



President's Message

It is an honor and a privilege to follow Dr. Jack Cassidy as president of the Texas Association for Literacy Education. Under the guidance of Dr. Cassidy, the association grew to fulfill the vision set forth in a survey of educators across the state. One major expectation was for the association to support the development of all aspects of literacy. Another was for the association to reach out to other state literacy organizations. Both of these expectations are well on their way to being fulfilled. The first is reflected in our name—Texas Association for Literacy Education. As for the second expectation, this association is currently planning a session at IRA San Antonio in cooperation with TAIR and TCTELA.

This first year has been a year of formation in response to Texas educators' expectations.

TALE's executive committee has been busy developing the bylaws recently approved at its first election in which members also elected a new vice president, Patricia Durham, as well as six regional representatives. I welcome our new board members with open arms. TALE needs you! This coming year will be a year of growth. We will work to expand membership and to plan our next conference for 2013-2014, which will be under the presidency of Dr. Sharon O'Neal. We hope to continue the successful partnership of TALE with the Specialized Literacy

Professionals and local universities in hosting quality literacy conferences.

TALE exists for you, our educators, so we invite your membership and your participation. If you are not already a member, join us by sending in the membership form found on our website, and don't forget to like us on Facebook!



Carolyn Denny

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Special points of interest:

- Celebrate TALE Members.
- Expand knowledge of popular young adult literature.
- Create mentor relationships among literacy educators.
- Cultivate opportunities for professional development through TALE.

"Literacy is not a luxury, it is a right and a responsibility. If our world is to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century we must harness the energy and creativity of all our citizens."

- President Clinton on International Literacy Day, September 8th, 1994

Welcome, Newly Elected Board Members!



Patricia Durham, Vice President

Regional Representatives:

Melissa Caraway

Marilyn Cook

Paul Haupt

Kimberly Reznicek

Kim Skinner

Ann Whiteside

Featured TALE Member Dr. Stephanie Grote-Garcia



Stephanie Grote-Garcia is an Assistant Professor of Teacher Education for the Dreeben School of Education at the University of the Incarnate Word (UIW). Stephanie earned her Ph.D. from Texas A&M University in Corpus Christi and was a Reading Specialist in the Corpus area prior to moving to San Antonio. Stephanie is the

webmaster and treasurer for TALE and was the Program Chair for the 2012 Literacy Summit, which was held on the campus of UIW. She is also one of the editors for the 2012 Combined Yearbook of TALE and the Specialized Literacy Professionals, which will feature key presentations from the 2012 Literacy Summit. In addition to her work

for TALE, Stephanie is the 2013 co-author for the annual What's Hot list and co-author of *Literacy Trends and Issues-What's Hot*. She is also the membership chair for the Professors of Reading Teacher Educators (PRTE), a special interest group of the International Reading Association (IRA).

TALE Members' Review Young Adult Literature

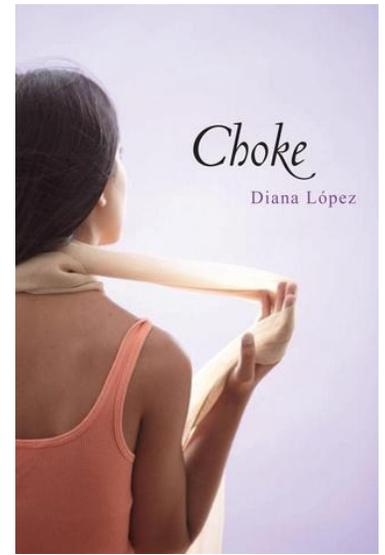
Review of Diana López's *Choke* by David de Anda

Like most girls her age, eighth grader Windy is average. She gets average grades and rarely has ambitions beyond not working too long on her feet. Windy must bear the trivial and superficial opinions of the "in-crowd," a group of popular, snotty girls, while trying to stay away from the "out-crowd," the school rejects. Windy and her best friend Elena are part of the "general public," a group of unassuming students that form the majority in their San Antonio middle school. While trying to juggle the complexities of her mother's life of drudgery as a

nurse and her weather forecaster father's mid-life crisis, Windy must also research her possible career choices for a school assignment. When the new girl, Nina, shows up, however, Windy's life changes. With Nina's friendship, Windy is presented with the privileges of in-crowd status, association with popular girls, and the possibility of a cute boyfriend. Yet this privilege is consequential. Nina's arrival indicates the end of Windy's innocence with Windy's induction as a "breath sister," an exclusive group of girls practicing the dangerous choking game.

What could have been a predictable reshuffling of the common teenage angst story is wonderfully manipulated

by López's moral objective: the dangers of the choking game, or the deliberate choking of another person to elicit unconsciousness for a drug high. Diana López, author of the popular *Con-fetti Girl* (2009), continues to delve into the minds of adolescent girls, usually of Hispanic heritage, enduring the often misunderstood anxieties of girlhood. Though the plot at times seems formulaic with immature cliques and school girl crushes, López's refusal to compromise with the dangers of the choking game makes *Choke* an example of good moral indictment against a culture much too satisfied with the traditional happy ending.



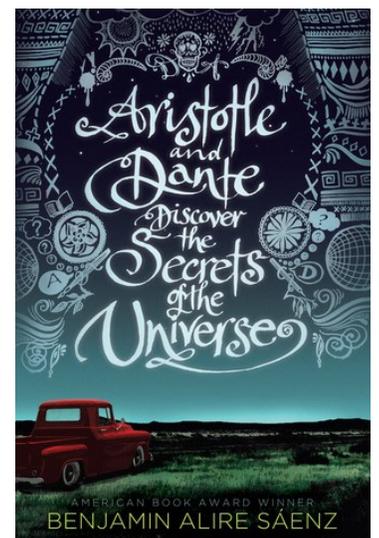
Review of Benjamin Alire Sáenz's *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* by Alma Gamez

In his latest YA novel, author Benjamin Alire Sáenz, who grew up on the New Mexico border and now lives in El Paso, gives a realistic portrayal of teens questioning all aspects of their identity. The book begins in El Paso in the summer of 1987. Fifteen-year-old Aristotle (Ari) Mendoza is a lonely outsider, angry and always ready to fight, like every typical teenager, or so he says.

Ari's life changes when he meets Dante Quintana, his opposite, full of self-confidence, calm and joyful, when Dante offers to teach Ari how to swim. Suddenly Ari has his first real friend in idealist Dante, who changes his perceptions of things like poetry, family, and their Mexican-American identity. After watching the openness of the Quintana family, Ari begins to question the silence of his father, a veteran of the Vietnam War, and the big family secret about Ari's brother who is in prison.

But Ari realizes that his best friend is in love with him

and is not sure how he feels about it. This character-driven novel shows Ari dealing with life's problems as they come, such as questions of identity and sexuality, experimenting with kissing and alcohol, learning to drive, and reading significant literature. There is the sweet discovery that a person should never be made to feel ashamed of love. Still, the ending of this novel provokes debate and disagreement among some readers, and you should find out why by reading *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*.





facebook

One of TALE's goals is to network and mentor each other. As school starts back, our student members and beginning teachers may have some questions about which our experienced teachers can offer suggestions. So, if you are a newbie, please post a question. If you are a veteran teacher, please offer suggestions. In this way we can begin to support each other across the state.

We have a posted question right now!! Please follow this link and let's start mentoring!

<http://www.facebook.com/texasreaders.org>

Editor's Note

TALE is an organization of literacy educators for literacy educators. You make every aspect of this organization shine! Your ideas and opinions are valued and we encourage you to share your literacy education experience.

We are very interested in finding members who would like to submit pieces for future featured columns titled *Technology*

Tales and Member Musings.

The *Technology Tales* feature will be focused on how technology is being implemented in members' classrooms. We want to hear what is working for you from you!

Member Musings is where we TALE members will be provided

with a space to explore the plethora of issues surrounding literacy education.

If you would like to write for the newsletter please submit your ideas/articles to Leslie Haas at lhaas@dallas.edu.



Upcoming Events

Please join us at the International Reading Association's 58th Annual Conference in San Antonio being held April 19-22.

For further information please visit their website at the following link:

<http://www.reading.org/convention.aspx>

