**Title:** Becoming Naomi Leon (Pam Munoz Ryan)  
**Level Y**

Quick summary: This story is about a young girl who lives with her Grandma and brother Owen. During the book she learns about herself, as well as her mother and father. Naomi travels to Mexico in search of her father who she has never back. In her return, she has gone from a mouse to a lion.

Possible Reading Assignments: (8 days) 1: ch. 1-3  2: ch. 4-6  3: ch. 7-9  4: ch. 10-11  
5: A Passel of Todays-13  6: ch. 14-16  7: ch. 17-19  8: 20-end

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<th>Ch. 1</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Difficult Vocabulary</th>
<th>Purpose for reading/Comp. Strategy</th>
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| 3-15  | Naomi lives in the trailer park, Avocado Acres Trailer Rancho with her younger brother Owen and her Gram. Owen was born with some health problems, but is one of the smartest students in his class. Naomi loves to make lists, she doesn’t have many friends. Boys at school make fun of her last name, Outlaw. She enjoys making soap carvings. Someone unexpected knocked at the door. | Pg. 3: trailer park  
Pg. 4: outlaw  
Pg. 6: iota  
Pg. 9: flourish  
Pg.10: sanctuary  
Pg. 11: predisposition  
Pg. 13: paring knife | “Sun had switched to its winter bed time.” (pg. 3)  
What does it mean?  
Character descriptions:  
Owen, Naomi, and Gram?  
Who are the other characters? |

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| 16-25 | At the door was the children’s mother, Terri Lynn, now Skyla. It has been seven years since their mom left them with Gram. She came for a visit while her boyfriend Clive is in tattoo artist training. The children don’t recognize her, but are optimistic about their mother coming. Gram and Skyla fight about her rights to be there. | Pg. 17: apparition  
Pg. 20: contentment  
Pg. 24: abominations | Prediction: Why did Skyla show up after all these years?  
How will she treat the children?  
Will this event turn out to be good or bad? |

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| 26-33 | Thinking back to how their mother came to live with Gram: Gram had one daughter who got married and moved far away. Her daughter had Terri Lynn and when she and the husband died in a car crash Terri came to live with Gram. Terri met and married Santiago, the children's father. They got a divorce and gave the children to Gram. Fabiola comes over and Gram tells her what happened. They go to tell Bernardo. | Pg. 27: widowed  
Pg. 29: dervish, kin  
Pg. 31: grating, tapioca  
Pg. 33: conviction | Connections: Gram describes their mom coming back as good and bad; Naomi has a list of good and bad things.  
What event has happened in your life that was good and bad at the same time? |

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| 34-42 | Gram says that Skyla does have the right to visit and get to know her children. Gram will be able to prove that they are well taken care of. When Skyla left she signed medical and school papers for Gram but other than that she has no real claim to the children. They wonder if Skyla has really changed. At night, Naomi lies in bed thinking about what she would like her mom to be like. She remembers one stormy night she went to a shelter with her father. He carved her a soap elephant; she fell asleep and has never seen her father again. Their mother was supposed to be watching them but left on a shopping trip. When she came back she dropped the kids off at Gram’s and said she couldn’t handle two kids right now. | 35: alterations  
36: crocheted  
37: riled  
38: stride, disposition  
42: caravan | 34-35: Fabiola’s body language helps us understand how she is feeling. Give some examples of emotions and what the body would look like.  
How did Naomi picture her mother?  
What unique talent does Naomi have?  
Connections: When Naomi carves soap it brings her comfort, is there an activity that brings you comfort? |

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<td>In the morning Skyla is asleep on the pullout.</td>
<td>43: awning</td>
<td>Prediction: What do you</td>
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<td>Pages 43-51</td>
<td>She wants to get to know her kids. During the middle of dinner Skyla enters with tons of things she bought for Naomi. She didn’t get anything for Owen, but gives him hope that she will buy him a bike. Skyla braids Naomi’s hair in a French braid. Naomi loves having Skyla act like a real mom. Skyla announces that she will attend their parent/teacher conferences with them next Thursday. 48: nimble think Skyla’s intentions are? What are your feelings about her? How do you think Owen feels? Does he know he’s being left out?</td>
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<td>Ch. 6 Pgs. 52-60</td>
<td>The next day at school Ms. Morimoto comments on Naomi’s new hair do. She could feel the whole class looking at her and doesn’t mind it. Blanca Raloma has just transferred to their school. At recess Blanca speaks to Naomi in Spanish and is surprised when she doesn’t understand. Blanca chats away the rest of the day to Naomi. Together they go to the library for lunch. Naomi tells Mr. Marble that her mother came back. 56: elaborately, plaited 57: ambience 56: “Dig up old bones,” what does the phrase mean? Connections: Mr. Marble calls the library a safe haven. Is there a place that is a safe haven for you? Why?</td>
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<td>Ch. 7 Pgs. 61-74</td>
<td>Over dinner Skyla gave Naomi more clothes; she still hasn’t gotten anything for Owen. The children are very excited to show their mom around school tomorrow and for parent/teacher conferences. Skyla woke up very cranky the next day and smelled like sour milk. Owen is teased at school but is able to look on the bright side of things and walks away with a smile on his face. After school they wait with Blanca’s mom for Skyla but she never shows up. When Gram comes to pick them up Naomi runs back into the school to pick up her backpack. She hears her teacher and principal talking about Skyla. Naomi learns that she has been in and out of rehab and halfway houses. There has been no contact with their dad but he did want them once and the mom refused to give him custody. 66: dapper 67: taunted, bandidos 72: luster Why did Skyla change her name from Terry Lynn to Skyla Jones? If you could change your name what would it be? Character Analysis: Owen—Why does he wear tape on his clothes? Why would he put on more tape today? How does he act when he is teased? Prediction: Why didn’t Skyla come to the conferences? When Naomi hears that her dad did ask for custody one how does she feel?</td>
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<td>Ch. 8 Pgs. 75-87</td>
<td>Gram, Naomi, and Owen go to Spray n Play, their special place when they have a difficulty or celebration. Love to eat ice cream and watch the cars go by in the car wash. Thanksgiving is only a week away, already the neighborhood is decorating for Christmas. Gram explains to the kids what rehab and halfway houses are. Skyla had asked her not to tell the children. Santiago, their father, had gone to move a boat but got caught in the hurricane. When he went back to the church where he had left the kids, they were already gone. He sent money for a while; Gram tried to contact him but after a few letters got sent back to her she stopped trying. Three nights later Skyla returns from a trip to Palm Springs with Clive and acts as if nothing had happened. She announces that Clive will be joining them for Thanksgiving. She brought a bicycle, 75: physical therapy 76: unassembled 78: dredge 80: bluster, shenanigans 85: disbelief Connection: What is your family’s special spot to go for special occasions? Naomi says, “a troublesome feeling tiptoed after me like a lurking shadow.” What do you think she means by this? Author’s intent: Why would the author include these clues? Is he foreshadowing an event?</td>
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<td>Ch. 9</td>
<td>Pgs. 88-106</td>
<td>Naomi put out some of her soap carvings as decoration for her Thanksgiving Dinner. She is extremely nervous about meeting Clive and doesn’t know what to expect. Mrs. Maloney, Fabiola, and Bernado join them for Thanksgiving dinner. We learn that every year Naomi’s dad left for Mexico right before Christmas for a huge radish carving competition. The only family Clive keeps in contact with is his daughter who is a few years younger than Naomi. Her name is Elizabeth, but he renamed her Sapphire. Clive and Skyla are going to move to Las Vegas when he is done with his training. Elizabeth will be living with them and they want Naomi to come too. Skyla played Owen in checkers, and he let her win three times. When he really played he beat her in a matter of minutes. Clive suggests they use him to bet. Skyla remarks on how retarded Owen is and looks. Before they leave Naomi thanks Clive for all his gifts. In the back of the car she sees a 12 pack of beer. She is told to mind her own business.</td>
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<td>Ch. 10</td>
<td>Pgs. 107-122</td>
<td>Gram has to fix alterations on a wedding dress and is unable to take Owen to his doctor’s appointment. She is hesitant to let Skyla take him but has no choice. While at the doctor’s office Skyla goes into the bathroom and has a drink. She tells Naomi it’s just to calm her down and get her through “this”. The doctor’s report that Owen has a high I.Q. and there is nothing more they can do for him at this time; he is just a FLK: Funny Looking Kid. Skyla is flaming mad. On the drive home she continues to drink. She tells Owen if he doesn’t stop putting tape on his clothes his bike will end up in the trash. Clive’s job went through in Vegas so Skyla starts packing and tells Naomi to as well. Naomi builds up her courage and says no, only to be surprised by a hard slap in the face. When Skyla went into the bathroom to get her lipstick Naomi and Owen snuck out and started running through the trees.</td>
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<td>Ch. 11</td>
<td>Pgs. 123-136</td>
<td>The kids ran into Fabiola’s living room, where the ladies were working on the wedding dress. They hide in the shed with Bernardo. Gram and Skyla fight; Skyla is going to return on Saturday for Naomi, if she is not ready Skyla will involve the police and believes that the court will give custody to the child’s parent. When Naomi wakes up on Saturday morning it feels like an earthquake but she realizes that Baby Beluga is</td>
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They are going to Mexico for the holiday, and to get away from Skyla. Fabiola and Bernardo have family in Oaxaca. The day before Gram had gone to a lawyer and got temporary guardianship of the children. They are going to try to find their father and see if he will help Gram get permanent custody of the children.

-What is Gram’s plan to keep Naomi away from leaving with Skyla? Will it work?

Naomi’s life is a fog of good and bad but at least she still has Gram and Owen. They are still on their way to Mexico.

When feeling down, what is something you think of that reminds you of the good in your life?

They have spent 4 days driving and will arrive in Mexico within the next two hours. Owen is getting antsy so Naomi reads him her list of things she saw on the way to Mexico. Owen helps her add to the list. Barrio Jalatlaco is the neighborhood they are going to in Oaxaco. Large walls surround each house. When they reach their destination and open the gate there is a tiny grey house. If feel homely like the trailer park. The house belongs to Fabiola’s sister Flora and her husband Pedro. Their daughter Graciela lives there with her seven year old son Ruben. Owen and Ruben become instant friends. They eat breakfast together, catching up and telling the story of Skyla and Clive. Bernardo, his cousin Beni, and Pedro are going to be carving together in the radish festival.

What new lists has Naomi created? Can you think of anything to add to her lists? (pg. 141)

They are going to the market to see the “cheese lady” who married a Leon. She hasn’t heard of him but will ask her husband tonight and call if she has any news. Beni came over to talk about the radish competition. The men fought about what to build. The cheese lady called but her husband has no relatives named Santiago. Gram called Mr. Maloney in Lemon Tree to see how things were going. Skyla and Clive came back and were angry to find them gone. Naomi, Owen, and Ruben call all the Leon’s in the phonebook to try to find information on her dad.

At the end of the chapter the author describe Naomi as sitting a little taller. What does this tell us about her?

Three days later, Santiago still hadn’t arrived in
### Ch. 16  
**Pgs. 189-200**

In the morning the men announce what they will be carving. They are going to make a large branch with animals for the leaves and on top will be a lion. The radishes are delivered and the men start to carve. Naomi gets to carve animals with them. At the end of the day the radishes are covered in a damp towel and put in a cooler. Naomi received the honor of being able to carve the lion that will sit on top. They arrive at El Zocalo and find their table. While the men set up the woman and children walk around. At each booth Gram would ask about their father. Many people knew of him but no one knew of his whereabouts. Gram tells Naomi they are running out of time.

| 191: contorted  
| 197: corralled |

**Imagery:** Have students describe the final product of Beni, Bernardo and Pedro.

**Why do you think Naomi's father ran as soon as he saw her?**

**What is Naomi feeling right now?**

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### Ch. 17  
**Pgs. 201-210**

Naomi and Gram reach their table and see the astonishing artwork all put together. Everyone is gathered around in amazement. They are in the free design category and received second place. A man came up to congratulate Bernardo, it was Naomi’s father. When he saw Gram, Owen, and Naomi he turned and started to run but Naomi ran after him. She couldn’t run any longer and Santiago got away. Naomi gets to keep the lion that she had carved. When they get home the jacaranda tree rustles—there is no wind.

**202: majestic**

**Imagery:** Have students describe the final product of Beni, Bernardo and Pedro.

**Why do you think Naomi’s father ran as soon as he saw her?**

**What is Naomi feeling right now?**

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### Ch. 18  
**Pgs. 211-217**

Santiago stepped out from behind the tree. Gram ran to him and tells him how happy they are to find him, next Owen come and jabbers about their journey. He reaches his hand out to Naomi and she wants to go but feels as if she can’t move, tears start down her cheek. He had run away so he could have time to think and prepare. He works on a boat and takes tourists fishing; his boat is named Soledad after his children. Santiago learns that Naomi carved in the festival and he is very proud. He will come back tomorrow so he can find someway to help.

**217: revel**

**Now that Naomi’s father is found what will happen to the children? Will he take them or give Gram custody?**

**Now that Naomi has talked to her father and understands why he ran away, how do you think she is feeling?**

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### Ch. 19  
**Pgs. 218-226**

On Christmas morning Naomi carves soap with her father while he carves wood. He teaches her that each piece has a personality that needs to be let out. Gram talked to Mrs. Maloney back at Avocado Acres and a mediator said she needed to

| 218: transparent, raspy  
| 220: machete, chaffed  
| 224: adoration |

**Why can’t the kids live with Santiago, or him move to California?**

**What did Naomi’s father find her father so bad?**

**Why did Beni react the way he did to Naomi’s soap carvings?**
talk to the family by Jan. 3. They will have to start their return home in two days. Santiago wrote a letter to the judge telling that he wishes the kids to stay with Gram and would like to see them on vacations. On the day that they must drive back Santiago tells Naomi that they will write and everything will be the way it is supposed to be. They both promised and say good-bye.

carve for her? What does it stand for? When leaving Oaxaca Naomi pulled out her notebook but couldn’t write. What was she feeling?

The mediator met with Owen, Gram, and Naomi individually and asked questions. They are now waiting at the courthouse for the judge to arrive. Skyla and Clive arrive dressed very nicely and looking like two ordinary people. Skyla is putting on a very nice front for the judge, pretending like she never wanted to leave the kids and all her problems are over now. The judge asks Naomi if she has any reason she shouldn’t be with her mother. Naomi is timid at first, but then tells everything that has happened since her mother returned: drinking, the slap… Skyla agreed that she only wanted Naomi because she and Owen never really connected. The judge grants Gram custody of the children because Skyla lied about a lot of things and she doesn’t feel it is in their best interest to be split up when they have always been together.

What was the mediator’s purpose when she talked to the children? Why did Clive and Skyla change their appearance when at court? What did Naomi think of to help her find the courage to tell the judge the truth? Voice: When the judge gives her final decision the author wrote in such a way that you can really hear a judge saying the words. Page 240

When Naomi got back to school Blanca was waiting for her and excited to hear about her adventure. There is a new boy in the library lunch group named Midah Bakiano. Naomi showed Mr. Marble the figures she has carved and he asked to put them in the display case for open house. Mr. Marble remarks that before Naomi went to Mexico she was a mouse, but now she is a lion. After school she tells Blanca goodbye. Blanca notices that her voice is louder as well.

Character Analysis: Mr. Marble—He always seems to care so much about the students’ lives and really makes them feel special. What animal would describe your personality and why?

Naomi thinks about how her life has changed. Not much is different in the way she lives. She probably won’t ever see Skyla again, but is ok if she does. The good and bad are all rolled up into one meatball. Every Christmas they promised Santiago that they would travel to Oaxaca to visit him and carve in the radish contest. Naomi is becoming who she was meant to be.

A Murmuration of Tomorrows pg. 244-246

How did Mexico change Naomi? Have students make a list of the ways that Naomi has changed.

Other Activities/Ideas:
- Each chapter has a unique name that has something to do with animals. As students read have them record the chapter names and the information in the chapter that they feel the chapter was named after.
- Soap carvings are a special talent of Naomi’s. Have students work on a project that shows their own special talent, and share it with the group.