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A fresh, breakout YA novel that is layered with themes of immigration, cultural identity, and finding your voice in any language.



Love in English

-by-

Maria E. Andreu

-On Sale February 2, 2021-

Sixteen-year-old Ana is a poet and a lover of language. Except that since she moved to New Jersey from Argentina, she can barely find the words to express how she feels.

At first Ana just wants to return home. Then she meets Harrison, the very cute, very American boy in her math class, and discovers the universal language of racing hearts. But when she begins spending time with Neo, the Greek Cypriot boy from ESL, Ana wonders how figuring out what her heart wants can be even more confusing than the grammar they're both trying to master. After all, the rules of English may be confounding, but there are no rules when it comes to love.

With playful and poetic breakouts exploring the idiosyncrasies of the English language, *Love in English* is witty and effervescent, while telling a beautifully observed story about what it means to become "American."

Maria E. Andreu is an Argentinian American author whose work has appeared in *Teen Vogue*, *Newsweek*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Newark Star Ledger*. Her debut young adult novel, *The Secret Side of Empty*, is a Junior Library Guild Selection and National Indie Excellence Book Award winner. Find her online at www.mariaeandreu.com.

Love in English by Maria E. Andreu

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A Note from the Author

Dear Reader:

Love in English is, at its heart, a story about finding one's voice, with the twist of how hard it can be to do that when you don't speak the language. I once didn't speak English, and all my confusion and curiosity is folded into these pages.

Ana's backstory is similar to mine, but I simplified hers, since mine is winding and complicated. My parents moved to Argentina from Spain as toddlers and grew up in Argentina. My grandparents lived and died in Argentina after they emigrated; my father, my aunts, uncles, and cousins live there still. My parents met, fell in love, and married in Argentina. When my mom was pregnant with me, my parents came to the US on a visitor's visa to save a nest egg, intending always to move back to rejoin their families in Argentina. Through weird timing, my mom was on a visit to Spain when I was born. My mom and I returned to the US when I was a few weeks old. As I grew up in the US, my mom spoke no English, so mine was spotty at best. When I was six, my mother and I went back to Argentina for my grandfather's funeral. We could not get back into the US since we lacked the proper papers. Separated from my father for years, my mother and I crossed the US–Mexican border undocumented when I was eight.

Whatever bit of English I understood before going to spend those years in Argentina had completely left me by the time I was back. I was lost. My early years of school in the US informed much of Ana's story. I still have vivid memories of missing jokes, of wearing the wrong thing, of not understanding what the teacher was saying. At first, English proved inscrutable to me. But eventually it revealed some of its mysteries, and, by high school, I loved it. I still love the great joy of inching as close as possible to the truth with just the right word. In being an outsider in both languages I have been relegated to forever questioning and wondering. Why dough, rough, and bough? Why "have your cake and eat it too?" I once lamented this. Now I relish it.

My immigrant story is important to me and informs what I write about. But I know that my experience as a white immigrant is in many ways privileged and different from that of immigrants of color. And although I was undocumented through my teen years, I didn't choose that same status for Ana because in today's uncertain climate, so much of immigration to the US is laden with danger and fear. I wanted Ana's story to feel universal: falling in love, trying to fit in, learning who she wants to be, and, ultimately, finding her voice.

Maria