finishing, write a brief reflection on the activity, discussing what was difficult, what was easy, and what you would change next time to make your design more successful.
- Do you think Sue is being ungrateful or is her mother just being uncaring? Write a two or three paragraph explanation of your opinion on this, including at least three pieces of evidence from the text.
- When Suyapa’s mother was fifteen, she left Honduras and moved to Texas on her own to work and send money home to her family. As a class, discuss what it must have been like for her to leave home and have to act as an adult in a country where she didn’t speak the language, and all at such a young age. In pairs or individually, create a four panel strip showing an imagined scene from her arrival in the USA, and exploring some of the emotions she must have felt.
- How do you think Suyapa’s family felt seeing her wearing her grandmother’s quinceañera dress?
- During her speech, Sue talks about how her grandmother has had a massive influence on her, and helped her to understand that it was okay to be herself. How did reading this scene make you feel? In small groups or as a class, discuss how sometimes people can have a huge impact on our lives, and how important it is to maintain cross-generational connections with family and friends.
- Sue and her friends were all hoping to go away to camp together, and were excited about the prospect of doing live action role playing games at their camp. If you were going camping for a week in the holidays with a bunch of friends, what types of activities would you want there to be? Write an illustrated schedule for your ideal two day camp. Present your schedule to the class, and try to sell as many students as possible on the idea of attending your camp.