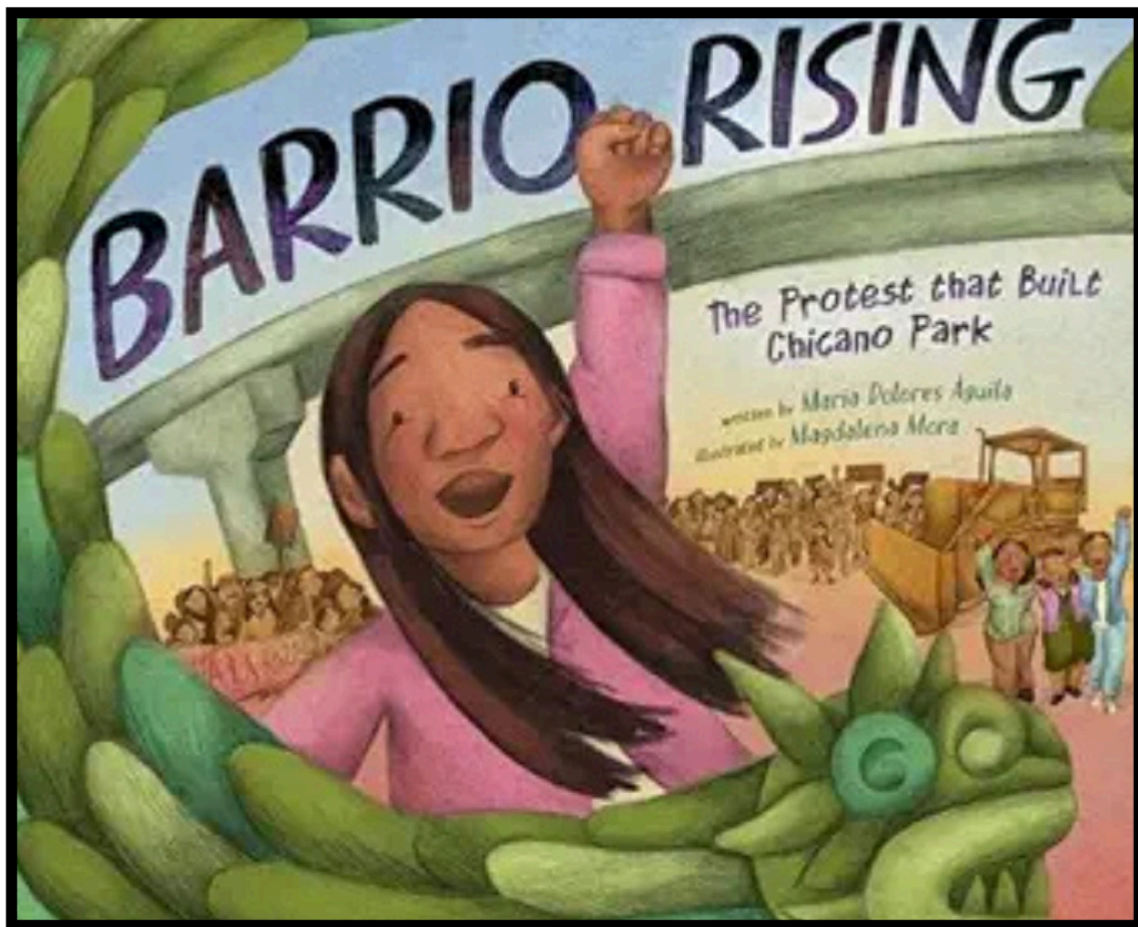


# América's Book Award

## EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



PRODUCED BY THE CONSORTIUM FOR LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES  
PROGRAMS

WRITTEN BY KRISTINE WITKO



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This educator's guide was written to support using *Barrio Rising* in elementary, middle, and high school classrooms. Produced by the Center for Latin American Studies (CLAS) at the University of Arizona on behalf of the Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs (CLASP) and the Américas Award, it was written in 2026 by Kristine Witko, Curriculum Consultant, with support from Katrina Dillon, Assistant Director of Outreach at CLAS.

## ABOUT THE AMÉRICAS AWARD

CLASP founded the Américas Award in 1993 to encourage and commend authors, illustrators, and publishers who produce quality children's and young adult books that portray Latin America, the Caribbean, or Latinx communities in the United States, and to provide teachers with recommendations for classroom use. CLASP offers up to two annual book awards, together with a list of honor books and commended titles. For more information concerning the Américas Award, including additional classroom resources, please visit the [CLASP website](#).

The awards are administered by the Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs (CLASP) and coordinated by both Tulane University's Stone Center for Latin American Studies and the University of Arizona's Center for Latin American Studies. Generous support is also provided by Florida International University, Michigan State University, Stanford University, University of California, Berkeley, University of California, Los Angeles, UNC-Duke Consortium in Latin American and Caribbean Studies, University of Florida, University of Michigan, University of New Mexico, University of Texas at Austin, University of Utah, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and Vanderbilt University.

## ABOUT CLASP

CLASP's mission is to promote all facets of Latin American studies throughout the world. Its broad range of activities include the encouragement of research activities, funding of professional workshops, advancement of citizen outreach activities, and development of teaching aids for the classroom.



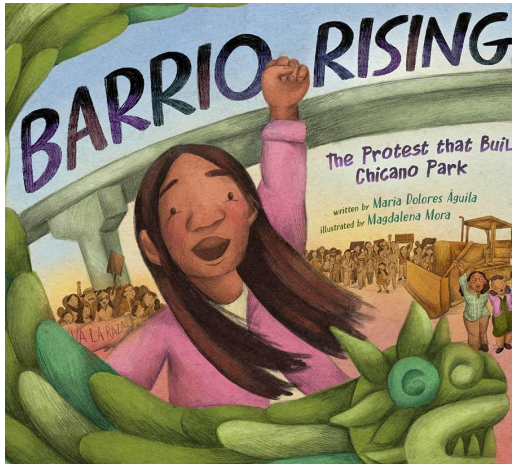
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## OVERVIEW

*Barrio Rising: The Protest that Built Chicago Park*

Written by María Dolores Águila and illustrated by Magdalena Mora

Published 2024 by Dial Books

ISBN: 0593462076

## THEMES

Activism, Collective Action, Social Justice, Community, Resistance, Cultural Pride, Family

## SYNOPSIS

Barrio Logan, one of San Diego's oldest Chicane neighborhoods, once brimmed with families and stretched all the way to the glorious San Diego Bay. But in the decades after WWII, the community lost their beach and bayfront to factories, junkyards, and an interstate that divided the neighborhood and forced around 5,000 people out of their homes. Then on April 22, 1970, residents discovered that the construction crew they believed was building a park—one the city had promised them years ago—was actually breaking ground for a police station. That's when they knew it was time to make their voices heard. *Barrio Rising* invites readers to join a courageous young activist and her neighbors in their successful twelve-day land occupation and beyond, when Barrio Logan banded together and built the colorful park that would become the corazón of San Diego's Chicane community.

## READING LEVEL

Grades Preschool – 3 / Ages 4–8



## REVIEWS

★ “A blossoming young activist joins her neighbors in the fight to build Chicano Park in Águila and Mora’s celebratory tribute to San Diego’s Chicane community. . . . Charged with soft purples, vivid greens, and bold reds, Mora’s lush digitally colored charcoal and watercolor artwork dreamily elevates this tale of social achievement, depicting pivotal scenes like a series of interconnected murals. Águila’s sharp, evocative text touches upon crucial moments: the community’s peaceful takeover of the disputed site, clashes with the police and city officials, and the arrival of allies in neighboring communities and across the state.”—*Kirkus Reviews*, *starred review*

★ “In this activist picture book, a child living in San Diego’s Barrio Logan vividly narrates, in English and Spanish, a story of individual and collective strength. . . . In a powerful work that celebrates community engagement at any age, Mora’s pencil, charcoal, watercolor, and digital illustrations contrast hard-edged concrete and metal with cloudlike jacaranda blossoms and vivid hand-rendered murals.”—*PW*, *starred review*

★ “Águila weaves together images of daily life in Barrio Logan with community members’ experiences of the city’s lengthy neglect and environmental racism against their community, to tell the story of the fight to build the park, which was ultimately successful. . . . Mora employs a blend of vivid colors, sepia tones, and pastel hues to highlight the intensity of the struggle and the everyday beauty for which the protesters were fighting, ending with depictions of the inspiring murals that residents eventually painted in the park.”—*Horn Book*

★ “Told with lyricism, this picture book presents kids with a real-life community experience of advocacy. Readers will come to understand how the trials and tribulations of a group of vecinos uniting created something beautiful. Recommended for all collections, especially those serving Chicano communities.”—*School Library Journal for El Barrio Se Levanta*

★ “Chicana poet Águila employs lyrical language to depict a thinly fictionalized account of the April 1970 protest by San Diego’s Barrio Logan residents . . . Aztec and Mayan cultural symbols appear throughout, reflecting the actual artwork in the park. Appended with a more detailed history of this event and additional resources, this is a welcome addition to Chicane resistance and resilience literature.”—*Booklist*

## AWARDS

- Américas Award Commended Book, 2025
- Jane Addams Children's Book Award Finalist



An Educator's Guide to *Barrio Rising* by María Dolores Águila

- Kirkus Best Books of the Year
- NPR Books We Love List
- A One Book, One San Diego Kids selection
- ILA 2025 Notable Books for a Global Society



# APPLICABLE COMMON CORE STANDARDS

## K-12 READING

### Key Ideas and Details

- Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
- Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

### Craft and Structure

- 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.
- Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.
- Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

### Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

- Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.



## K-12 WRITING

### Text Types and Purposes

- Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

### Production and Distribution of Writing

- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

### Research to Build and Present Knowledge

- Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.
- Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR: MARÍA DOLORES ÁGUILA



María Dolores Águila is a Chicana poet and writer from San Diego, California. Deeply inspired by Chicane history and art, she seeks to write empowering and inclusive stories about everything she learns. She also loves drinking coffee, browsing the bookshelves at her local library, and spending time with her family. Find out more at [mariadoloresaguila.com](http://mariadoloresaguila.com).

### IN HER WORDS: THE AUTHOR'S NOTE

Taken from “Author’s Note” in *Barrio Rising*:

“I was raised—and now live—within five miles of Chicano Park, in the portside community of National City. National City faces many of the same environmental issues as Barrio Logan, namely the emissions from nearby freeways and toxic pollution from industrial businesses next to homes and school.

When I was growing up, my family would pile into our old car and drive through Barrio Logan, passing by Chicano Park, and I remember seeing and admiring the murals but never understanding exactly how they got there. Years later, I became so fascinated with the mural *Women Hold Up Half of the Sky*, painted by the women of the Royal Chicano Air Force (a Sacramento-based art collective). That’s when I finally came to understand the fight behind the beautiful, and the magnitude of what my community accomplished.

On Sunday afternoons, when I take my children to Chicano Park and watch them play on the grass and swings, I am filled with pride and gratitude as I think of those who stood together and refused to give up on their dream. I wrote this story because I want children in barrios everywhere to know that our Chicane communities have a rich history of resistance and resilience.

¡El pueblo unido, jamás será vencido!”



## CLASSROOM RELEVANCE AND APPLICATIONS

What does it mean to fight for one's community? María Dolores Águila's book *Barrio Rising* introduces young readers to the true story behind the creation of Chicano Park in San Diego's Barrio Logan neighborhood. The story is told through the perspective of a girl named Elena, who loves her community and is frustrated by the effects of intense industrialization. As Elena and her mother walk past the brightly painted houses and the jacaranda trees, they smile and wave at their neighbors. One neighbor is sketching a drawing, while another is watering the lush plants surrounding her porch. Each greeting from Elena is interrupted by the sounds of traffic on the freeway or the heavy rumbling of a diesel truck, which casts dark clouds of dust. She passes a large chain-link fence with barbed wire, which encircles a junkyard filled with several snarling dogs. Despite these signs of environmental injustice, Elena is full of hope: her neighborhood will finally be getting the park they have always been promised.

Except Elena and her neighbors soon find out that this promise has been broken, and instead, the city plans to use those resources to build a police station instead. The years of pain and indignation finally reach a breaking point, and the community members decide to take action. This story shows how ordinary people (including children!) can work together to fight for change.

In addition, this book provides a valuable opportunity for students to learn about community activism, social justice, and local history. Through the experiences of Elena and her neighbors, readers can see how decisions made by governments and city planners can affect communities and how residents can respond when their needs are being overlooked. This story encourages readers to think critically about fairness and the importance of having a voice in decisions that affect their day-to-day lives.

The historical background offered at the back of the book offers an opportunity for interdisciplinary learning, connecting the topics of history and English language arts. Students can extend their learning by conducting research themselves on the history of Chicano Park, examining primary documents and photographs that shed light on the broader struggle. They can also make connections by researching other examples of grassroots movements that led to positive change.

The book's celebration of Chicano culture and identity is another meaningful aspect that lends itself well to classroom discussions. The real-life development of Chicano Park and its murals provides multiple conversation topics. As seen in one of the post-reading activities, the Chicano Park Museum created a colorful map of several mural "trails," along with notes regarding the various murals on the way. The corresponding guide contains photographs of each mural and author information. One such example is titled "Save Barrio Logan" with



illustrations of collective action against environmental injustice. Many murals celebrate Chicano culture, history, and traditions.

After reading this book, students can reflect on the places that matter to them too. They can think of parks, libraries, community centers, or other public spaces that serve important functions in their neighborhoods and consider what makes those places meaningful. Students can work collaboratively to design improvements for their community or write persuasive letters to advocate for change. As they can see from Elena's example, anyone can fight for change, and organization through collective action can amplify their voices.

*Barrio Rising* teaches us that change is not enacted by just one individual—one “hero”—but rather many heroes who work together in solidarity. After reading this book and engaging in thoughtful classroom activities, students may start to see themselves as active participants in their communities, with voices that can shout loud to fight for a more just society.

## LESSON PLANS AND ACTIVITIES

In addition to this guide, several high-quality resources are available to support educators in using *Barrio Rising*. These have been linked below.

- [Book activities](#) from [María Dolores Águila's website](#)
- [Latine changemaker organizations in Oregon curriculum](#) from the [Oregon Historical Society](#)
- [Related resources](#) from the [Zinn Education Project](#)

## PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Before reading the book with students, you may want to introduce some of the important themes, activate any prior knowledge, and generate interest and anticipation through the following activities and/or discussion questions:

## VOCABULARY

abrazo

assembly

barrio

casita

councilman

disperse

gritos



iglesia

jacaranda

ollas

scoff

tiendita

tortillería

triumphant

valiente

vecindario

vecino

## ACTIVITY 1: PICTURE WALK

Pique students' interest, activate prior knowledge, and introduce the book through a picture walk.

### PROCESS:

1. Show students the front and back cover of the book. Ask them to predict what they think the book will be about. Then, slowly flip through the pages of the book without reading any of the words. As students ask questions about each picture they see, guide them to make inferences based upon their observations. Focus on who, what, when, where, why and how questions such as: "What is happening here?" "What will happen next?" "Who do you think this is?" "How does she feel? What makes you say that?"
2. Once students have read the book, return to their thoughts and predictions, comparing them to the actual events of the book.

## ACTIVITY 2: OBSERVATION CHARTS

Observation charts offer one way for students to pique their interest about a book they will begin to read. As students will be analyzing illustrations from the book, it is helpful to select pages in advance that may spark some interesting conversations. Examples include the following:

- pages 1–2 (Elena and her mother walk through the neighborhood)
- pages 5–6 (Elena passes a beautiful porch with rich, lush flowers, and walks past a gray junkyard with barbed wire and angry dogs)
- pages 11–12 (the neighbors confront the construction workers)
- pages 13–14 (the neighbor lays down in front of the bulldozers)
- pages 15–16 (protests begin in earnest)
- pages 19–20 (Elena and her mother think of all this neighborhood has lost)



- pages 25–26 (the neighborhood chants together)
- pages 29–30 (the community experiences victory)
- pages 35–36 (Chicano Park with a message: hasta la bahía)

### PROCESS:

1. Explain to students that they are going to be working in small groups. Each group will rotate around the room to view and discuss each image. One person will be the recorder at each table. When looking at an image, students will spend at least one minute silently reflecting on what they see and thinking about the questions “What do you see?” “What do you think is happening?” “How does this illustration make you feel?” Then, students will discuss their thoughts in the small group. The recorder will write down their reflections and answers to the questions on the observation chart. Sticky notes can also be used to record the group’s thoughts. Explain to students that they will have a set amount of time at each image. When time is up, the teacher will give a signal and each group will move to the next image.
2. Divide students into small groups. Place an image and marker at various tables or stations in the classroom. Direct each group to the table or station where they will begin. Begin the activity. Continue rotating groups through the images until each group has seen each image.
3. Hang up all of the observation charts with comments. As a whole group, discuss each illustration, giving students time to share and respond to what they posted. Keep the charts posted throughout the reading and discussion of *Barrio Rising*. Allow students to revisit them and discuss them as they think more about what the images represent.

### ACTIVITY 3: COMMUNITY ACTIVISM

This activity helps students appreciate their own neighborhoods, consider ways it could change for the better, and problem-solve to come up with a solution, just like Elena in *Barrio Rising*.

### PROCESS:

1. Explain to students that soon, they will read a story about a girl who gathers together with her community to fight for their rights. In preparation for reading this book, ask them to think about their own communities: What do they love about their community? Is there anything that would help it to become better?
2. Ask students to brainstorm as many aspects of their community that they can think of, including places they care about, issues they notice, and ideas for improvement. While students share responses, chart



them as a visual aid. One example may be to come up with three columns (favorite places, issues, ideas for improvement) and chart accordingly.

3. After a brief discussion, break students up into groups to choose one community issue they care about and collaboratively develop a proposal for change.
4. When students have finished, they can present their group's ideas to the class, explaining the issue and the solution using a short oral presentation, poster, or visual representation such as an infographic.
5. Ask the whole class to help the group consider ways to spread the word about their solution and have their voices heard, such as by developing a petition or speaking up at city council meetings.
6. Explain that this activity helped them to better understand Elena, the main character in *Barrio Rising*, who protests with her community to advocate for change.
7. As they read the book, students can think about how Elena's experiences compare to their own ideas for change, the challenges her neighbors face during their protests, and how collective action can lead to meaningful improvements for communities.

## ACTIVITY 4: REVIEW OF GENRE

Prepare students to read *Barrio Rising* by having a discussion of genre. This book falls under the broader category of fiction, but since it is based on true events, it would be within the specific sub-genre of historical fiction.

### PROCESS:

1. Write "fiction" and "nonfiction" on the board. Ask students, "How would you define a fiction book?" Have them turn and talk then select a few to share with the class.
2. Write down the shared class definition. (Ex. Fiction is a story or poem created from the author's imagination. It may have characters, a setting, a problem, a solution, and a lesson learned.)
3. Ask, "How would you define a nonfiction book?" Have them turn and talk then select a few to share.
4. Write down the shared class definition. (Ex. Nonfiction is based on facts, real events, or real people. It explains, informs, or persuades by giving information).
5. Ask students to point out examples of fiction around the classroom. Then, ask them to point out examples of nonfiction. (Have some examples ready to use in case students need guidance.)
6. Hold up *Barrio Rising* and ask: What genre do you think this book is? Why do you say that?
7. Say, "This is a fiction book because it is a story with characters created from the author's imagination. This book has characters, a setting, a problem, a solution, and a lesson learned. However, this book was based on true events, even if the main character herself did not exist. So for that reason, it would be called *historical fiction*, since it is a fiction story inspired from true events."
8. If time allows, read the blurb aloud to the class. If relevant, ask them about any other historical fiction books they may have read in class as a point of comparison.



## GUIDED READING QUESTIONS

### BEFORE READING

1. Do you think this is a fiction or nonfiction text? What makes you think that?
2. This book is fiction. It has characters, a setting, a problem, a solution, and a lesson learned.
3. Based on the title and the illustration, what do you think this story will be about?
4. Read the blurb on the front cover. Who are the characters? What do you predict will happen in this story?

### DURING READING

#### *Transferable Questions*

1. (Every few pages) What is happening?
2. Who are the characters? What do we know about them?
3. How does the character feel? How do you know?
4. What lessons can we learn from this book?

#### *Text-Based Questions*

1. What do you notice about Elena's neighborhood at the beginning of the book?
2. What challenges does Elena experience in her neighborhood?
3. Why is Elena so excited when she walks into the tiendita?
4. What does it mean when Elena tells her mami, "We have to be valiente"?
5. What do the neighbors decide to do once they hear about the police station being constructed in place of a park?
6. How do Elena and her *mami* support the protest movement? Why is that important?
7. After the *vecinos* reminisce about what they have lost, other people end up joining the fight. Who else joins the protest? Why do you think this could be important?
8. At the town meeting, what happens when their neighbor, Salvador, stands up? How do the neighbors react?
9. How is the problem solved at the end? What happens when the neighbors finally get the park?

### AFTER READING

1. Have you read any other books about similar themes? Examples can be activism, social justice, community, resistance, cultural pride, or family. What happened in those books? How were they similar or different?
2. Have you read other books by the same author or illustrator? What were those books about and was this one similar or different?



## POST-READING ACTIVITIES

There are so many different ways one can approach a unit on the themes discussed in *Barrio Rising*. The context in which one is teaching is of paramount importance. Not only do we need to consider the age/grade level of the students, but also students' own personal backgrounds and family histories. As with any lesson, it's important to consider the needs of your students and plan accordingly. With this in mind, we've provided a variety of extension activity ideas and resources below that can be used in conjunction with the book.

### APPROACH 1: LITERACY CONNECTIONS

To expand the literacy connections made when using *Barrio Rising*, consider including the readings discussed below.

#### **“Separate Is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation”**

Similar to *Barrio Rising*, *Separate Is Never Equal* by Duncan Tonatiuh is another book that illustrates the example of how people can fight for change in the face of injustice. *Separate Is Never Equal* tells the true story of a young girl named Sylvia Mendez who, along with her brothers, was not allowed to attend their local school in California and instead had to attend a school designated only for “Mexicans.” This school was severely underfunded in comparison to Sylvia's neighborhood school. The Mendez family adamantly refused to accept this injustice and took their battle to the courts in the landmark *Mendez v. Westminster* lawsuit. After the Ninth Court of Appeals said that the “separate is equal” doctrine in California was unconstitutional, this ruling set the stage for the *Brown v. Board of Education* case that would occur afterward. The Américas Award has also created an Educator's Guide for [Separate Is Never Equal](#).

#### **Process:**

1. Begin by asking students open-ended questions, such as, “Can you think of people we've learned about who had to fight for their rights? What did they do? Can you think of anyone that you know in real life who fought for their rights or for the rights of their community?”
2. Explain, “Today, we will read a nonfiction book called *Separate is Never Equal* by Duncan Tonatiuh. Look at the cover. What do you notice? What do you think we will learn?”
3. State, “As we read today, we will learn about Sylvia Mendez and her family, who experienced prejudice and were told they could not attend their local neighborhood school. Instead, they had to go to a different school that was only for Mexican students. This is an example of segregation. As we read this nonfiction book, we will think about what we have learned.”
4. Read the book. Occasionally stop to ask comprehension questions: “Who did we learn about so far?” “What do we know about them?” “What challenge does Sylvia experience?” “What does her family



decide to do as a result?” “What do you think will happen next?” “What happens to Sylvia and her family at the end?”

5. Upon finishing the book, ask students to share out some key points that they learned.
6. Make the connection to *Barrio Rising*: “How are these two books similar? How are they different? What do they teach us about activism? Why do you think it is important to learn about real-life examples of people or communities who fought for their rights?”
7. As a post-reading activity, teachers can choose from a range of choices. They can make a venn diagram comparing the two texts, conduct research on the Mendez family, or look up current grassroots movements that are striving for change.

### “Dolores Huerta: A Hero to Migrant Workers”

This book makes a useful comparison to *Barrio Rising* because it also describes the power of an organized movement to fight for change. *Dolores Huerta: A Hero to Migrant Workers* by Sarah Warren tells the story of labor leader Dolores Huerta, who first worked as a teacher then wondered why her students were too sick to play, too hungry to pay attention in class, and had no shoes. When she speaks to the parents of her students, she discovers that although they work long days under grueling conditions, they are not paid enough to support their families. Huerta tries to advocate for their rights, but the bosses refuse to raise wages or provide more humane working conditions. In response, Huerta organizes a strike and speaks to the press about these issues, ultimately succeeding after a long and difficult protest.

#### Process:

1. Ask students, “Have you ever noticed something that seemed unfair? What did you do about it?”
2. Explain, “Today we will read a nonfiction book called *Dolores Huerta: A Hero to Migrant Workers* by Sarah Warren. Before we start, let’s look at the cover. What do you notice?” (Students may say that they notice a woman with her arm raised in a fist; she is standing in what appears to be a field, with people working in the background.)
3. Say, “As we read today, we will learn about Dolores Huerta, a labor leader who fought for the rights of farmworkers. Like Elena and her community in *Barrio Rising*, Dolores saw that people were being treated unfairly and decided to take action. As we read, think about the challenges she faced and the strategies she took to create change.”
4. Read the book, asking questions along the way such as, “What problem does Dolores notice?” “What does Dolores do to try to solve this problem?” “What challenges does she face?” “What happens in the end?”
5. Ask students to summarize key events at the end of the book. Then make the connection to *Barrio Rising*: “How is Dolores Huerta similar to the residents of Barrio Logan? How are their experiences different? What issues did they want to solve? What actions did they take? What do these books teach us about the power of working together?”



6. To continue the conversation, students can conduct more research about Dolores Huerta or investigate additional change-makers who worked in organized movements to fight for change.

## APPROACH 2: CONTRIBUTIONS OF LATINOS TO THE UNITED STATES

At the end of *Barrio Rising*, Águila has a page titled, “A Brief History of Chicano Park.” In this text, Águila describes the morning in 1970 when the Barrio Logan community members discovered construction crews building a police station and not the park that they had been promised for years. She further illustrates the injustice by explaining how Barrio Logan had long been neglected by San Diego. In addition to the San Diego Naval Station being built along the bay, taking away their access to the water, the neighborhood was zoned from residential to mixed industrial use without informing the residents. As a result, junkyards and factories populated the neighborhood, and highways physically split the city and forced many residents to leave. In response to yet another broken promise, Barrio Logan organized together and fought for change. Once they finally received their park, Salvador Torres developed a vision to make it a stunning place of beauty. Now, it holds the largest collection of murals in the United States and is considered a National Historic Landmark. As Águila explains, the fight still continues today to gain access to the bay.

### Process:

1. Begin by reading the “A Brief History of Chicano Park” at the end of *Barrio Rising*. Ask students questions like, “What did you learn?” “What other challenges did the people of Barrio Logan have to face?” “How did they transform the park in the end?” “What kind of success have they had?”
2. Explain that this is one example of many examples of times when Latinos made positive impacts on places in the United States through their activism, art, work, and more. Consider reading the following article: [“8 Latinos Who Influenced American Life”](#) written by Sevanny Campos. Discuss: “Have you heard of any of these individuals before? What did you learn about them? What were some of their contributions?”
3. Explain that for class today, each student will have the opportunity to research the contributions of Latinos. Students can work in pairs or individually and can choose one Latino who has played a key role in society. They will research important facts about the individual’s upbringing, key influences, major contributions, and their long-lasting impacts. Once completed, students can present to the class.

## APPROACH 3: RESEARCH CHICANO PARK

At the end of *Barrio Rising*, the reader is able to see the initial development of Chicano Park through illustrations. By conducting research and viewing real-life photographs and videos of the park, students can see how visually stunning the park has become and consider the importance of its murals. They can also have a broader conversation about the role that a park plays in showcasing a community’s identity.



### Process:

1. Tell students, “Now that we have read *Barrio Rising*, let’s learn more about the beautiful park that was obtained and developed as a result of the community members’ activism. Chicano Park is a real park in San Diego.”
2. Ask students: “What parks can you think of near where you live? Why do you think parks and public spaces may be important to a community?”
3. Explain that Chicano Park is known for its many murals illustrating the history of the community’s struggle and celebrating the Chicano heritage of many of its members.
4. In class, students will take 10-15 minutes to research Chicano Park. They can use some teacher-provided resources as a starting point and may expand to find resources of their own. Some helpful websites are listed below:
  - a. [Chicano Park Museum](#) - In addition to providing history of the park, the “murals” section offers a visual map of the murals, as well as a guide with additional information.
  - b. [Chicano Park Steering Committee](#) - This website serves as an additional resource that describes history, current events, and murals at the park.
5. Based on their research, students can pick one focused topic that they would like to teach the class. For example, they may choose one mural or a series of murals they would like to analyze. They could read the Steering Committee history section and analyze its references to the community members’ Mexican heritage, such as the myth of Aztlán. Alternatively, they could analyze the Chicano movement of the 1970s and the meaning of the word Chicano. This book provides numerous opportunities to learn more about history, providing a nuanced lens from which students can view the book.

## MULTIMEDIA RESOURCES

To complement and enhance teaching about *Barrio Rising*, we’ve compiled the following selective multimedia resources that are available at no cost online.

### INTERVIEWS WITH MARÍA DOLORES ÁGUILA

- Read [“Author Q&A: Barrio Rising: The Protest That Built Chicano Park by María Dolores Águila”](#)

During this interview, Águila discusses the inspiration for *Barrio Rising* and her personal connection to Barrio Logan. Not only does her mother-in-law live in the neighborhood, but Águila herself grew up in a nearby neighborhood that shared many of the same issues. As Águila describes, even though both her neighborhood and Barrio Logan were bayfront communities, neither one had access to the beach and both suffered from the intrusion of intensely industrial areas. She explains that while others may view these neighborhoods as without hope, she knew deeply from personal experience that they were full of



joy and beauty. This poignant interview is a worthwhile addition to a classroom discussion about Barrio Logan and helps to provide some historical context.

- Watch: ["Children's Book Author María Dolores Águila Talks About Her Latest, 'Barrio Rising'"](#)

This interview by CBS 8 San Diego provides a local perspective, as the story was set in Barrio Logan, a neighborhood of San Diego. During the interview (set in Barrio Logan itself), the video depicts some of the real-life murals in the neighborhood, illustrating its range of vivid colors and styles. As the interviewer and Águila explain, the fight still continues today to limit industrialization and obtain access to the bay, as the neighborhood had previously extended to that point but had its water access points taken away. The interview ends with some additional concerns held by community members and a brief discussion of Águila's next book.

- Read: ["Author Chat With María Dolores Águila"](#)

This interview focuses more on Águila's writing process. The author describes her inspiration to become a writer, the types of scenes she enjoys writing, her favorite place to write, and techniques that help her avoid procrastinating. The responses would serve as a useful supplement for a classroom discussion about the writing process.



## COMPLEMENTARY LITERATURE

### CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Titles marked with \* are Americas Award selections.

\**Churro Stand* by Karina N. González and illustrated by Krystal Quiles. Abrams, 2024.

On a hot summer's day, Lucía and her brother accompany their mother to sell delicious, sugary churros on the bustling streets of New York City. But when a thunderstorm rolls in, and the customers are chased away, Lucía's mother must improvise with a little bit of magic and lots of amor.

*Dolores Huerta: A Hero to Migrant Workers* by Sarah Warren and illustrated by Robert Casilla.

Dolores is a teacher, a mother, and a friend She wants to know why her students are too hungry to listen, why they don't have shoes to wear to school. Dolores is a warrior, an organizer, and a peacemaker. When she finds out that the farm workers in her community are poorly paid and working under dangerous conditions, she stands up for their rights. This is the story of Dolores Huerta and the extraordinary battle she waged to ensure fair and safe work places for migrant workers. The powerful text, paired with Robert Casilla's vibrant watercolor-and-pastel illustrations, brings Dolores's amazing journey to life. A timeline, additional reading, articles, websites, and resources for teachers are included.

*Diego* by Jeanette Winter and Jonah Winter. Dragonfly Books, 1994.

This story of Diego Rivera, the greatest muralist of Mexico—and of the world—is told in Spanish and English. Vibrant miniature paintings convey the sense of adventure and magic that marked Rivera's early years. And the story shows how his passion for painting and love for his country combined to make a powerful art celebrating the Mexican people.

*Diego Rivera: His World and Ours* by Duncan Tonatiuh. Harry N. Abrams, 2011.

Diego Rivera, one of the most famous painters of the twentieth century, was once just a mischievous little boy who loved to draw. But this little boy would grow up to follow his passion and greatly influence the world of art. After studying in Spain and France as a young man, Diego was excited to return to his home country of Mexico. There, he toured from the coasts to the plains to the mountains. He met the peoples of different regions and explored the cultures, architecture, and history of those who had lived before. Returning to Mexico City, he painted great murals representing all that he had seen. He provided the Mexican people with a visual history of who they were and, most important, who they are.



\**Dreamers* by Yuyi Morales. Neal Porter Books, 2018.

*Dreamers* is a celebration of making your home with the things you always carry: your resilience, your dreams, your hopes and history. It's the story of finding your way in a new place, of navigating an unfamiliar world and finding the best parts of it. In dark times, it's a promise that you can make better tomorrows. This lovingly-illustrated picture book memoir looks at the myriad gifts migrantes bring with them when they leave their homes. It's a story about family. And it's a story to remind us that we are all dreamers, bringing our own strengths wherever we roam. Beautiful and powerful at any time but given particular urgency as the status of our own Dreamers becomes uncertain, this is a story that is both topical and timeless. The lyrical text is complemented by sumptuously detailed illustrations, rich in symbolism. Also included are a brief autobiographical essay about Yuyi's own experience, a list of books that inspired her (and still do), and a description of the beautiful images, textures, and mementos she used to create this book. A parallel Spanish-language edition, *Soñadores*, is also available.

\**Growing an Artist* by John Parra. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2024.

Today is a big day—the first time Juanito gets to help his papi on the job as a landscape architect! Throughout the day, Juanito sketches anything that catches his eye: a nest full of baby birds, a nursery with row upon row of plants and flowers, and more. Father and son travel from house to house, pruning, weeding, mowing, and turning overgrown and chaotic yards into beautiful spaces. A few of the clients don't appreciate Papi's hard work, like Juanito's classmate who pretends not to see him. But Papi always feels pride in owning his own business and in a job well done. And at the end of the day, Juanito may get the chance to turn his artistic eye toward landscape design—just like his papi.

\**Hopeful Heroes: More Poems About Amazing Latinos* by Margarita Engle and illustrated by Juliet Menéndez. Godwin Books, 2025.

Prepare to be inspired by this empowering collection of poetry that tells a larger story about fortitude and community across Hispanic history. From environmental activists such as Christina Figueres to record breaking athletes like Pelé, each role model featured is a legend in their own right. There's no better time to champion the accomplishments of this remarkable group of unsung heroes from all across Latin America! Those profiled in this collection include Anacaona, Martín de la Cruz and Juan Badiano, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Micaela Bastidas Puyucahua, Simón Bolívar, Mariana Grajales Cuello, Ana Roqué de Duprey, Julio Garavito Armero, Ramón Fonst Segundo, Christiana Figueres, Juano Hernández, Gabriela Mistral, Martín Chambi de Coaza, Marina Núñez del Prado, Noé Canjura, Nicolás García Urriburu, Pelé, and Rigoberta Menchú Tum.

*Maybe Something Beautiful: How Art Transformed a Neighborhood* by F. Isabel Campoy and Theresa Howell, illustrated by Rafael López. Clarion Books, 2016.



What good can a splash of color do in a community of gray? As Mira and her neighbors discover, more than you might ever imagine! Based on the true story of the Urban Art Trail in San Diego, California, *Maybe Something Beautiful* reveals how art can inspire transformation—and how even the smallest artists can accomplish something big. Pick up a paintbrush and join the celebration!

\**Menudo Sunday* by María Dolores Águila and illustrated by Erika Meza. Dial Books, 2025.

Sundays are the best: that's when a little girl and her mamá, abuelitos, tías and primos all gather together to eat yummy menudo, a traditional Mexican soup. But when playtime with the cousins and family dogs gets out of hand and Abuelito Esteban's special bowl of menudo breaks, everyone has to pitch in to make a new batch! Through all the menudo mishaps and sneaky snacks for perritos with wagging tails, young readers will giggle as they learn to count from 1-15 in Spanish and English. Bonus materials at the back of the book include a glossary of Spanish words, a note from the author, and tips for hosting your very own Menudo Sunday!

\**My Papi Has a Motorcycle* by Isabel Quintero and illustrated by Zeke Peña. Kokila, 2019.

When Daisy Ramona zooms around her neighborhood with her papi on his motorcycle, she sees the people and places she's always known. She also sees a community that is rapidly changing around her. But as the sun sets purple-blue-gold behind Daisy Ramona and her papi, she knows that the love she feels will always be there.

\**Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote: A Migrant's Tale* written and illustrated by Duncan Tonatiuh. Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2013.

Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote opens with festive scenes of the Rabbit family preparing for Papá Rabbit's homecoming. Musicians, family and friends gather to welcome home Papá who had traveled north to work in the carrot and lettuce fields, years before. Plates of mole, rice and beans are prepared in anticipation of his arrival and the house is strung with papel picado. When Papá Rabbit doesn't arrive, his son Pancho decides to sneak away in the dark of the night to find him. The reader follows the young rabbit as he travels north with the aid of a sneaky coyote by train, by river, by tunnel, and by desert. Tonatiuh bravely presents the controversial issue of illegal immigration through the lens of a children's fable. Inspired by 14th century Mixtec codices and traditional folklore, the author / illustrator presents the sometimes startling realities of many modern day immigrants in a form which can be appreciated by both young and old alike. (Grades Kindergarten and up)

Classroom Resources: [Educator's Guide for Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote: A Migrant's Tale](#) written by Katrina Dillon on behalf of CLASP.

\**Photographic: The Life of Graciela Iturbide* by Isabel Quintero and illustrated by Zeke Pena. Getty, 2018.



Graciela Iturbide was born in México City in 1942, the oldest of 13 children. When tragedy struck Iturbide as a young mother, she turned to photography for solace and understanding. From then on Iturbide embarked on a photographic journey that has taken her throughout her native México, from the Sonora Desert to Juchitán to Frida Kahlo's bathroom, to the United States, India, and beyond. Photographic is a symbolic, poetic, and deeply personal graphic biography of this iconic photographer. Iturbide's journey will excite readers of all ages as well as budding photographers, who will be inspired by her resolve, talent, and curiosity.

*\*Separate Is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation* by Duncan Tonatiuh. Harry N. Abrams, 2014.

When her family moved to the town of Westminster, California, young Sylvia Mendez was excited about enrolling in her neighborhood school. But she and her brothers were turned away and told they had to attend the Mexican school instead. Sylvia could not understand why—she was an American citizen who spoke perfect English. Why were the children of Mexican families forced to attend a separate school? Unable to get a satisfactory answer from the school board, the Mendez family decided to take matters into its own hands and organized a lawsuit. In the end, the Mendez family's efforts helped bring an end to segregated schooling in California in 1947, seven years before the landmark Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* ended segregation in schools across America.

*\*The Circuit* (graphic novel) by Francisco Jiménez and illustrated by Celia Jacobs. Clarion Books, 2024.

An honest and evocative account of a family's journey from Mexico to the fields of California—and to a life of backbreaking work and constant household moves—as seen through the eyes of a boy who longs for education and the right to call one place home. A popular choice for community reads, as well as school curricula and curriculum adoptions, Francisco Jiménez's award-winning memoir, now brought to life in Celia Jacob's beautiful and resonant artwork, is a powerful story of survival, faith, and hope.

*\*The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child* by Francisco Jiménez. University of New Mexico Press, 1997.

After dark in a Mexican border town, a father holds open a hole in a wire fence as his wife and two small boys crawl through. So begins life in the United States for many people every day. And so begins this collection of twelve autobiographical stories by Santa Clara University professor Francisco Jiménez, who at the age of four illegally crossed the border with his family in 1947. "The Circuit," the story of young Panchito and his trumpet, is one of the most widely anthologized stories in Chicano literature. At long last, Jiménez offers more about the wise, sensitive little boy who has grown into a role model for subsequent generations of immigrants. These independent but intertwined stories follow the family through their circuit, from picking cotton and strawberries to topping carrots--and back again--over a number of years. As it moves from one labor camp to the next, the little family of four grows into ten.



Impermanence and poverty define their lives. But with faith, hope, and back-breaking work, the family endures.

\**The Interpreter* by Olivia Abtahi and illustrated by Monica Arnaldo. Kokila, 2025.

Some kids have one job: to be a kid! Cecilia has two. When she isn't on the soccer field scoring goals, she's accompanying her parents to all kinds of grown-up places, like the DMV, the accountant's office, and the auto shop. She helps them translate from Spanish to English and from English to Spanish. It's an important job, and it can even be fun. It's also hard work. Sometimes Cecilia's second job is so much responsibility, it feels like she'll split in two! Is it time for Cecilia to blow her whistle and call for a time-out? Olivia Abtahi's clever text and Monica Arnaldo's charming illustrations capture a common aspect of life for immigrant and bilingual families while offering a model for teamwork that helps everyone feel understood.

*The Perfect Place* by Matt de la Peña and illustrated by Paola Escobar. G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2024.

Lucas goes to the perfect school in the perfect neighborhood. And when he gets perfect grades, he feels like he fits right in. But life at home is not so perfect. His dad's old work truck keeps breaking down. His mom works long hours at her job at the diner. And Lucas has to share his small room with his baby sister. One night, Lucas is awakened by a strange light, which he follows all the way to the place where the perfect people live. Everything there is more beautiful than he could have imagined. But the longer Lucas stays, the more he wonders what it really means to be perfect. Does it mean never making mistakes? Does it mean rejecting his bustling neighborhood and his loving family? And what's so great about being perfect, anyway? From award-winning talents Matt de la Peña and Paola Escobar comes this heartwarming, uplifting picture book about a boy, at home in two worlds, discovering what it means to be at home with himself.

\**Xochitl and the Flowers / Xóchitl, la Niña de las Flores* by Jorge Argueta and illustrated by Carl Angel.

Children's Book Press, 2008.

Miles away from their home in El Salvador, Xochitl (SOH-cheel) and her family make a new home in the United States, but nothing is the same. Xochitl mourns a lovely garden and her family's small flower business, all left behind. Selling flowers on the street soon provides more than income for the Flores family: they begin to make friends with local storeowners and neighbors. But it is not until the family decides to start a nursery in its backyard that Xochitl begins to learn the true value of community in their adopted country. Basing his narrative on real-life events, prize-winning poet Jorge Argueta has crafted a tender, poetic, and moving story about a family's determination to set down roots and about their child's blooming among friends and neighbors. Artist Carl Angel's authentic and brilliant artwork splendidly documents this quintessentially American immigration story. (Grades Kindergarten and up)



Classroom Resources: [Teacher's Guide to Xochitl and the Flowers](#) produced by Children's Book Press and Lee & Low Books.

## Young Adult Literature

\**A Second Chance on Earth* by Juan Vidal. Holiday House, 2024.

Have you ever encountered a book that KO'd you, Iron Mike Tyson style? One that hit you square in the face and heart like some abracadabra casting a hex from an unknown planet? For sixteen-year-old poet and b-baller Marcos Cadena, that book is the beat-up copy of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* he finds among his late father's possessions after Papi is killed in an accident. Marcos' papi has always loomed large in his eyes. So, when Marcos travels to his parents' childhood home of Cartagena, Colombia to spread Papi's ashes, he brings his father's book with him, convinced that Gabriel García Márquez's masterpiece holds the key to understanding Papi's life and accepting his death. In Cartagena, Marcos befriends eighteen-year-old Camilo, a taxi driver and fellow García Márquez fan who appoints himself Marcos' unofficial tour guide. Together, the two boys explore the landscape of Cartagena, from the picturesque streets of Old Town to the poor neighborhood where Camilo grew up. But when Camilo reveals a troubling secret from his past, Marcos must ask himself whether everyone deserves a second chance. Woven through with themes of friendship, family, and forgiveness, this poignant novel in verse is also a love letter to Colombia and to the books of Gabriel García Márquez.

\**Brownstone* by Samuel Teer and illustrated by Mar Julia. Versify, 2024.

Almudena has always wondered about the dad she never met. Now, with her white mother headed on a once-in-a-lifetime trip without her, she's left alone with her Guatemalan father for an entire summer. Xavier seems happy to see her, but he expects her to live in (and help fix up) his old, broken-down brownstone. And all along, she must navigate the language barrier of his rapid-fire Spanish—which she doesn't speak. As Almudena tries to adjust to this new reality, she gets to know the residents of Xavier's Latin American neighborhood. Each member of the community has their own joys and heartbreaks as well as their own strong opinions on how this young Latina should talk, dress, and behave. Some can't understand why she doesn't know where she comes from. Others think she's "not brown enough" to fit in. But time is running out for Almudena and Xavier to get to know each other, and the key to their connection may ultimately lie in bringing all these different elements together. Fixing a broken building is one thing, but turning these stubborn individuals into a found family might take more than this one summer.

\**Call Me Iggy* by Jorge Aguirre and illustrated by Rafael Rosado. First Second, 2024.

Ignacio "Iggy" Garcia is an Ohio-born Colombian American teen living his best life. After bumping into Marisol (and her coffee) at school, Iggy's world is spun around. But Marisol has too much going on



to be bothered with the likes of Iggy. She has school, work, family, and the uphill battle of getting her legal papers. As Iggy stresses over how to get Marisol to like him, his grandfather comes to the rescue. The thing is, not only is his abuelito dead, but he also gives terrible love advice. The worst. And so, with his ghost abuelito's meddling, Iggy's life begins to unravel as he sets off on a journey of self-discovery. *Call Me Iggy* tells the story of Iggy searching for his place in his family, his school, his community, and ultimately—as the political climate in America changes during the 2016 election—his country. Focusing on familial ties and budding love, *Call Me Iggy* challenges our assumptions about Latino-American identity while reaffirming our belief in the hope that all young people represent. Perfect for lovers of multigenerational stories like *Displacement* and *The Magic Fish*.

*Clap When You Land* by Elizabeth Acevedo. Quill Tree Books, 2022.

Camino Rios lives for the summers when her father visits her in the Dominican Republic. But this time, on the day when his plane is supposed to land, Camino arrives at the airport to see crowds of crying people....In New York City, Yahaira Rios is called to the principal's office, where her mother is waiting to tell her that her father, her hero, has died in a plane crash. Separated by distance—and Papi's secrets—the two girls are forced to face a new reality in which their father is dead and their lives are forever altered. And then, when it seems like they've lost everything of their father, they learn of each other.

*I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* by Erika L. Sánchez. Ember, 2019.

Perfect Mexican daughters do not go away to college. And they do not move out of their parents' house after high school graduation. Perfect Mexican daughters never abandon their family. But Julia is not your perfect Mexican daughter. That was Olga's role. Then a tragic accident on the busiest street in Chicago leaves Olga dead and Julia left behind to reassemble the shattered pieces of her family. And no one seems to acknowledge that Julia is broken, too. Instead, her mother seems to channel her grief into pointing out every possible way Julia has failed. But it's not long before Julia discovers that Olga might not have been as perfect as everyone thought. With the help of her best friend Lorena, and her first love, first everything boyfriend Connor, Julia is determined to find out. Was Olga really what she seemed? Or was there more to her sister's story? And either way, how can Julia even attempt to live up to a seemingly impossible ideal?

\**The Hero's Guide to Summer Vacation* by Pablo Cartaya. Kokila, 2026.

Gonzalo Alberto Sánchez García has never considered himself the hero of his own story. He's an observer, quietly snapshotting landscapes and drawing the creatures he imagines emerging from them. Forced to spend the summer with his estranged grandfather, Alberto William García—the very famous reclusive author—Gonzalo doesn't expect to learn that heroes and monsters are not only the stuff of fantasy. But that's precisely what happens when Gonzalo's CEO mother, Veronica, sends Alberto on



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tour to promote the final book in his fantasy series for children and Gonzalo must tag along, even though he feels no connection to his grandfather or the books. Together, they embark on a cross-country road trip from Mendocino to Miami in a classic 1968 Oldsmobile Cutlass S convertible named Mathilde. Over the course of ten epic days on the highway, they will slay demons, real and imagined; confront old stories to write new ones; and learn what it truly means to show up for your family.