



## Ms. Cheby's Annotated Reader's Guide

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# Breathe and Count Back from Ten

Posted on October 21, 2022 by Ms. Cheby

### Bibliographic Information:

Sylvester, Natalia. *Breathe and Count Back from Ten*. Clarion Books, 2022.

### Plot Description (100-150 words):

After a lifetime of surgeries for hip dysplasia and lessons from her Peruvian parents on how to be a 'good immigrant' in the face of fears of deportation, Veronica defies the wishes of her parents and applies for a summer job as a mermaid at a local theme park in their small Florida town. With a blossoming romance with the new boy in their apartment complex, and new information about the seriousness of her condition, the secrets between Veronica and her parents mount. Veronica's efforts to assert her bodily autonomy in a loving but strict home forces Veronica and her family to find courage to be honest with themselves and each other. Sylvester writes a protagonist both brave and flawed and surrounds her with a diverse cast of supporting characters, who, as she grows in finding her own voice, Veronica learns all have their own obstacles to living authentically.

**Quantitative Reading Level:** Lexile Level: N/A; Accelerated Reader RL: N/A; Reading Counts RL: N/A

### Qualitative Reading Analysis:

Sylvester's writing is accessible for high school readers while employing complexity of character and rich figurative language. The moderate complexity of sentence structure creates smooth reading, though specific medical terminology will challenge students to deepen their reading skills and vocabulary. While the day-to-day experiences of these teens should feel familiar, the glimpse into a Peruvian-American family's experience as immigrants, Veronica's experience with hip dysplasia, and life in a Florida suburb will allow many readers to broaden their world view and experiences.

### Content Area:

- English Language Arts
- Health
- Life Skills

### Subjects/Themes:

Disability, Immigration, Sexuality, Bodily Autonomy, Inherited Trauma, Gender Roles, Sexual Assault, Decision-Making,

### Tags:

#OwnVoices

#SEL

### Library Subject Headings:

- Fathers and daughters--Fiction
- Family life--Florida--Fiction
- Conduct of life--Fiction
- Teenagers--Fiction
- Hip joint--Dislocation, Congenital--Fiction
- Love--Fiction
- Peruvian Americans--Fiction



## ARCHIVES

January 2023

October 2022

October 2017

May 2014

April 2014

March 2014

February 2014

January 2014

December 2013

- Swimmers-Fiction
- People with disabilities-Fiction
- Coming of age-Fiction

- Children of immigrants—Fiction
- Bildungsroman

### Content Area Standard:

#### • CCSS: College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards 6-12: Reading:

- 4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone
- 10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently

#### • CA Model School Library Standards

- 4.1 Read widely and use various media for information, personal interest, and lifelong learning:

#### • CA Health Standards 9-12

- 1.3.G Discuss the characteristics of healthy relationships, dating, committed relationships, and marriage.
- 4.1.G Analyze how interpersonal communication affects relationships
- 4.3.G Demonstrate effective communication skills within healthy dating relationships
- 5.2.G Use a decision-making process to examine barriers to making healthy decisions about relationships and sexual health.
- 5.1.P Apply a decision-making process to a personal health issue or problem.

### Curriculum Suggestions:

Core text / Literature Circle choice for ELA 9<sup>th</sup>– 12<sup>th</sup> grade

Supplemental text for Health courses to bring in perspectives of disabled people or to examine healthy relationships

Essential for high school libraries

### Supporting Digital Content:

<https://www.teachingbooks.net/qlktmagg>

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/58311963-breathe-and-count-back-from-ten>

### Personal Thoughts:

Such a beautiful mermaid tale of finding voice and rewriting stories that fit all bodies and souls. I've already recommended this book to several educators and libraries. It is one that stays with you after the last page

### Reviews:

Starred Reviews from [Kirkus Reviews](#) and [Publisher's Weekly](#)

### Awards:

AudioFile Earphones Award Winner

A Today Show 2022 pick

### Series Information: N/A

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