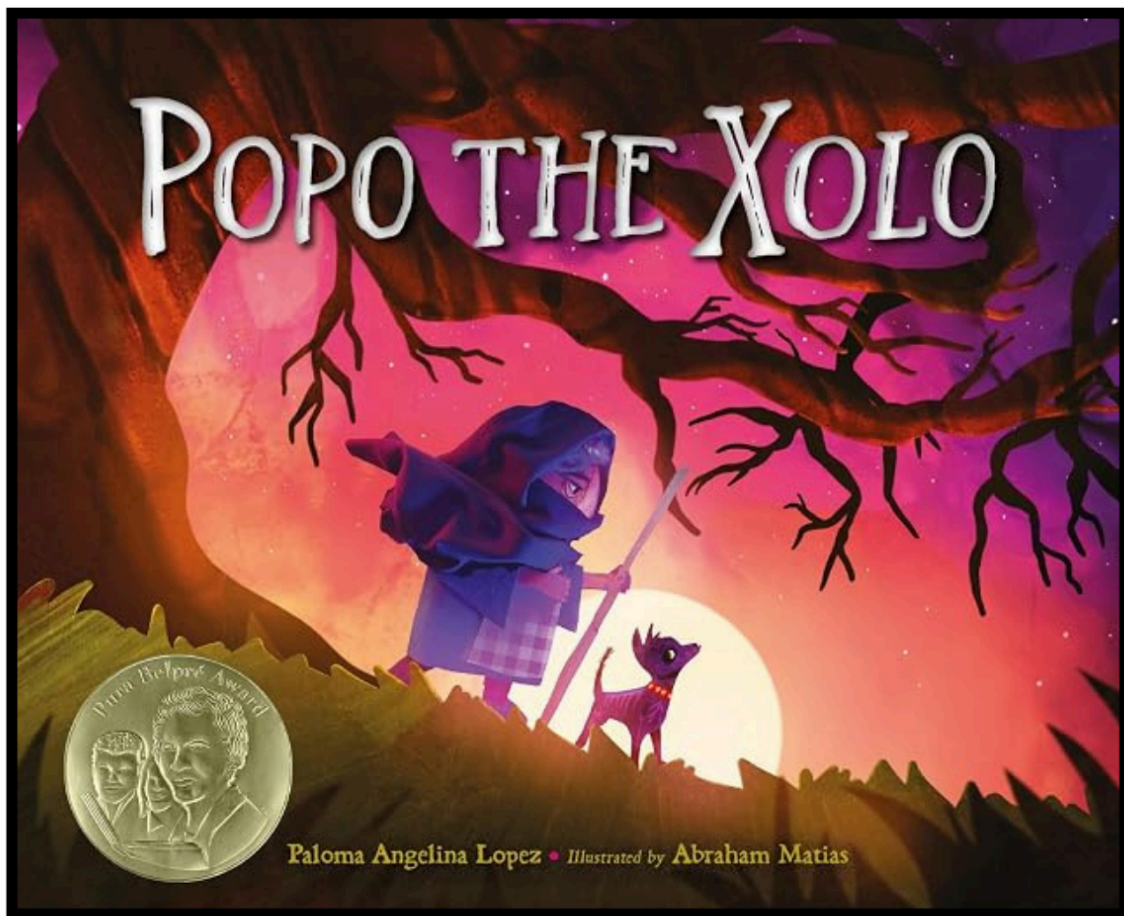


Americas Book Award

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 *Popo the Xolo* 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.

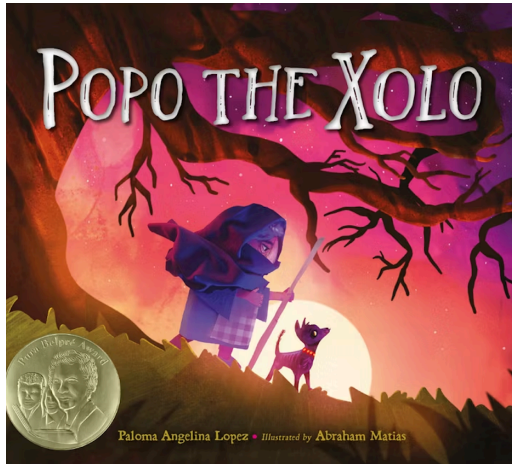


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OVERVIEW

Popo the Xolo

Written by Paloma Angelina Lopez and illustrated by Abraham Matias

Published 2025 by Charlesbridge

ISBN: 1623544572

THEMES

Family, Memory, Courage, Acceptance, Loss, Grief, Companionship, Culture

SYNOPSIS

Nana is surrounded by family and takes joy in her many grandchildren. She's also tired and feels pain. Soon she begins her transition from life into death, accompanied by her beloved Xolo dog, Popo.

Together they go on Nana's journey, and by the end of the story, Nana's family celebrates the many years of love they shared with her. And a grandchild will now care for Popo.

Beautifully told by debut author Paloma Angelina Lopez and featuring a stunning blend of colored art by Mexican illustrator, Abraham Matias, *Popo the Xolo* helps kids understand how loved ones live on in our memories. An unforgettable picture book that's grounded in the importance of the 9 levels of Mictlān and the role Xolo (show-low) dogs play in Indigenous cultural understandings of present-day Mexico.

Popo the Xolo is available in both English and Spanish language editions.

READING LEVEL

Grades 1 – 4 / Ages 6–9



REVIEWS

★ “Rich in otherworldly blends of purples, pinks, and sun-kissed hues, Matias’ striking paper-cut artwork depicts Nana’s passing in a series of stunning double-page spreads, softening the heavy subject matter. Lopez’s gentle text pulls at the heartstrings in subtle streaks, punctuated by the phrase “Keep going. ¡VÁMONOS!” accompanying Popo’s barks of encouragement to his beloved owner. Nana wades through a river, climbs hills, glides across an obsidian path, battles snowy winds, evades arrow-throwing monkeys, and more as she recalls memories both good and bad. Her journey ends back at her casita, where her familia holds on to their shared remembrances. Nana now moves on (“Her aches have disappeared”), and Popo remains with her familia. Lopez deftly lands on a bittersweet note, a message of love that transcends life and death. Gently magnificent.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ “With her debut picture book, Lopez embraces Mexican culture and shares a touching story about celebrating those we love who have passed on. . . . Matias’ captivating illustrations, executed in cut paper and digital media, illuminate the story with rich jewel-toned colors and texture. Details such as Nana’s and Popo’s bony reflections in water offer interesting visual cues, while Spanish words throughout the text add cultural authenticity and warmth. This is a triumphant, moving reflection on death that pays meaningful homage to Indigenous Mexican culture. An author’s note about Mictlān, xoloitzcuintle dogs, and grief and a Spanish glossary conclude. Also available in a Spanish edition, *Popo el Xolo*.” —*Booklist*, starred review

★ “An accompanied journey ends in rest and remembrance in Lopez’s arresting debut, which, in English and Spanish, blends Indigenous Mexican myth with a story of loss. Popo, Nana’s tiny Xoloitzcuintle, “is the best apachador, always looking for cuddles,” which the two share during evenings in front of the TV. Sitting in her chair, “Popo keeps Nana warm and helps heal her aches.” Nana is surrounded by the love of family, but after a long day, it’s Popo’s bark that awakens her as she finds herself standing in a river, tired and lost. The two next pass through strange landscapes, Nana reliving memories (“her favorite novelas, the smell of her pan dulce and cafecito”) as Popo urges her along toward a home that is “different somehow.” Matias’s jewel-toned cut-paper and wash-style digital illustrations leap off the page with a vivid light-and-shadow dimensionality suggestive of puppetry, making for a luminous tale of comfort. Back matter discusses the Nine Levels of Mictlān and more.”

—*Publisher’s Weekly*, starred review



AWARDS

- Américas Award Winner Book, 2026
- A Charlotte Huck Recommended Book
- A Chicago Public Library Best Picture Book of 2025
- A Publisher's Weekly Best Book of 2025
- A Kirkus Reviews Best Book of 2025
- A Pura Belpré Award Winner for Illustration
- A 2025 CALIBA Golden Poppy Mirrors & Windows Award winner
- A Pedro and Daniel Intersectionality Book Awards Longlist Book



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

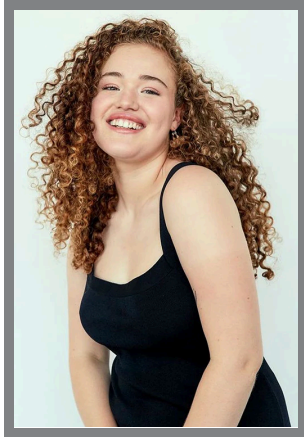
- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

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: PALOMA ANGELINA LOPEZ



Paloma Angelina Lopez is a mother, student, and creative living in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. She is a dual citizen of the United States and Mexico. Her maternal grandmother's family comes from Jalisco and Guanajuato and her father's family is from Zacatecas and Sinaloa. Paloma married into a Cherokee family that is heavily involved in language and culture, and she works as a full-time Cherokee language learner. She hopes to become an educator and author in the Cherokee language. This is her debut children's book. She hopes to publish more children's literature inspired by her culture and upbringing.



CLASSROOM RELEVANCE AND APPLICATIONS

How can we honor the memory of our loved ones? Why is memory so important? In *Popo the Xolo*, Paloma Angelina Lopez introduces us to Nana and her loyal dog Popo as they travel through Mictlān, the underworld in Aztec cosmology. Popo is a xoloitzcuintle (also known as xolo), meaning a Mexican hairless dog that the Aztecs believe to be a spiritual guide who leads souls through the underworld. As Nana travels through nine challenging levels, she thinks back on memories from her life and the people she has loved. Guided by Popo, she ultimately feels a sense of calm, peace, and acceptance regarding her death. Although Nana has passed, the love from her family members remains. Now that she has reached her destination, Popo has returned to watch over her family.

Popo the Xolo is a book about grief, memory, and healing, providing a way for children to talk about difficult topics like death and loss while still emphasizing the importance of honoring loved ones through stories and shared memories. Teachers can use this book to lead conversations about emotions, remembrance, and the ways that different people and cultures understand life and death.

The book also provides a great introduction to Indigenous Mexican history and culture. Through its depictions of Mictlān and the role of xoloitzcuintle dogs as guides for the afterlife, students can begin learning about Aztec traditions and history. As a result, they can engage in interdisciplinary learning that connects literature, history, religion, mythology, and culture. Classroom activities could include researching Aztec beliefs, comparing creation stories and afterlife traditions, or researching more about the role of xoloitzcuintles.

Students can connect with various themes, such as memory. For example, students can create memory books, write narratives to record important family traditions, interview relatives, and think of people and pets whom they care deeply about. Connecting to the theme of courage, students can think back to a time when they were able to do something even though they felt scared. Although grief may be a complicated topic in the classroom, after reading the book, some students may decide to share stories about people or animals whom they have lost. Any discussions about death or grief should be held via careful, guided discussions in an established and safe class environment. While some may not want to talk, others may find comfort in knowing that they can share these memories with a teacher or friends. These conversations can help foster empathy and understanding.

In addition to having a range of accessible themes, the book's illustrations stand out and can spark classroom discussions or art activities. Students could decide to draw a map of Nana's journey or compare the different visual representations of the afterlife found in different cultures.



Popo the Xolo shows readers that although loss can be painful, memories and love still remain. Exploring themes of family, cultural identity, memory, and resilience can allow students to appreciate their own histories while developing empathy for the experiences of others.

LESSON PLANS AND ACTIVITIES

In addition to this guide, the publisher has put together a small packet of resources for talking with students about difficult subjects, including some discussion questions and similar books. It is linked below.

- [Hard Topics for Kids](#) from [Charlesbridge](#)

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

apapachador

bastón

beloved

beso

bosque

escoba

familia

frijoles

lagarto

monos

nietos

nieve

obsidiana

pantufas

reunite

sierras

trieste

xoloitzcuintle



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 in 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 (the family plays with Popo)
- page 6 (the family embraces each other)
- pages 7–8 (Nana begins her journey to the afterlife)
- pages 13–14 (Nana and Popo travel through the snow)
- pages 17–18 (the two are attacked by monkeys, but Popo protects Nana)
- page 22 (Nana no longer needs her cane)
- pages 23–24 (Nana remembers her life, her loved ones, and her favorite things)
- pages 27–28 (the family misses Nana and vows to remember her)
- pages 29–30 (Popo returns to the family)

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 *Popo the Xolo*. Allow students to revisit them and discuss them as they think more about what the images represent.

ACTIVITY 3: MEMORY BOOK

Popo the Xolo emphasizes the importance of memory. Students can begin gathering some of their most meaningful memories and collect them in a memory book.

PROCESS:

1. Explain to students that soon, they will read a story about an old woman who looks back on her life and is so happy to relive some of her fondest memories. For this reason, students will connect to the book by thinking about their own memories.
2. Lead a think-pair-share. Tell students: “Can you think of one of your favorite memories right now? Take a moment to think about a time that was really special to you.” [Give think time.] “Once you're ready, lock it in and be prepared to share with a partner!” Have students turn to the classmate next to them and share. If time allows, have some students share out loud to the whole class.
3. Explain, “Many of our memories live in our heads. We can look back on them whenever we'd like and enjoy the moment again. One way to keep these memories safe is by creating a memory book. A memory book is just what it sounds like: a book filled with some of your fondest memories. We can be creative in the way that we save our memories. We can draw an illustration, write a journal entry, or even write a poem or song about this memory.”
4. Younger students may benefit from a model. The teacher can project the model on the board, thinking out loud about the memory and considering how he or she would like to preserve it. Then, the teacher can choose a creative way to record the memory, such as by drawing or writing.



5. Have students go back to their desks independently to create a small memory book. At their tables, they should have paper, pencils, a variety of art supplies, scissors, glue, craft materials, and more. The goal could be to record 2–3 memories during the class period.
6. When students have finished, they can share their memory books with classmates sitting near them. Ask a few students to share out: “What was a memory you wanted to save? Why is this memory so important to you?”
7. Tell students that as they read *Popo the Xolo*, they can think about the memories Nana reflects on during her journey. What do these memories show us about her? What do they tell us about her life?

ACTIVITY 4: REVIEW OF GENRE

Prepare students to read *Popo the Xolo* by having a discussion of genre.

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 *Popo the Xolo* 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.”
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 we learn about Popo at the beginning of the story?
2. How do we know that Nana and Popo have a special relationship?
3. Describe Nana's relationship with her family.
4. What happens the night that Nana's heartbeat slows?
5. Describe the journey she goes on. What happens?
6. What are some of the different challenges that Nana and Popo face? How do they handle these challenges?
7. Who is Tata? How does Nana feel when she thinks about him?
8. What happens when Nana reaches the end of her journey?
9. What is Nana's family doing at the end of the story?
10. What happens to Popo at the end?

AFTER READING

1. Have you read any other books about similar themes? Examples can be family, loss, grief, acceptance, companionship, or courage. 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 *Popo the Xolo*. 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 *Popo the Xolo*, consider including the reading discussed below.

“The Invisible Parade”

Similar to *Popo the Xolo*, *The Invisible Parade* written by Leigh Bardugo and John Picacio is another book that has themes of grief, remembrance, and courage. *The Invisible Parade* centers around a young girl named Cala, who is grieving the loss of her grandfather on Día de los Muertos. While at the cemetery, she meets four horsemen who help her confront her fears. The book shows that love continues after death through our memories.

PROCESS:

1. Begin by asking students open-ended questions, such as, “Why do people tell stories about those they love? What are some ways people remember loved ones who pass away?”
2. Explain, “Today, we will read a fiction book called *The Invisible Parade* by Leigh Bardugo and John Picacio. Look at the cover. What do you notice? What do you think this story will be about?”
3. State, “As we read today, we will think about how memories and cultural traditions can help us remember those we love.”
4. Read the book. Occasionally stop to ask comprehension questions: “Who are the characters? What do we know about them? What is happening? Are you noticing a problem? How is the problem solved? What can we learn from this book?”
5. Upon finishing the book, ask students to summarize the key events in the story. Ask them to share some of the cultural traditions they noticed related to the Día de los Muertos.
6. Make the connection to *Popo the Xolo*: “How are these two books similar? How are they different? What lessons do they teach us?”
7. As a post-reading activity, teachers can choose different choices. Students can make a venn diagram comparing the two texts, conduct research on the different conceptions of death held by different cultures, or research Día de los Muertos.



APPROACH 2: FAMILY TRADITIONS AND MEMORIES

Throughout *Popo the Xolo*, Nana thinks about the important people and memories in her life. Her memories show how families can preserve traditions over time, from generation to generation. Students can read this book and think about their own family traditions, as well as their importance.

PROCESS:

1. Ask students questions, “What memories were important to Nana? Why do you think she remembered those moments? What do memories and traditions teach us about a person's life?” Finally, ask, “How can traditions help families stay connected, even across generations?”
2. Explain that the word “tradition” is a broad term, and traditions can take many forms. Some families celebrate holidays, prepare special foods, tell stories, gather for family reunions, or participate in cultural festivities. Every family is unique, and traditions can be large (such as a 100+ person family reunion) or small (such as a quiet Sunday dinner at home).
3. Ask students to brainstorm traditions that are meaningful in their own lives. Give them time to take notes. They can think about who this tradition involves, where it takes place, what happens, and why it is so important.
4. After they have jotted down some ideas, students can reflect on how these traditions are passed down over time, and how traditions tie people to their family and their culture.
5. Some students may need to see a teacher model this process by thinking out loud about a personal tradition and drafting out a beginning, middle, and end to the narrative. Another option is to provide a graphic organizer for guided development. Students can engage in the writing process and prewrite, draft, revise, and edit their narratives.
6. At the end, students can either share with others at their table or read out loud in an “author’s chair” activity (especially popular for young learners). As they listen to their classmates’ stories, encourage students to note similarities and differences. Ask students how traditions help to preserve memories and culture.
7. After all students have finished sharing, connect it back to *Popo the Xolo*. Nana’s memories revealed what mattered most to her. Our memories do the same. These memories and traditions help us remember important people and experiences in our lives. We can engage in storytelling to preserve these memories and pass them down to future generations.

APPROACH 3: RESEARCH AZTEC HISTORY AND CULTURE

Popo the Xolo incorporates Aztec beliefs about life, death, and the afterlife. As Nana travels through the nine levels of Mictlān with Popo, readers are introduced to concepts from Aztec culture that may be unfamiliar to them. By conducting research on Aztec history and culture, students can gain a deeper understanding of the book’s setting, symbolism, and themes while learning about an important indigenous civilization.



PROCESS:

1. Tell students, “Now that we have read *Popo the Xolo*, let’s learn more about the Aztec history and culture that inspired this story.”
2. Ask students to review the end of the book together. Read about the nine levels of Mictlān and the role of xoloitzcuintle dogs as spiritual guides. Discuss with students about how this information helps them to better understand Nana’s journey.
3. Explain that many elements of *Popo the Xolo* are based on beliefs and traditions that were important to the Aztec people. Stories can teach us about a culture’s values and worldviews, and learning more about Aztec history can help us appreciate the cultural context of this book.
4. In class, students can break into groups to conduct research on different aspects of Aztec culture, history, or mythology. Some topics may include xoloitzcuintle dogs, Mictlān, Aztec gods and goddesses, Aztec architecture, indigenous Mexican traditions, or the influence of Aztec culture today.
5. Students can develop a project based on what they have learned, such as through a short video, a poem, a slideshow, a poster, a work of art, or a story.

MULTIMEDIA RESOURCES

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

INTERVIEW WITH PALOMA ANGELINA LOPEZ

- Read [“Guiding Souls Home: Abuela Takes Center Stage in Paloma Angelina Lopez’s *Popo the Xolo*”](#)

This book review summarizes an interview held with the author, in which she describes the importance of grandmothers, who are at the “center of it all.” They are often the ones who keep the traditions alive. Lopez also shares the inspiration for *Popo the Xolo*. This article highlights the importance of family and caring for one another.

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

- Watch [“What is Día de los Muertos? An expert explains the holiday celebrating loved ones who have died”](#)

In this YouTube video by PBS NewsHour, students can learn when the Día de los Muertos occurs and how it is celebrated, such as by decorating gravesites, creating *ofrendas*, and holding parties with dancing, food, and music.



- Watch [“Day of the Dead for Kids | 1-2 November | Día de los Muertos | Twinkl USA”](#)

This is another educational video that describes the origins of Día de los Muertos. This video is well-suited for younger learners.

- Use the [Día de los Muertos curriculum materials](#) created by the LAII at the University of New Mexico to teach your students about the holiday.

In partnership with the National Hispanic Cultural Center, the LAII developed a curriculum guide to provide hands-on art activities and literacy exercises to bring Día de los Muertos to the classroom.



COMPLEMENTARY LITERATURE

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Titles marked with * are Americas Award selections.

**A-Ztec: A Bilingual Alphabet Book* by Emmanuel Valtierra. Levine Querido, 2025.

From *Chocolatl* and *Axolotl* to *Guacamole* and *Quetzalcoatl*—open up this spectacular treasury of Aztec words from A to Z! Award-winning artist Emmanuel Valtierra brings young readers an enchanting bilingual journey through twenty-six words, concepts, and gods central to Aztec and Mexican culture. Each page features a letter of the alphabet paired with captivating poetry in both English and Spanish, kaleidoscopic illustrations inspired by ancient Aztec codices, and pronunciation guides to help families explore these beautiful words together.

**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.

Día de Muertos by Jaque Jours and illustrated by Alejandra Ruiz. words & pictures, 2025.

Pancho and his family are inviting you to celebrate with them! Join in as they prepare in the lead-up to the festival, setting up the ofrendas, finding photographs of beloved family members, decorating with flowers, cutting out skull patterns, cooking tamales and enjoying a wonderful day with all the family. Along the way, you'll learn all about the significance and history of the festival, brought to even more life with: Instructions to make your own papel picado, a recipe to make delicious pan de muerto, a fun quiz to try out all your knowledge. In this immersive exploration of Día de Muertos, kids join a family as they celebrate. Seen through the eyes of young children celebrating themselves, this is a simple and exciting way to introduce little ones to this special period.

**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.

It's Time for Día de los Muertos: A Day of the Dead Book by Lilibeth M. Jimenez. Cartwheel Books, 2025.

Get ready with Meli as she gathers family portraits, prepares her abuelito's favorite ponche, bakes her tía's favorite pan dulce, and prepares the ofrenda with her family. It's time for Día de los Muertos! With bright and festive illustrations from author-illustrator Lilibeth M. Jimenez and engaging text that features some key Spanish words, this sweet story teaches little ones that by celebrating and honoring the lives and memories of your loved ones, your family will always live on in your heart.

**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.



**Pilgrim Codex* by Vivian Mansour, illustrated by Emmanuel Valtierra, and translated by Carlos Rodríguez Cortez. Levine Querido, 2025.

We, the Vargas Ramírez family, come from a faraway place north of Tenochtitlan called Iztapalapa, Land of Clay Upon Water. A land surrounded by cars and dry grass; a place where the pieces of our small world were scattered. For some time we lived there, but then one day my father heard a beautiful birdsong that rose up and appeared to say *tibui, tibui, tibui*: let's go, let's go, let's go. And so we gathered up our friends who made up that small world and decided to head north, for the other side, and a better life. Together the Boy and his family will journey from the Land of the Frogs to The Place Where Feet Cry to the River Where the Waters Tangle, fleeing Gunmen and braving Coyotes and plunging darknesses as black as an obsidian forest. Originally published in Mexico, *Pilgrim Codex* (Códice peregrino) captures through the eyes of a child one family's part in the ever-changing and fleeting story of the brave migrant warriors who search for a better place to live.

**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 Dia de Los Muertos Story: Celebrating the Never-Ending Bonds of Family by Andrea Jáuregui De La Torre and illustrated by Laura González. becker&mayer! kids, 2025.



Through detailed stories told by Little Andrea's beloved abuela, *The Dia de Los Muertos Story* reveals to young readers the origins of Dia de Los Muertos, or the Day of the Dead, what it means to Mexican families, and how it has grown and expanded to other parts of the world, specifically north into the United States. This enchanting picture book follows Little Andrea as she discovers how what began as ceremonies practiced by the ancient Aztecs has evolved into a holiday recognized far beyond the borders of Mexico. As the story unfolds, Little Andrea explores significant moments in history and historical figures that demonstrate the endurance of the holiday through the ages. *The Dia de Los Muertos Story* offers children a deeply personal and more meaningful way to connect with the season surrounding the more commercial celebration of Halloween, giving an opportunity to transform the often-scary topic of death into a more nuanced perspective that includes the important celebrations of life, family, and friends. Gorgeously illustrated, this guide to understanding Dia de los Muertos encourages a young audience to engage directly with the holiday and Mexican culture through its many hallmarks such as sugar skulls, papel picado, ofrendas, catrinas, and more. Young readers will love learning beside Little Andrea about the incredible history and traditions of Dia de los Muertos and its joyful celebration of life.

**The Invisible Parade* by Leigh Bardugo and John Picacio, illustrated by John Picacio. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2025.

Everyone in the neighborhood was getting ready for the party. Everyone knew somebody on the guest list . . . This was the day the dead returned. There's a party tonight, but Cala doesn't want to go. While her family prepares for the celebration, Cala grieves her grandfather and tries to pretend she's not afraid. But when she is separated from her family at the cemetery, Cala encounters four mysterious riders who will show her she is actually quite brave after all. Brimming with magic and humor, *The Invisible Parade* is the first picture-book collaboration between award-winner John Picacio and New York Times bestselling Leigh Bardugo. Set on the night of Día de Muertos, Cala's story is one of love, loss, and the courage that can be found in unexpected places.

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.

* *Xolo* written by Donna Barba Higuera and illustrated by Mariana Ruiz Johnson. LevineQuerido, 2025.

It is said the mighty feathered serpent god, Quetzalcoatl, helped create the earth. He is the hero who stole back the bones of humanity from the evil god of the Underworld. In his quest to bring humans to the earth, Quetzalcoatl's dog-headed twin brother, Xolotl, was present. Not much is known of Xolotl, the god of lightning, death, and misfortune. A monster.

This is what really happened.

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 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.