



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

MATT DE LA PEÑA grew up in California and moved to New York City to seek adventure and to pursue his writing career. *Mexican WhiteBoy* is his second novel. His first novel, *Ball Don't Lie*, will soon be released as a major motion picture. Matt received his MFA in creative writing from San Diego State University and his BA from the University of the Pacific, where he attended school on a full athletic scholarship for basketball. He currently lives in Brooklyn, New York, where he teaches creative writing.

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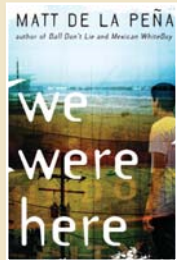
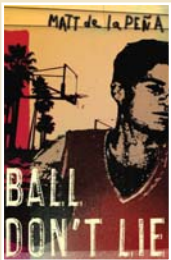
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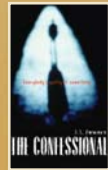
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MEXICAN WHITEBOY

READER'S GUIDE



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"Deftly explores the subject of interracial mixing."

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Prepared by Susan Geye, Director of Library Services, Everman ISD, TX.

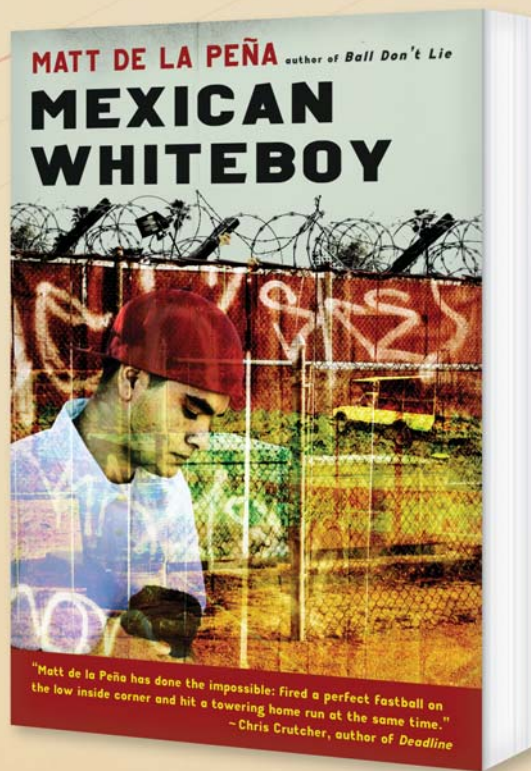
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ABOUT THE BOOK

Biracial, yet feeling unwelcome in either culture, ace baseball player Danny, the Mexican whiteboy, chokes on the pitching mound at his prestigious private school yet can't even speak Spanish with his family in National City.

Danny is disappointed when his mother announces she is moving to San Francisco with Tommy, a white man Danny does not respect or like. Danny makes plans to spend the summer in National City with his father's family, learning more about his Mexican heritage and saving money to visit his father who abandoned him when he was younger. On Danny's arrival, he is welcomed into the family, and his cousin, Sophia, introduces him to her friends who love baseball. Danny joins in the game and soon shows the guys how good he is by hitting balls farther than anyone ever has. But in a hard hit, Danny breaks a bat that injures Uno's younger brother. Uno reacts instinctively, beating Danny and sending him to the hospital. Despite this rocky beginning, a lasting friendship is forged between Danny and Uno based on mutual respect and the love of baseball.

Capitalizing on Danny's skills, Danny and Uno bet on Danny's prowess on the pitching mound, and both soon have enough money to achieve their goals for the summer—Uno to live with his dad and Danny to visit his dad. But Danny soon discovers that his family has been lying to him about his father, and he must confront the lie he has believed about himself and his father.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

- ◆ Why does Danny dig into his skin with his fingernails? How does the pain make him feel real? How do Danny's mom and uncles react when they realize what he is doing? How could they have helped him?
- ◆ Danny feels too brown to be a part of the baseball team at his private school and too white to be a member of his Mexican father's family and community. What could Danny do to fit in at both places? Why does he let the color of his skin prevent him from being a member of either community? How would Danny's life have been different if he had been raised in National City?
- ◆ How does Danny react to the news that his mother is moving to San Francisco with a white man? Why does he feel that his mother is dishonoring his father? What plans does Danny make as a result of his mother's decision?
- ◆ When Uno's brother, Manny, is hurt by Danny's broken bat, why does Uno attack Danny? Is Uno's attack justified? Why or why not? Who is hurt the most—Danny, Manny, or Uno? Why?
- ◆ Danny's ability to play baseball is remarkable by any standard. What pushes him to practice hours a day, striving to be the best he can be? Why does he choke on the pitching mound? Why is it so important for him to show the team at his private school how good he is?
- ◆ The showdown between Uno and Uncle Ray is an important event in establishing Danny's reputation. What is at stake? What does Danny gain from the exchange? What, if anything, does Uno lose? How does the showdown shift the balance of power among all of the guys?
- ◆ The relationship between fathers and sons is examined through Uno and his father and Danny and his father. How are the boys' relationships with their fathers different? How are they the same? Does either Uno or Danny come to accept the relationships with their fathers? In what ways do they accept or reject their fathers?
- ◆ Danny and Uno have more in common than either of them realize. What motive does Uno have to make friends with Danny? What does each of the boys have to gain from their friendship? How does Uno help Danny overcome his pitching block?
- ◆ After Danny witnesses Uncle Ray murder a man in the streets, Danny is stunned and overwhelmed at the rage his uncle displayed. How does this help give him an understanding of his father's character? When Danny learns the truth about his father, what is his initial reaction? How does Danny overcome the fear that he will one day be like his father and his uncles?
- ◆ Sophia asks Uno, "We all start out believing we can do anything. But at some point we lose it. Why is that?" (p. 212) This is true for all of the characters in the book and many people in real life. What happens in life that causes people to lose sight of their dreams?