

LUNA

By Ramón Esquivel

A Study Guide

By Darci Ramirez
& Shelley Graham,
dramaturgs



About The Author: Ramón Esquivel +

Ramón Esquivel is a playwright-educator born and raised in Kirkland, Washington, and is of Mexican and Yaqui Indian heritage. He teaches playwriting and theatre education at Central Washington University in Ellensburg, and previously taught middle school in Washington DC, Brooklyn, and Seattle.

Esquivel's overall reason for writing content like *Luna* is stated in his article, "Latinx Theater for Young Audiences, Where We are and Where We Must Go:"

"WHILE WE MAY WANT TYA PLAYS THAT REFLECT THE GREAT DIVERSITY OF LATINX EXPERIENCES, OUR YOUNG AUDIENCES NEED THEM".

Luna tells a story that anyone can connect to, that of being an outsider, through a reality that speaks to many people who haven't had the chance to see their lives and perspectives on stage.



About the Director Kris W. Peterson *

Kris W. Peterson is an educator, director, and actor whose training includes work at Brigham Young University, the Utah Shakespeare Festival, and the University of Exeter. In this production, she explores what it means to find connection and your dreams at the same time – even if we struggle as we pursue them both.

Luna explores what it's like to feel isolated in an unfamiliar setting. Peterson chose to inform the cultural background of Soledad with one similar to her own, with her Costa Rican heritage seeping into the soul of Soledad and her family.

The world in which Soledad finds herself is informed by Mexican traditions and designs, and this difference highlights the loneliness that one might feel in an unfamiliar environment, as well as the connections that one can make to overcome it.

LUNA

written by Ramón Esquivel
Directed by Kris Peterson

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Friends and Dreams

Esquivel was inspired to write this story after hearing of Bonnie Dunbar, an astronaut born and raised in the farmlands of eastern Washington amid the strong migrant worker community, who dreamed of traveling among the stars. She achieved her dream and flew 5 missions with NASA, but what stuck with Esquivel was the story of a girl standing in a field, staring up at the stars. When he was commissioned to write *Luna*, he wanted to explore what it would be like to be a member of this community and dream of the stars.

Making Connections

Connecting, or even trying to connect with others can come with risks. Believing in and pursuing our dreams also comes with risks. Luna asks, "Have you ever tried something new to find you couldn't do it? Have you ever worked hard to get better at something but it still doesn't work?" The scarier answers to these questions – yes – is why it can be so hard to find and build friendships and believe in ourselves.

Why is taking risks so important to making connections and pursuing our dreams?

Sometimes, we leave the people we love. Sometimes, we hurt the people we love. But in the end, they are the support that we need in order to reach our dreams – whether it's traveling to the stars or simply making a new friend. Soledad's parents try to create a life for her that gives her friendship, and Luna comforts and guides her when she's unsure of her path.

What are some ways that you help others reach their dreams?

Who helps you build your dreams?

Soledad means "solitude" or "loneliness" in Spanish – and sometimes it's easy to feel as if we're all alone just like her. But in the same way that Luna finds friends in stars, Soledad is able to find friends in other children. So, like a constellation, each of these separate stars can come together, through their connections, to make a beautiful whole.

What can make it hard to find and keep connections?

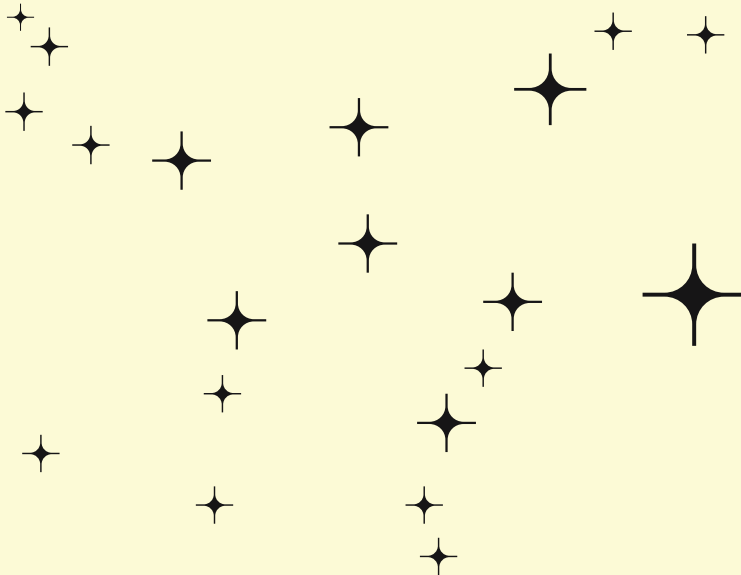


What are some things that bring you and your constellation together? Could it be books? A love of good food? Or something else entirely?



Make Connections! Make Constellations!

Name each of these stars with dreams that you have or important people in your life. Then create your own constellation when you connect the stars! As you do, think about how these dreams and these people are connected to each other.



Migrant Work

For much of the produce in the U.S., the best way to harvest is through manual labor. But because of the seasonal nature of different crops, it calls for a group of skilled workers to travel to each agricultural area to harvest them while in season. These people are migrant workers.

Migrant and seasonal work is vital to US agriculture. Historically, migrant workers have come from all over the United States and the world; but the majority have been Latinx workers from North, Central, and South America – especially Mexico. However, the seasonal and migrant workforce remains an industry that holds people of many different backgrounds and national origins.

Utah is one of the most food-vulnerable states in the US, and is particularly dependent on many local agricultural areas to supply it. In Utah, some of the most significant areas for both agricultural production and seasonal/migrant workers are in Payson, Santaquin, and Mona. We set our production of *Luna* in Utah, since Soledad's experience might be familiar to some of our own school children.



Costa Rica and Mexico

The background of each member of the production team shapes the world of the play. It's been influenced by various Latinx backgrounds, including Mexican and Costa Rican, and you may especially see this in the design of this production. These distinct and beautiful traditions serve as inspiration, but they don't belong to this production alone. We tell the story of one very brave girl finding friendship and inspiration. Her story, like this production, is informed by these cultures, but isn't a representation of the culture as a whole.



Traditional oxcarts are a source of pride for Costa Ricans and an inspiration for our design. Used to transport families, crops, and legacies, the theme of the oxcart helps to tell the story of Soledad's family and their travels.

