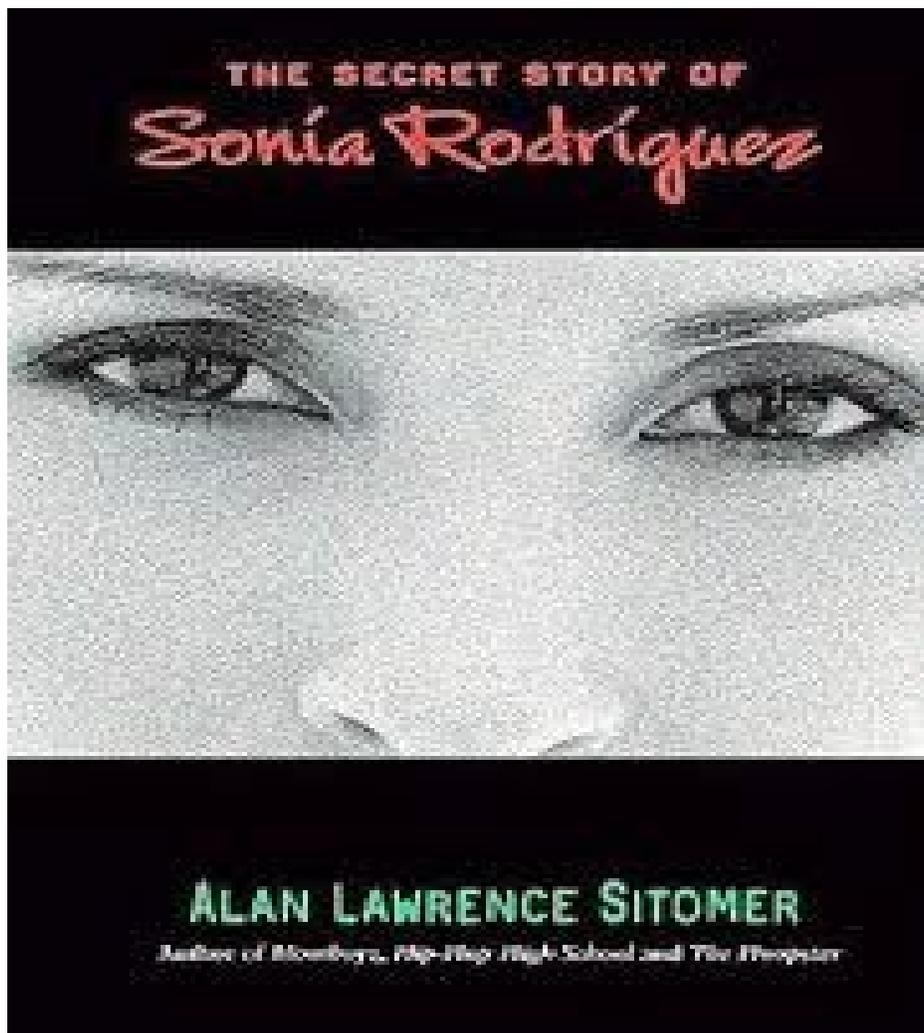


# *The Secret Story of Sonia Rodriguez*

*By Alan Lawrence Sitomer*



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## *Alan Lawrence Sitomer*

He is a California Teacher of the Year (2007) and a celebrated author of young adult fiction, teacher methodology texts, and children's literature. He has written several widely held books and has become nationally renowned for his success work in secondary literacy instruction, particularly when it comes to engaging reluctant readers.

Born in New York on February 15, 1967, Sitomer earned a B.A. degree from the University of Southern California, a teaching certificate from San Diego State University, and a master's degree from National University (California). He has taught English, Creative Writing, Speech & Debate and AVID classes at Lynwood High School in Lynwood, Los Angeles County, California and was named California's 2007 teacher of the year by the California Department of Education.

*Alan Lawrence Sitomer*



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alan\\_Lawrence\\_Sitomer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alan_Lawrence_Sitomer)

*The Hoopster, Hip Hop High School ,Homeboyz, The Secret Story of Sonia Rodriguez, Nerd, Girls: Rise of the Dorkasaurus, The Downside of Being Up, Nerd Girls: The Rise of the Dorkasaurus, The Downside of Being Up, Daddies Do It Different, CinderSmella, Nerd Girls: A Catastrophe of Nerdish Proportions.*

## *Summary of the Book*

This book tells about a Mexican girl who lives in a family of seven, has to basically do most of the work at home while taking care of a pregnant mother, one all-the-time drunk uncle, and four younger brothers. The story spins around Sonia's life of how greatly she handles her school work without missing a single assignment while doing other things. Sonia's mother, most of the days, spends time in bed watching television and eating junk food. Whenever she needs something, she screams out loud from the bedroom to whichever the room Sonia is in, to ask her to bring things she needs. Sonia's uncle, who she calls a drunkle, drinks alcohol all the time and never stays sober for at least half a day. Although there are tons of tasks for Sonia, she has a super strong desire that no matter what, school is the most important thing that betters her life, and she's fighting against everything that impedes her way to achieve her goal. "A desire that not a lot of Mexican girls will have," she said.

## Three Quotes

- “Being the oldest daughter in a *familia* of seven has its benefits. I cook, I clean, I mop, I sweep, I shine, I bake, I dust, I do laundry, change diapers, wipe countertops, and scrub the goopy grime off the tile in the shower. I even do windows. Like I said, being the oldest daughter has its benefits: For everybody else. It’s part of *mi cultura*.

Don’t get me wrong, I love *mi cultura*. I love it deep in my bones. I love the cooking and the food. I love the music and the dancing. But most of all, I love the people. Smiles, honor, family, *amor*-Latinos have warmth in their blood.

I promised myself a long time ago that no matter what, I was going to be the first in my family to graduate from high school. For some people that may not sound like much, but for me it’s a big deal. A very big deal.

Especially because I am a girl. Of course, no one expects me to do it, but in my heart I am determined, more determined than anyone gives me credit for.”

=> This quote introduces Sonia as the oldest kid in the family where she takes tasks in her household perfectly from taking care of her pregnant mom, rule her brothers to do their homework, clean the whole house, and

even do the cooking. But no matter how hard it changes Sonia, she still follow her path to a succeed future. Graduate from high school, get a diploma so that she can move on in life to college, university which not a lot of Mexican kids who were born in the United States can do.

- “Okay, so I sound like an old maid when I say this. Plus, I like cats, which for sure means that I am going to spend my life alone. But I can’t even imagine what would it be like to have too few people in my life. After all, my house is filled with people, I’ve even learned to poop quietly, like a mouse. But at least I know one day I won’t be dependent on a man to pay my bills and give me money so that if I wanted to go buy a new cordless telephone I’d have to ask permission. That’s why an education isn’t just about a dumb piece of paper to me. It’s about freedom and power. An education means I won’t have to be any macho man’s two-breasted slave. One day when I have a diploma, I will tell a man, “*Wash your own dishes. And make sure you use hot water.*” Boys never use hot water when they wash dishes.”

(Page 34).

=> This quote explains clearly what Sonia’s thought about how important education is to her, and that nothing can stop her from studying and get what she has planned. Sonia, a high school kid, has already thought about how she can be independent herself and not depend on any men later on

her life to ask for money if she needs to buy anything, because she can make money by her own two hands, from education.

- “To me, *mi papi* represented everything a real Latino should be. He was honest, hardworking, caring, and made sacrifices for his *familia* without calling attention to himself and without ever asking for anything in return. He didn’t drink, smoke, lie, or complain. He even paid his taxes. Of course, he had to use a fake social security number to pay them, and the government had no way of giving him credit for his tax contributions, but *mi papi* felt it was the right thing to do since his kids went to American schools, his wife rode on American buses, and his feet walked on American streets. Technically, because *mi papi* was illegal, the government really shouldn’t have kept his money. After all, it wasn’t being properly and legally collected by them.” (Page 79-80).

=> This quote describes how wonderful Sonia’s father is to her, and that her father is a role model, a huge sacrifice, a motivation for Sonia to achieve her goal and not stopping it for any reasons. Sonia appreciated the sacrifices her dad has made from crossing the borders to come to the U.S. and left his native country behind, from working two to three jobs without even having a day off during a week, all so that he can take good care of his family.

## *Why Should Teens Read This Book ?*

This book can definitely be used in the classroom(s) because this is a nonfiction story of a girl who has been through a lot of issues in life, in real life. The book has its own lesson to teach kids that no matter what the situations in life they have, they need to face it like Sonia Rodriguez and know what is the most important thing to do that can change their lives later in the future, education. This book is perfect for those in elementary school and junior high because of the text complication, simple enough that any kids with different levels of reading will still be able to read. This book is a biography that is really easy to read, this based on a true story. In addition, this has been happened since the last thirty years in America.

### *Text Complexity*

Lexile Level: 800L

Reading Level: 5

Word Count: 61,246

Source: <https://www.teachingbooks.net/tb.cgi?tid=13596#Pronunciation>