



# A SWING WITH WINGS

TEXT BY MONIQUE ZEPEDA  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY CARLOS VÉLEZ



MONIQUE ZEPEDA was born in Mexico City. She is a psychoanalyst, artist and writer. She has always been interested in the world of children: how they think, how they solve their problems and how they look for questions while finding answers. Monique believes that adults can learn a lot from children, so she keeps close to her childhood memories. She is the author of the 5th and 6th grade textbook *Salud integral para casi jóvenes* and more than 20 books for children and teachers published by FCE, Ediciones Castillo, SM, Alfaguara infantil, among others: *Nicolás dos veces*, *Salvavidas*, *Sentido contrario en la selva*, *María la curandera*, *Adivina qué soñé*, *Las piñatas*, *Ser chavo no es fácil*, *trucos para sobrevivir*, *Toda la verdad* y *El cuaderno de Pancha*. She won the Barco de Vapor-CONACULTA prize in 2000 and 2005 and received the Caniem prize in 2008. Her books *Tigre calado* and *Kassunguilá* were selected for the White Raven exhibition in 2009. She has also been a scriptwriter for the children's program *Debajo de tu cama* on Radio Educación and a contributor to the "Gente chiquita" section of the *Reforma* newspaper.

# A SWING WITH WINGS

## Instituto Nacional Electoral

President Councilor

Lcda. Guadalupe Taddei Zavala

Electoral Councilors

Mtro. Arturo Castillo Loza

Norma Irene De La Cruz Magaña

Dr. Uuc-kib Espadas Ancona

Mtro. José Martín Fernando Faz Mora

Carla Astrid Humphrey Jordan

Mtra. Rita Bell López Vences

Mtro. Jorge Montaña Ventura

Mtra. Dania Paola Ravel Cuevas

Mtro. Jaime Rivera Velázquez

Mtra. Beatriz Claudia Zavala Pérez

Executive Secretary

Dra. Claudia Arlett Espino

Head of Internal Comptrollership Office

Mtro. Víctor Hugo Carvente Contreras

Acting Executive Director of Electoral

Training and Civic Education

Lcda. Iliana Araceli Hernández Gómez

*A SWING WITH WINGS*

First edition in English, 2026

Original title in Spanish: *COLUMPIO CON ALAS*

Text: Monique Francoise Zepeda Seine

Illustration: Carlos Vélez Aguilera

Translator: Varinia del Ángel Muñoz

Copyright © 2026, Instituto Nacional Electoral

Viaducto Tlalpan núm. 100, esquina Periférico Sur,

col. Arenal Tepepan, 14610, Ciudad de México

ISBN complete electronic work in English: 978-607-8870-87-5

ISBN electronic volume in English: 978-607-2604-54-4

Free dissemination. No sale allowed.

# A SWING WITH WINGS

Text by Monique Zepeda  
Illustrations by Carlos Vélez



# PRESENTATION

*A Swing with Wings* is a literary work that, as a part of the **Árbol** collection, the Instituto Nacional Electoral (INE, National Electoral Institute) makes available to children with the intention of promoting reading for pleasure with texts that introduce them to topics of citizen formation and democratic values.

This publication is part of the Estrategia Nacional de Cultura Cívica 2017-2023 (National Civic Culture Strategy 2017-2023), which seeks to contribute to strengthening our civic culture, recognizing that it is necessary to create the conditions for citizens to make public space their own and become the main actors in democratic life.

This publication offers children around the country a story that places them at the center of events in a neighborhood where any of us could live. In this setting, the author Monique Zepeda and the illustrator Carlos Vélez put together a plot where the characters deal with dilemmas and situations related to possible ways of ensuring that each and every child can satisfy their need for recreation; in this way, the playground and the multi-purpose athletic court serve as splendid analogies for those public spaces where the members of a democratic society must learn to interact respectfully and develop.

With this publication, particularly aimed at children in the lower grades of primary school, we hope to spark reflection about the democratic values enshrined in our laws, and in this way closely examine the consistency that these values demand in our own social interaction. The story highlights the importance of committing ourselves to taking concrete actions that will strengthen our life in democracy and that go far beyond participation in electoral processes.

Parents and teachers will find in this story a valuable tool for accompanying children in the process of identifying the foundations of a society that lives in democracy, such as respect for plurality and diversity, participation, inclusion and non-discrimination. This publication is, above all, an invitation to read an enjoyable story, as well as an opportunity to see ourselves in the characters and discover how much we can do if we focus our day-to-day actions on upholding together the democratic life that our society demands.

# Teasing, a Kick, and Certain Questions

Ramón kicked the ball against the wall as he waited for his friends. He was impatient for them to show up because they'd made an agreement with their neighbors: the little kids could use one half of the court while the older boys used the other half to practice basketball, except on Sundays when the skaters got to use it.

The agreement had worked out well, but this day Ramón didn't want to waste a minute of their time because the older kids wouldn't be there so they could use the whole court, which would make the game more exciting.

In the distance he could see Alejandra walking by with her little sister.





Ramón waved to her. Alejandra looked down; being out with her little sister was not easy for her: she never got used to the looks, and sometimes to the whispering and laughing.

Ale and Sofía crossed paths with Ramón’s buddies, who were eager to play soccer. The three boys threw the girls a sidelong glance. They didn’t say hello, and when the girls had passed, Julio started limping and jerking his arms around, making fun of Sofía. Alberto and Pepe giggled under their breath.

When Ramón saw what was happening, he kicked the ball straight at Julio.

“Hey, what’s wrong with you?” shouted Julio.



“What’s wrong with you?” Ramón snapped back.

“Take it easy, you two,” Alberto said as he stepped between them, “don’t make such a big deal out of it...”

“C’mon, let’s play. It looks like it might rain,” insisted Pepe.

Ramón walked away and took up his position at defense. He and Pepe were a team and defended one side of the court, while Julio and Alberto defended the other goal. The game started heating up. All four boys handled the ball well, and twice now it had come close to getting past Pepe. Ramón started to see red. He stopped the ball on the fly with his chest, set it up and let rip a tremendous shot, point-blank at Julio, sending him flying backwards into his own goal and knocking the breath out of him.





A few raindrops began to fall.

Alberto and Pepe ran over to help Julio, who was getting his breath back little by little.

“What’s the matter with you, Ramón?” demanded Alberto, “That’s out of line...”

Ramón shrugged his shoulders. His cheeks were flushed and he’d bitten his lip without knowing.

Julio struggled to get up, wiped the tears off his face and enraged, went straight for Ramón.

Pepe and Alberto managed to hold him back; they all exchanged a few choice words before heading home.

That night Ramón couldn’t sleep. Certain questions kept running through his head.

# A Note, Another Ball, and a Handshake that Didn't Happen

Ramón woke up early. He wanted to hurry because Alejandra always arrived way before everyone else. Her mother worked in the principal's office and had to report to work 15 minutes before the start of the school day.

He had noticed that Alejandra waited in the schoolyard, sometimes looking at the branches of the tree, other times arranging her trading cards on the bench.


Ramón walked up to her. In his pocket he had an envelope with trading cards, the kind that a bunch of the kids collected.

“Hi. Take a look at these that I got yesterday,” he said.

Ale looked at them one by one.

“This one I don't have. I'll trade you for one of mine,” she said, showing him her collection.





“You can have it,” said Ramón.

“Do you mean it?” exclaimed Alejandra.

Ramón walked off smiling. That morning the classes dragged on forever; it seemed like the teacher was talking in slow motion.

At recess, Ale walked up to him with a piece of paper folded up. She slipped it into Ramón’s hand when nobody was looking. He opened it and read “thanks.” At that moment he would have sworn that the sun suddenly shined brighter.

Across the schoolyard he could see Julio coming his way, with a scowl on his face and his hands clenched behind his back.

Ramón hesitated, but decided to face him. He walked in his direction, and when they were face to face, they looked at each other:

“We good? Look, I’m sorry,” said Ramón, reaching out his hand.





Surprised, Julio pulled his hand from behind his back, revealing a brand-new soccer ball.

“Wanna play?” he asked.

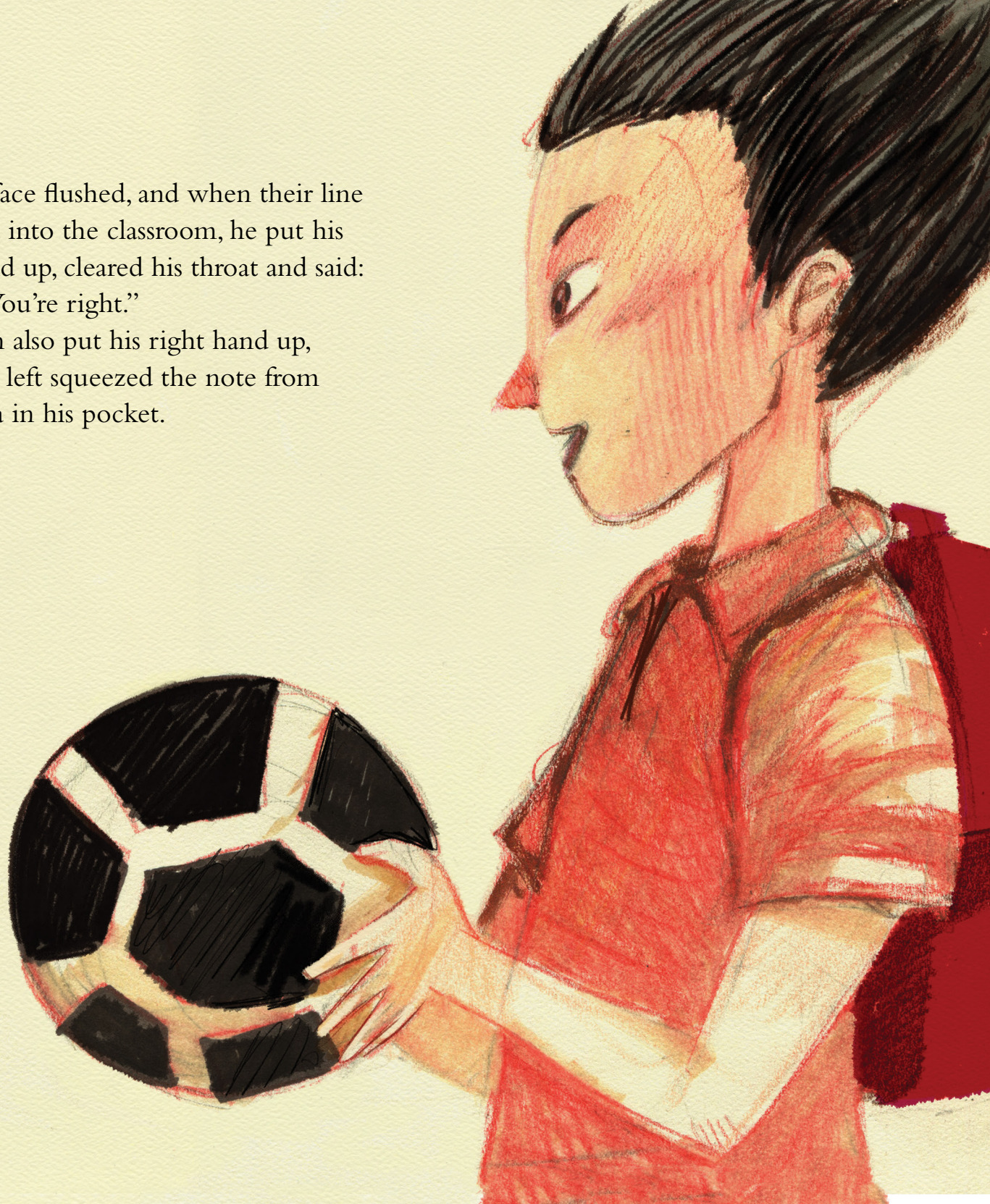
“Okay...”

Between dribbles, passes and goals, recess flew by, while Ramón kept hearing his dad’s voice in his head: “Put yourself in the other guy’s shoes, that’s something Julio needs to do; truth is, we all need to...”

The bell rang, and as they were lining up, Ramón said to Julio: “I don’t like it when you make fun of Ale’s sister.”

Julio's face flushed, and when their line advanced into the classroom, he put his right hand up, cleared his throat and said: "Sorry. You're right."

Ramón also put his right hand up, while his left squeezed the note from Alejandra in his pocket.



# Something Like Jealousy, and a Candy that Can't Be Swallowed

In the afternoon, the four boys met at the court, ready for another game. Alejandra walked by again, accompanied by Sofía.

Julio walked up to her and Alejandra looked nervously around her.

“Hi, Ale,” Julio said very seriously. “Where are you going?”

“I’m taking Sofía to speech therapy,” answered Ale after a brief pause.

“Have a good one,” murmured Julio.

Ramón, feeling a bit nervous himself, bounced the ball waiting for the game to start. Without knowing why, he felt like kicking the ball at Julio. Finally the game started, and they played to a draw. A sweaty draw!



They were just leaving when they saw Alejandra and her sister heading toward the swings. Sofía was crying and pulling Ale by the hand.

“I already told you, Sofi; you can’t get on the swings because you’ll fall,” explained Ale, a bit annoyed.

Little Sofía kept insisting, and her tantrum was getting louder.

Ramón said good-bye to his friends and walked over to the girls.

“Does she want to get on?”

“Yeah, but she can’t hold tight to the chains and she might fall backwards,” said Ale.

“Plus, my mom won’t let her.”

Ramón fished around in his pocket and pulled out Alejandra’s note together with a hard candy.

“Sofía, want a candy?” asked Ramón.

Alejandra opened her eyes wide and shook her head.

Sofía grabbed the candy out of Ramón’s hands, but when she tried to unwrap it, the candy fell on the ground.



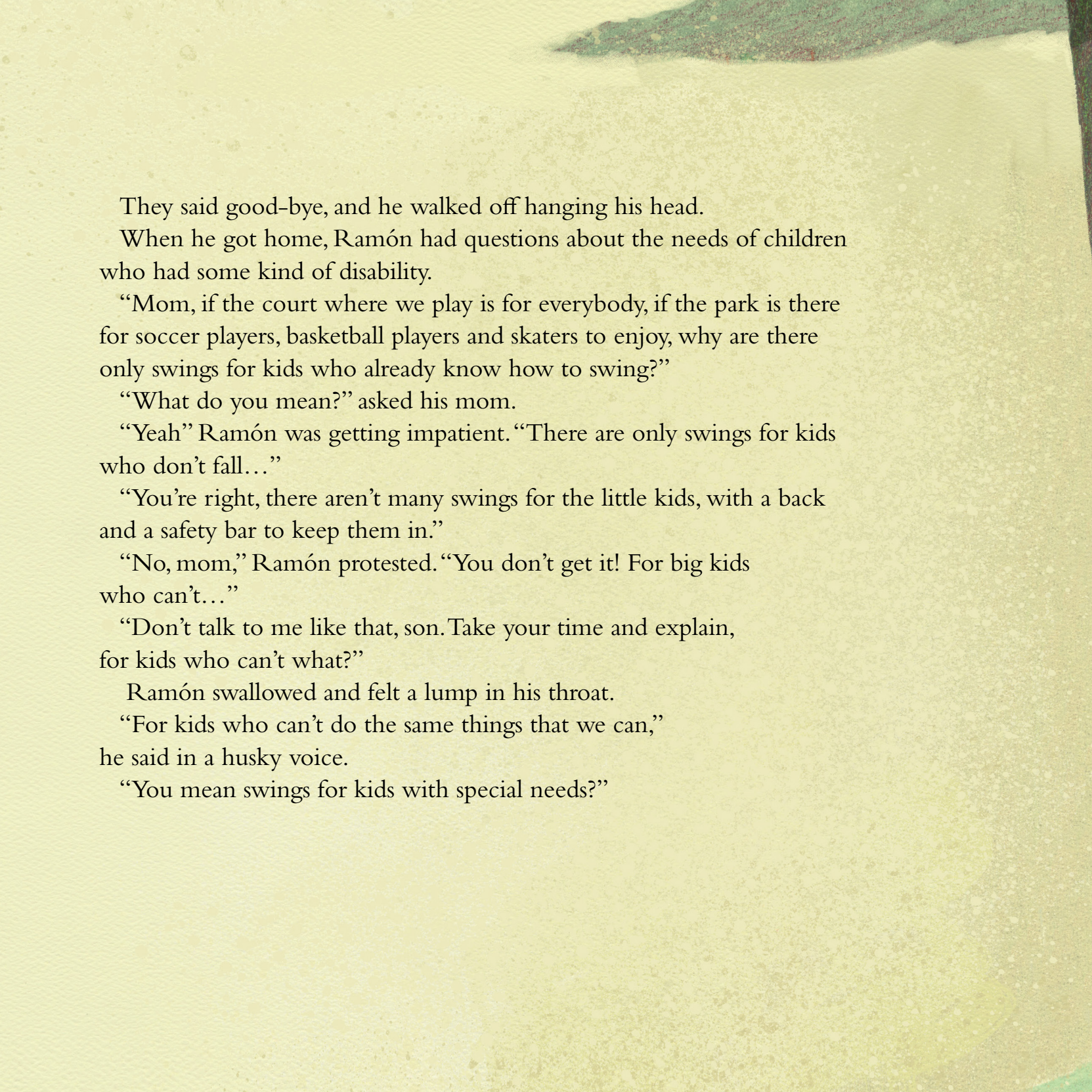


“Now you can’t eat it,” said Ale with relief.

Sofía kept crying, even harder than before.

“She’s not allowed to eat that kind of candy,” explained Ale. “She could choke on it.”

“I didn’t know. I’m sorry,” said Ramón.



They said good-bye, and he walked off hanging his head.

When he got home, Ramón had questions about the needs of children who had some kind of disability.

“Mom, if the court where we play is for everybody, if the park is there for soccer players, basketball players and skaters to enjoy, why are there only swings for kids who already know how to swing?”

“What do you mean?” asked his mom.

“Yeah” Ramón was getting impatient. “There are only swings for kids who don’t fall...”

“You’re right, there aren’t many swings for the little kids, with a back and a safety bar to keep them in.”

“No, mom,” Ramón protested. “You don’t get it! For big kids who can’t...”

“Don’t talk to me like that, son. Take your time and explain, for kids who can’t what?”

Ramón swallowed and felt a lump in his throat.

“For kids who can’t do the same things that we can,” he said in a husky voice.

“You mean swings for kids with special needs?”



“Yeeesss!” answered Ramón.

“There are a few, but it’s very, very few. We’ll have to do something about it. There must be institutions that support people with those needs...”

“It’s not fair, Mom...”

“Well, let’s see what ideas we can come up with, honey. I promise I’ll look into it. I know it’s the government’s job to make sure everyone has the same benefits.”

Ramón had calmed down when he went to bed, thinking about how he could help his friend.



# True Friend and Deflated Ball

“Julio, your dad has a welding shop, doesn’t he?” asked Ramón when he ran into his friend at school.

“Yeah. Why?”


“Can we go talk to him this afternoon?”

“Um, okay... but what for?” asked Julio skeptically.

“I’ll tell you later.”

During recess, Alejandra could see that Ramón and Julio were whispering about something. They both looked over at her before going off to play ball.

Alejandra shrugged her shoulders; she was used to people giving her funny looks. She didn’t have many friends. Pilar was the only one who sat down to eat with her during recess, but Pilar often missed school because she got sick a lot.

An illustration of a young girl with short brown hair, wearing a blue shirt and green pants, sitting on a dark grey ledge. She is looking down and to the right. To her left is the thick, textured trunk of a large tree. In the background, a framed picture hangs on a grey wall. The sky is a pale yellow with scattered orange and red speckles. Three small red birds are flying: one near the tree trunk, one on the ledge in front of the girl, and one further to the right.

On days when Pilar was absent, Ale would sit with her other classmates, but sometimes they turned their back on her, or told her they didn't sit with girls who didn't have a pretty lunchbox, or who had weird sisters, or who didn't have a cool hairstyle.

When this happened, she looked for a patch of shade to sit by herself. It didn't bother her anymore, and she had quit crying over this, ever since the day her mother told her: "We're not ashamed of your sister. The shame is on those girls who refuse to get to know Sofia, to understand how she thinks, to see how well she draws."



But on this particular day, Ale did feel annoyed because Ramón seemed to be whispering with Julio about her. She thought Ramón was a friend... a true friend.

She was really annoyed, and wished their ball would deflate, and as she had these thoughts, she realized she was very angry.

Her parents had explained to her that sometimes people wished bad things on people they didn't like, but that that was a mistake, that it's better to work things out by talking, asking questions and clearing the air.

So when school let out, she looked for Ramón to ask him whether he was a true friend or not. Unfortunately, she couldn't find him.



# Clear Instructions and Reading with Glasses

Julio and Ramón didn't show up to play soccer. Surprised, Pepe and Alberto figured they must be grounded. They felt bored and decided to go home. When they passed by the welding shop, they discovered that their missing friends were there.

“What are you doing here?” Alberto asked.

“We want to make playground equipment for Alejandra's little sister.”

“Playground equipment? You mean like a sliding board or a merry-go-round?”

“We thought swings would be a good idea...” suggested Ramón.

“Yes,” Julio's dad agreed. “Swings would seem to be the safest option.”

“Well, I'd like a seesaw better,” exclaimed Alberto.

“Why don't we vote?” Julio proposed.



columpio

sube y baja

The four boys ran out of the welding shop and found pieces of paper where they wrote down their preferences.

When they counted the votes, they found two with the word swings, one with sliding board and one with seesaw.

Julio's dad took the votes, showed the boys the materials he had in his shop: pipes, chains, bars... and invited them to think and vote again.

This time there were three votes for swings and one for seesaw.

“Okay, let's get to work,” said Julio's dad. “We'll make a big swing, with a back and a safety bar, like for babies...”

“Not exactly. For someone who needs to feel safe and not fall out,” explained Ramón as the other three pored over the drawings that Julio's dad was making in a notebook.

In the meantime, Alejandra, on the way to speech therapy, looked over toward the courts, and didn't find Ramón. Resigned, she tried not to think about him.

“Always look for new friends,” her mother had told her. “Never give up.”

Recently, as she waited for Sofia to finish her therapy session, she had talked with an older girl who also took her brother to special classes. Her name was Natalia.

“Have you read this book?” she asked.


“No,” mumbled Ale.

“It’s about a boy who’s a lot like my brother,” she said with self-assurance.

Natalia wore glasses that made her look very...

Alejandra couldn’t think of the word she was looking for to describe how Natalia looked in her glasses; she just wanted to have those same glasses, wear the same clothes, comb her hair the same way and speak with the same self-confidence.





## There's Not Just One Favorite Color and Air that Tastes Good...

The next day, during recess, Alejandra and Pilar were sitting together when Ramón came up.

“What’s Sofia’s favorite color?” he asked straight away.

“Huh? Why?” answered Ale.

“What’s her favorite color?” Ramón insisted.

Alejandra looked inside her bookbag and took out a drawing signed by her sister.

“Ah,” said Ramón, walking away.

“Wait!” cried Alejandra.



But the bell announcing the end of recess drowned out her voice.

In the afternoon, Ale hurried along, pulling Sofía behind her. She wanted to see Natalia and show her the book she was reading.

“What book are you reading?” asked Natalia distractedly.

“It’s called *Pancha’s Notebook*. It’s the story of a girl who once wet herself because the teacher wouldn’t let her go to the bathroom... and she didn’t have many friends... just one friend...”

Natalia paged through the book, read a paragraph and said: “The same thing happened to me in the fourth grade. It was horrible.”

Alejandra felt so glad. She felt like clapping for having gotten Natalia’s attention.

“Yeah, horrible,” Ale agreed; but then something incredible happens...

“No, no, no, don’t tell me!” Natalia cut her off. “Lend me the book when you’re finished so I can read it myself.”

Alejandra felt like the air tasted sweet.



# A Swing with Wings

As she and Sofía left therapy, Ale tried to steer clear of the swings to keep her sister from throwing another tantrum, but she couldn't help seeing a knot of people around the playground equipment: Ramón and Julio, the rest of their soccer buddies, the basketball players, a few kids with their skateboards and even some grown-ups. She decided to see what was going on, what had brought them all there.

Her little sister pulled her hand excitedly pointing toward the swings. Ale stopped and imagined the scene Sofía would make in front of all those people, but then she remembered her mother's words: "we're not ashamed..." and decided to satisfy her curiosity.

"Sofi, we'll go over, but don't start crying."

She could see a brand-new shiny chain, and she heard voices saying:  
“We should make more equipment like this.”

The little girl pulled her sister’s hand even harder and then suddenly let go;  
Ale lost her balance and fell on the ground, while Sofia ran as fast as she could  
toward the people.








As she picked herself up, brushing the dirt off her clothes and noticing that her hand and cheeks stung, Alejandra heard Sofia laugh.

Ramón made a motion with his hand and Julio's dad and the rest stepped back to reveal what all the commotion was about.



“Sofi, look at the beautiful swing!” exclaimed Ale, bringing her hands up to her mouth.

“No, not sw...swing,” cried Sofi, “a fl...fly...ing k..kite...”

Natalia came up with her brother and asked him:

“Do you want to take a ride on Sofia’s flying kite?”

The air, aside from sweet, was warm. Sofia’s laughter flowed like a waterfall.



The background is a complex, abstract composition. It features several large, overlapping, swirling shapes in shades of light blue, pale green, and off-white. These shapes have a textured, almost painterly quality, with visible brushstrokes and some darker, more saturated areas. Interspersed throughout these swirls are numerous small, colorful dots in red, yellow, blue, and green. The overall effect is one of dynamic movement and vibrant energy.

TO REFLECT  
AND DISCUS

# Democracy and Everyday Life

All children are sensitive and intelligent, and deserve to receive education about citizenship both in school and at home.

For the purpose of making this story meaningful to children, we invite teachers, parents and other adults to accompany them as they read and enjoy the story, to engage in dialogue and reflection about democracy and diversity in their day-to-day life, not just when elections are held.

Democracy encompasses so much more than the procedures for electing our government by vote; it's tied up with all the aspects of our social life, day in and day out.

These final pages lay out the most important concepts that come up in the story *A Swing with Wings* so that you can try to identify them in different moments of the story:

- Society is a place where people interact, grow, develop and express themselves, where different groups and individuals who have common or special interests can share them. People and families come together to live as a group, and they organize, reach agreements and set rules so that they can interact in harmony.

In the story *A Swing with Wings*, this dynamic is represented symbolically by a group of kids who share a space: the multi-purpose athletic court where they hang out and play on different days and times.

- As individuals, we need society in order to express who we are, to overcome isolation, to feel supported and protected. This is why Ramón doesn't act alone; he undertakes different actions together with the other kids, while respecting the rights of everyone.



- Democracy is a resource for organizing everyday life in society, for resolving conflicts and encouraging people to participate in the formation of their government and in the selection of their representatives.

The use of the multi-purpose court in an organized way, with special times for soccer players, basketball players and skaters, shows how different groups can come up with a fair and satisfactory solution democratically.

- Democracy also enables people, groups and countries to undertake projects. For this, dialogue is key.

Ramón expresses his concerns to his mom, to his best friend Julio and to Julio's dad; he also dialogues with his soccer buddies to find the best option for helping Alejandra and her little sister Sofía.

- All groups and people are equal because they have the same rights and they also have responsibilities. But at the same time they're different and their identities and interests can vary. Diversity enriches societies.

Unfortunately, in spite of having the same rights as all children, Sofía didn't have access to the same opportunities for play as the other kids, due to her disability.

- Democratic values apply for all citizens depending on the types of activities they engage in:

- Tolerance: accepting ideas and opinions that are different from our own. This is exemplified at different points in the story, such as by the phrase "Put yourself in the other guy's shoes," words spoken by Ramón's dad that Ramón remembers in different situations, for example, when he expresses his differences with Julio. Tolerance is



also seen in Natalia's attitude toward her brother, who like Sofia has a speech impediment.



- Equality: making sure that everyone is treated the same.

In this regard Ramón tells his mom about his concern that the playground has no equipment for disabled kids and he organizes his friends to find a solution to the problem.

- Pluralism: interacting in peace, respecting different ways of acting and thinking.

The boys have different ideas about how to help Sofia and they vote to choose what they think is the best solution.

- Participation: influencing community life voluntarily and with a sense of solidarity.

Justice, freedom and participation can be seen when the boys in this story don't wait for some authority to solve Sofia's problem; instead, they take the initiative themselves and contribute freely and actively to improve their community's living conditions, in pursuit of the common good.



- The Mexican State is democratic and our government is made up of three branches: the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary.

Like in the story *A Swing with Wings*, we Mexicans need to be organized to develop as a society that interacts peacefully and to vote for the people who govern us.

It is very important to listen to the children's doubts, experiences and opinions regarding the story and what they feel about the theme, both in their school and in their community. We hope that children and their families enjoy *A Swing with Wings* and that it contributes to their formation as citizens



*A SWING WITH WINGS*

The Bembo Std font family was used.



CARLOS VÉLEZ AGUILERA was born in Mexico City in 1980. He is a graduate of the National School of Plastic Arts of the National Autonomous University of Mexico. He completed the CASUL Illustration, Processes and Contexts diploma, and different illustration workshops and seminars with masters such as Javier Sáez, Kveta Pakovska, Adellci Galloni, Noemí Villamuza, Santiago Caruso, André Neves and Roberto Innocenti, among others. He has been a professional illustrator for 10 years and has collaborated with publishers such as Santillana, Castillo, Norma, SM, Trillas, Richmond, Alfaguara, Porrúa, and for magazines *Quo*, *Chilango* y *Escala*, among others. In 2015 he was selected for FONCA's Young Creators program in the graphic narrative category and won second place in the FILIJ's catalog of illustrators of children's publications.



*A Swing with Wings* is the story of a group of children who join ideas and efforts with a common goal: to help a little girl who has special needs so that she can enjoy her games just like all her classmates.

This work from the **Árbol** collection is an invitation to reflect on empathy, diversity, tolerance, justice and respect, a starting point for understanding democracy and living it as a daily exercise of citizenship.