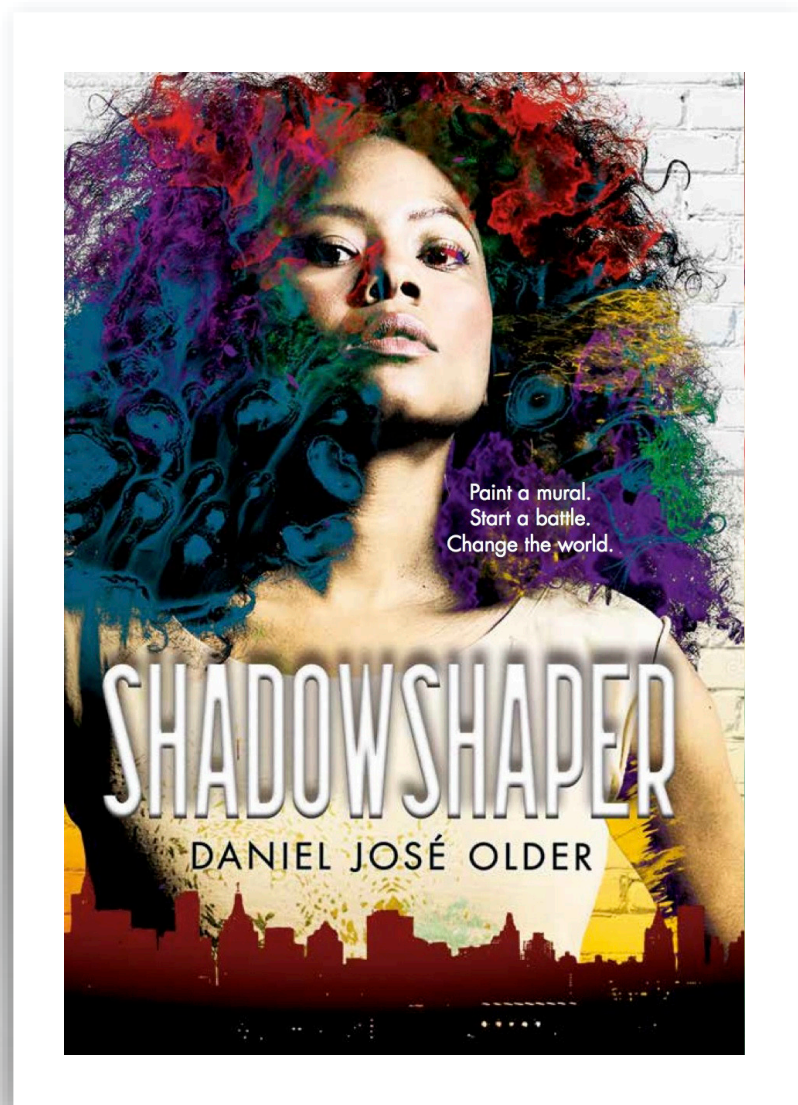


# VAMOS A LEER

*teaching latin america through literacy*



# VAMOS A LEER

## Educator's Guide

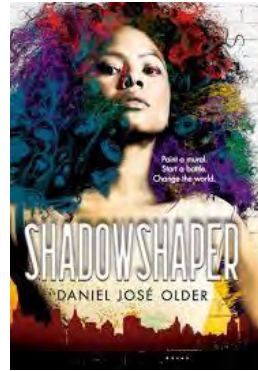
### **Shadowshaper**

Written by Daniel José Older

Published by Arthur A. Levine Books, 2015

ISBN: 0545591619

Age Level: 12 and up



### **BOOK SUMMARY**

*Paint a mural. Start a battle. Change the world.*

Sierra Santiago planned an easy summer of making art and hanging out with her friends. But then a corpse crashes the first party of the season. Her stroke-ridden grandfather starts apologizing over and over. And when the murals in her neighborhood begin to weep real tears... Well, something more sinister than the usual Brooklyn ruckus is going on.

With the help of a fellow artist named Robbie, Sierra discovers shadowshaping, a thrilling magic that infuses ancestral spirits into paintings, music, and stories. But someone is killing the shadowshapers one by one -- and the killer believes Sierra is hiding their greatest secret. Now she must unravel her family's past, take down the killer in the present, and save the future of shadowshaping for generations to come.

Full of a joyful, defiant spirit and writing as luscious as a Brooklyn summer night, *Shadowshaper* introduces a heroine and magic unlike anything else in fantasy fiction, and marks the YA debut of a bold new voice.

### **AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS:**

- Finalist for the 2015 *Kirkus* Prize

- *Publishers Weekly* Best Children's Books of 2015, Young Adult
- *Booklist* 2015 Top 10 Books for Youth, Arts
- *SLJ's* Best Books of 2015, Young Adult
- *SLJ's* Top Latino-themed Books 2015
- *The New York Times* Notable Children's Books of 2015, Young Adult
- *Kirkus Reviews* Best Books of 2015, Teen
- *Booklist* Best Young Adult Books of 2015
- *Booklist* Editor's Choice 2015, Fiction

## AUTHOR'S CORNER

### About Daniel José Older:

Daniel José Older is the author of *Shadowshaper*, a book hailed as one of the best new urban fantasies, and lauded for its diverse protagonists. However, Older is a man of many trades and, aside from his career as a young adult novelist, he is also a musician and composer. Older also spent nearly a decade working as a New York City paramedic, and he has



turned some of the dispatches and memories from those years into creative non-fiction pieces, or “[Ambulance stories](#).” Older’s time spent as a paramedic exposed him to a variety of social conditions and narratives, which, presumably, have influenced the political and sociological aspects of his creative work. His imaginative fantasy is grounded by real-world social critiques and commentaries. Older lives in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York, which is also where his most recent novel, *Shadowshaper*, takes place.

According to a review of *Shadowshaper* by [The New York Times](#), “*In the best urban fantasy, the city is not just a backdrop, but functions as a character in its own right, offering up parallels between personal histories and histories of place. That is certainly true in Daniel José Older’s magnificent ‘Shadowshaper,’ which gives us a Brooklyn that is vital, authentic and under attack.*” Indeed, Older’s own Brooklyn hometown emerges as a dynamic character full of artistic wonders and sociopolitical complexities, such as gentrification and racism.

Older’s story centers on a female, Afro-Latina protagonist and incorporates elements of Latino culture into a sprawl of urban fantasy. [The New York Times](#) also states,

Sierra herself is a compelling, refreshing hero, with a “fro stretched magnificently around her in a fabulous, unbothered halo.” Along with her brother Juan, a guitar player in a salsa-thrash band; the enigmatic Robbie, who draws so compulsively that his art covers “every surface of his clothes, his backpack, his desk”; her trickster figure of an uncle; and a collection of clever and funny friends, she has to discover who is murdering her abuelo’s associates and why other murals all over her neighborhood are fading.

*Shadowshaper* brings magical realism into the streets of urban life, while incorporating sensations of music and mural-art into a textual narrative.

Older, in an interview and article by [The Guardian](#), also explains his intention of diversifying his stories and their characters:

Older’s imagined Brooklyn is full of danger, less gentrified than the real-life version, and decidedly diverse. “We’re doing something very political by

deciding whose life matters, where we're going to focus things, and who we erase from the picture," he says. This kind of diversity, he feels, is lacking in most other fantasy YA novels. "When we create worlds based on this world that don't include diversity, we're lying," he says. "We're not being honest as authors. Even if it's infused with magical powers, or zombies, or whatever you'll have, we should still be trying to tell the truth. Then, it becomes a question of what truth, how are we telling it, and whose truth do we take the time to repeat?"

Older is openly critical of other young adult novels that lack adequate representation of minorities or people of color. He engages in writers workshops for children, as well as panels for book conferences, in an attempt to inspire others to follow suite in diversifying young adult novels. According to the same article by [The Guardian](#), "Older also values the supportive community of fellow writers of colour. His mentors have been black female fantasy and science fiction writers like [Sheree Renée Thomas](#) and [Tananarive Due](#), who pointed out to him that black women are rarely positioned as protagonists. With Sierra, Older is trying to live up to what he feels is his responsibility to change that."

Older's other works include *Half-Resurrection Blues* and *Salsa Nocturna*, amongst other novels and short stories. Older has also co-edited the anthology *Long Hidden: Speculative Fiction from the Margins of History*. In addition, he has written a number of essays that have appeared in different journals, magazines, and online publications, as well as in another anthology, *Mothership: Tales of Afrofuturism and beyond*. Older is a dynamic and prolific writer, who is commendably paving the way in the diversification of YA fantasy.

For additional information on Daniel José Older, check out the following links:

- Older's article, [Diversity is not Enough: Race, Power, Publishing](#)
- Older's article, [Writing Begins With Forgiveness: Why One of the Most Common Pieces of Writing Advice Is Wrong](#)
- Older's [personal website](#)
- Older's opinion piece in *The Guardian*, [Do black children's lives matter if nobody writes about them?](#)

**USING  
*Shadowshaper*  
IN THE  
CLASSROOM**

Older's *Shadowshaper* has received wide-acclaim, and after reading it, it's easy to see why. There aren't many books out there that do what this one does. I'm not sure I've ever read an urban fantasy book, certainly not for young adults. I also can't think of a single fantasy book whose characters are based almost entirely on a group of urban youth of color. As we talk more and more about the need for authentic and quality diverse literature in the classroom, it's easy to see why a book like this is so important.

While I certainly enjoyed it, and definitely appreciated it even more after a second read, the adult reader in me (who loves fantasy) wanted more

backstory. Since it's set in New York City, Older really isn't creating a new world, so there's not the need for all the history that has to be presented in world building. He is creating a new mythology though, and I found myself wanting more backstory about what had happened generations before that resulted in the situation that Sierra and her friends find themselves. Of course, all of this may be what turns a YA reader off, especially a reader who struggles when getting bogged down in too much background information and not enough active plot. I also realize that providing all of that background information tends to lead to a denser text, which I know can make it even harder to incorporate into the classroom. For various reasons, we teachers typically can't spend months and months on one book. Perhaps all of this just means there is a prequel in the making.

One of the strongest elements of the book is the way in which it broaches so many important discussion topics. I could go on and on here, so I'll keep it short and offer more of a list of highlights. I loved the way the dialogue in the book problematized the idea of a monolithic Latino/a race or ethnicity. As the characters talked about their own heritages they demonstrated the ways in which conquest and colonization create complicated heritages and racial histories. I think the way in which the book engages in conversations about race will appeal to many students. The critique of racism is certainly here, but not in a forced way. It comes through discussions of a brother lost to police violence, gentrification, segregation of neighborhoods in New York City, and the assumptions made when Sierra finds herself in a neighborhood where she's not welcome. I really appreciated that many of these critiques came through the dialogue among youth of color. I particularly enjoyed the conversation about the hippies, yuppies, and the difference between the two. The banter and conversations among the characters is one of the best parts of the book.

Sierra's own struggles with body image and self-acceptance were another powerful part of the book. As I read her struggles I was reminded of another one of my favorite female protagonists from [\*Gabi, A Girl in Pieces\*](#). I think it's so important that these types of conversations around the connection between body image and self-love are made explicit with our students. I also think the book can be used to discuss important topics like sexism and patriarchy through looking at the motivations for the grandfather's actions and choices. On a somewhat related note, our book group had a similar conversation. I should preface the following by saying we are not an easy audience to please. I think that's why I love our monthly meetings so much. This is a group of strong, intelligent, critical, and creative women, and we frequently discuss the ways in which women are portrayed in literature. Not surprisingly, we loved Sierra Santiago. However, we may have been a \*tiny\* bit critical of the need to write in a boyfriend and how rapidly that relationship seemed to move. I think it's important to discuss with our students how often our strong female protagonists seem to "have to have" some kind of romantic interest via a boyfriend or crush.



While our book group may have had a few critiques, we were unanimous in our agreement that this is a book that many students would love. One of our teachers is even reading it to her students now. In its entirety, it's certainly a book for older middle school or high school students, but I think parts of it could be used with elementary students. As much as many students love fantasy, it's not a genre they always get to read a lot of in school. Students could really enjoy listening to a read aloud of a chapter or two that explains the premise of the book and the idea of shadowshapers, then writing their own story based on that information. Using the premise of the book as a story starter, students could create their own fantasy short story.

We'd love to hear your thoughts on the book. If you'd like to read other reviews check out the links below.

- [New York Times'](#)
- [NPR's "Shadowshaper Paints a Vibrant Picture"](#)
- [Rich In Color](#)
- [American Indians in Children's Literature](#)
- [Latinos in Kid Lit](#)

## **LESSON PLANS & ACTIVITIES**

The following lesson plans are comprised of two sections:

- A short section of suggested activities that can be used before, during or after the reading of the novel which are organized thematically by different subject areas
- Guided reading questions organized by parts of the book and extended response writing prompts. These questions have been written to support the types of reading and critical thinking skills required in standardized reading comprehension tests. The following key words and skills are highlighted: analyze, infer, evaluate, describe, support, explain, summarize, compare, contrast and predict.

Common Core Standards Addressed:

**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.

#### 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.

#### Gentrification and Displacement

Gentrification and displacement are important themes in Older's *Shadowshaper*. Rethinking Schools has created a number of curriculum materials and resources to teach about this topic which are linked to below:

- [Whose Community Is This? Mathematics of neighborhood displacement](#) by Eric (Rico) Gutstein
- [Stealing Home: Eminent domain, urban renewal, and the loss of community](#) (preview of article, entire article accessible with Rethinking Schools subscription) by Linda Christensen
- ["Why Is This the Only Place in Portland I See Black People?" Teaching young children about redlining](#) by Katharine Johnson
- [Rethinking Research: Reading and Writing about the Roots of Gentrification](#) by Linda Christensen

### **Social Studies, Art, and Literature**



**Guided Reading Questions**

Street Art

Street art is a significant part of the world of a Shadowshaper. Use the lesson plan “[STREET ART/GRAFFITI : SELF-PORTRAITS](#)” by Aimee Carmella to explore how visual artists use images, symbols, and words to convey meaning.

Trickster Tales

Some have suggested that the character Uncle Neville is representative of the role of a trickster in the trickster tale genre. If students are not familiar with this genre, ask them to research it. Once they have a basic understanding, guide them to analyze the ways in which Uncle Neville could be a trickster. To expand, use the list of [Trickster Tales in Children’s Literature](#) found on pages 38-42 of the linked guide. Ask students to read other examples of Trickster Tales and compare Uncle Neville to the trickster in these stories. Close the lesson by asking them to write a paragraph explaining why Uncle Neville is or is not a trickster figure.

Chapter One | Pages 1-5

1. What two things does Sierra notice about the mural? (p. 1)
2. Where is Sierra painting her mural? Why was she asked to paint on that specific building? (p. 2)
3. Who is Manny? What does he do? (p. 4)

Chapter Two | Pages 6-11

1. What’s different about Grandpa Lázaro when Sierra goes in to check on him? (p. 7)
2. What does Grandpa Lázaro tell Sierra? (p. 8-9)
3. Describe what Sierra’s mother looks like. (p. 9-10)
4. Compare and contrast Sierra’s style with that of her friend Bennie. How does Bennie dress? (p. 10)
5. What happens when Sierra mentions the shadowshapers to her mother? How does María respond? (p. 11)

Chapter Three | Pages 12-19

1. Who is Sierra’s high school named after? Why is this significant? (p. 12)
2. What do we learn about Robbie from the descriptions offered by Sierra’s friends? (p. 14)
3. How does Robbie respond to the conversation with Sierra? Does he seem surprised by anything Grandpa Lázaro has said? What is significant about his response? (p. 18-19)

Chapter Four | Pages 20-24

1. Who appears at the party? What does he look like? What is he looking for? (p. 20-21)
2. How does Sierra interpret the police response to the shooting? Why do you think she interprets it this way? (p. 23)

Chapter Five | Pages 25-33

1. Who is Neville Spencer? (p. 25)
2. What's happened to Ol' Vernon? Where does Sierra recognize him from? (p. 26)
3. What does Grandpa Lázaro keep repeating? Make a prediction: Why do you think he continues to say this? (p. 28-29)
4. What's happened to Vernon Chandler's photo in the picture hanging on the wall?
5. What clue does Sierra get from Abuelo? (p. 32)
6. Who is Vincent? What happened to him? (p. 33)
7. How has Vincent's mural changed? (p. 33)

#### Chapter Six | Pages 34-47

1. How do the men at the Junklot respond when Sierra asks about Ol' Vernon? What does this response suggest? (p. 34-35)
2. What does Bennie find out about Dr. Wick? Where can Sierra find more information about Dr. Wick? (p. 40)
3. How do the Columbia students respond to Uncle Neville? (p. 46)

#### Chapter Eight | Pages 48-54

1. What book titles does Sierra notice when she gets into the library? Why do these surprise her? Older could have mentioned any titles here. Why do you think he chose these specific ones? What could his purpose be in choosing these? What statement is he making? (p. 48)
2. Who runs the anthropology archives? Why does this surprise Sierra? (p. 49-50)
3. What kind of library does Nydia want to open eventually? How does Older use this to critique traditional academia? (p. 50)
4. What kind of critique does Nydia offer of the field of anthropology? (50-51)
5. What was in Neville's briefcase? How did he create the distraction that got Sierra into the library? What is the political statement or critique here? (p. 53-54)

#### Chapter Nine | Pages 55-60

1. What does Sierra learn about the shadowshapers' mythology from Wick's notes? (p. 55)
2. What does Manny tell Sierra about the shadowshapers? (p. 60)

#### Chapter Ten | Pages 61-67

1. Who trained Robbie? What did he train him to do? (p. 62)
2. Why was Papa Acevedo's mural crying? (p. 62-63)
3. Why are the murals fading? (p. 64)
4. Who is Lucera? (p. 64)
5. What is a corpuscule? (p. 66)

#### Chapter Eleven | Pages 68-72

1. In Wick's notes on the shadowshapers how does he come across? Does it seem like he wants to learn more just for the sake of knowledge? Is he interested because he wants to support the community of the shadowshapers? Does he think he can benefit

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from their magic? (p. 70-71)

Chapter Twelve | Pages 73-81

1. How does Sierra paint Manny into her mural? (p. 73)
2. What advice does Manny give Sierra about getting involved with the shadowshapers? (p. 74-75) Do you think this is good advice? What would you do?
3. What prejudices do Tía Rosa's comments communicate? What is the meaning of "If he's darker than the bottom of your foot, he's no good for you?" (p. 77). What is valued in a statement like this? What is insinuated by the comment "See, María, this is what happens. You let her keep her hair all wild and nappy like this. . .?" (p. 78) What does this reveal about what is desirable or undesirable in terms of one's appearance according to Tía Rosa? Explain your answers.
4. How does Sierra re-envision her hair so that it is powerful and desirable? (p. 78)
5. How do Sierra's thoughts reveal her own body image struggles? (p. 78-79)
6. Think about Sierra's description of herself as "the color of coffee without enough milk" (p. 79). What does "not enough milk" convey? Again, what does this convey about societal messages on desirability and appearance? (p. 79-80)
7. Why is Sierra so upset that the thought "not enough" came from somewhere within herself? Who else has communicated this idea to her? How do you think it would affect someone if they consistently heard the message that they "weren't enough"? Explain your answer. (p. 80)

Chapter Thirteen | Pages 81-87

1. How has Bennie's neighborhood changed? What kinds of places are closing? What is replacing them? (p. 81-82)
2. Why do you think Bennie calls it "The Takeover"? (p. 81-82)
3. What advice does Bennie give Sierra about talking to Robbie about the shadowshapers? Do you agree with Bennie? Do you think Sierra should trust Robbie? Why? (p. 84-86)
4. Why does Robbie want to take Sierra to Club Kalfour? (p. 87)

Chapter Fourteen | Pages 88-94

1. Why does Sierra feel at home in Club Kalfour? (p. 89)
2. How does Robbie show Sierra what shadowshaping is? (p. 91-93)

Chapter Fifteen | Pages 95-99

1. What effect does the music have on Robbie's mural? (p. 96-98)
2. What appears when Robbie and Sierra step outside of the dance club? (p. 99)

Chapter Sixteen | Pages 100-104

1. How does Sierra decide to confront the thing that follows her as she flees into Flatbush? (p. 102)
2. How is Flatbush different from Sierra's neighborhood? (p. 101-

102)

3. How does the shadow phantom attack Sierra? (p. 103-104)

#### Chapter Seventeen | Pages 105-110

1. How do the neighbors respond when they find Sierra in the street? What assumptions are made about what's wrong with Sierra? What does their behavior demonstrate? (p. 105-106)
2. Who comes to help Sierra? (p. 107) How did he know she needed help? (p. 108-109)
3. How does Juan's revelation further complicate Sierra's feelings about her grandfather? (p. 110)

#### Chapter Eighteen | Pages 111-118

1. How do the spirits communicate with Juan to let him know that Sierra is in trouble? (p. 113-114)
2. What was Abuelo's form as a shadowshaper? (p. 115-116)
3. What is the most common form for a shadowshaper? (p. 115)
4. What more does Sierra learn from Wick's file entry on March 16<sup>th</sup>? (p. 117-118)

#### Chapter Nineteen | Pages 119-132

1. Who shows up at Sierra's window? How does she respond? (p. 120-121)
2. Why did Robbie leave Sierra alone when the corpuscles appeared? (p. 121-122)
3. Describe Robbie's tattoo. Who is represented in it? (p. 125-127)
4. Who are the Taíno? Why is Sierra surprised that Robbie has a Taíno tattoo? (p. 125-126)
5. What is a throng haint? How is it created? (p. 128-129)
6. What does Robbie discover about Sierra? (p. 131)

#### Chapter Twenty | Pages 133-140

1. What are the two things that matter most in shadowshaping? Explain their significance. (p. 134-135)
2. How is shadowshaping an exchange? (p. 137)
3. What shadow does Sierra give a shape or form to? (p. 138)

#### Chapter Twenty-One | Pages 141-147

1. What does Sierra draw to track Robbie? (p. 141)
2. What is Sierra's first reaction to the humming of the spirits? (p. 142-143)
3. What does Sierra realize about the spirits? What are they doing to her? (p. 144-145)
4. How does Sierra prepare for combat shaping with Robbie? (p. 145-146)

#### Chapter Twenty-Two | Pages 148-152

1. What does Sierra dream about? Do you think this is a prediction of something? Explain. (p. 148-149)
2. How does Sierra confront her Tía Rosa? How and why is this a

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turning point for Sierra? (p. 150-152)

Chapter Twenty-Three | Pages 153-158

1. Who does Sierra call on her way to the Junklot? What does she learn about the Sorrows? (p. 153-155)

Chapter Twenty-Four | Pages 159-164

1. While Sierra and her friends are joking about the hipster coffee shop, they're also critiquing how and why their neighborhoods are changing. What is the critique? Why is there an issue with businesses like this coffee shop opening up in their neighborhoods? (p. 159-161)
2. How does the conversation among Sierra, Tee, Izzy, and Jerome about where their people are from demonstrate the complexity and diversity within the Latino and/or Caribbean community? What stereotypes are critiqued through this conversation? (p. 162-163)
3. How is the statement "I doubt her African and Taíno ancestors feel like it's 'whatever'" a critique of colonialism? (p. 163)
4. What else happens that causes Sierra to worry even more about Manny? (p. 163-164)

Chapter Twenty-Five | Pages 166-173

1. Why will more "bakeries and boutiques" mean more train stations? (p. 166)
2. What do they find at the *Searchlight* offices? (p. 168-172)

Chapter Twenty-Six | Pages 174-176

1. What do the police find when they check the *Searchlight* offices? (p. 174-175)
2. Who does Sierra fear Wick will go after next? (p. 176)

Chapter Twenty-Seven | Pages 177-183

1. What is El Mar usually like? How is it different the night that Juan's band plays? (p. 177)
2. Who or what does Sierra find protecting Juan at El Mar? (p. 178-179)
3. What clue is in the band's song? (p. 181)
4. Why does the group have to exit the club so quickly? (p. 182-183)

Chapter Twenty-Eight | Pages 184-192

1. Once the group decodes the riddle, what does it mean? (p. 189-192)
2. Where does the group need to go? (p. 192)

Chapter Twenty-Nine | Pages 193-199

1. Who does Sierra let know that they're heading to Coney Island? (p. 194)
2. How do Sierra's friends react when she tells them the whole story? How do you think you would react if one of your friends told you this story? (p. 196-199)
3. Who stays with Sierra? (p. 199)

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4. Do you think that they're walking into a trap? Explain. (p. 199)

Chapter Thirty | Pages 200-207

1. What is Coney Island like at night? (p. 200-201)
2. How have the corpuscles disguised themselves? (p. 203-204)
3. Does it seem like the others can see or hear the thronh haint? Explain. (p. 203-207)
4. Who saves Juan? How does he do it? (p. 206)

Chapter Thirty-One | Pages 208-211

1. How does the thronh haint trick Sierra into getting close to it? (p. 208-209)
2. What happens when Sierra reaches the water? (p. 210-211)

Chapter Thirty-Two | Pages 212-224

1. What does Sierra find when she enters the ocean? (p. 212-213)
2. Where does Lucera take Sierra? What does she show her? (p. 214)
3. Who is Lucera? (p. 214-215)
4. Why is Sierra angry with her grandmother? (p. 215-216)
5. Why didn't Sierra's grandparents tell her anything about the shadowshapers? (p. 217-218)
6. What prompted Abuela/Lucera to leave? (p. 218-219)
7. Where does the true source of shadowshaper magic come from? (p. 220)
8. Why can't Mama Carmen return with Sierra? (p. 222)

Chapter Thirty-Three | Pages 225-227

1. As Sierra returns to her friends, she starts to feel better about having to fight Wick and figure out her powers without Mama Carmen. What makes her feel that way? (p. 225-226)
2. Why is Bennie crying when Sierra returns? (p. 227)

Chapter Thirty-Four | Pages 228-235

1. What happened to Robbie? (p. 228)
2. What comes out when Sierra confronts her mom about all that has been kept secret? (p. 232-234)
3. Make a prediction: Who do you think Sierra suspects is Wick's spy? (p. 235)

Chapter Thirty-Five | Pages 236-243

1. Why does Sierra suspect Nydia? Why did Sierra trust Nydia initially? Do you think Nydia is helping Wick? Explain. (p. 236)
2. What is Nydia's research on? (p. 240)
3. Where does Sierra want Nydia to take her? Why? (p. 241-242)
4. What will happen to Sierra's powers if she confronts the Sorrows? (p. 242)

Chapter Thirty-Six | Pages 244-253

1. Is Neville a shadowshaper? What is his role in the story? (p. 244-245)
2. What happens when Sierra confronts the Sorrows? (p. 249)



3. How did Wick fail the Sorrows? What do the Sorrows want from Sierra? (p. 250-251)
4. How does Sierra get the information she needs from the Sorrows? (p. 252-253)
5. Where is Wick? (p. 253)

#### Chapter Thirty-Seven | Pages 254-262

1. Who shows up at the Tower to meet Nydia and Sierra? (p. 255)
2. Sierra thinks they should split up and Bennie thinks they should stay together. What do you think the best plan is? Why? (p. 257)
3. What attacks the group first? (p. 259) How does the first battle go? (p. 260-262)

#### Chapter Thirty-Eight | Pages 263-269

1. How does the chalk phantom attack Sierra? What does it make her feel? (p. 265-266)
2. How can the group fight the chalk phantoms? (p. 268-269)

#### Chapter Thirty-Nine | Pages 270-276

1. What has happened to Robbie when Sierra finds him? (p. 271-272)
2. How did Wick create the chalk phantoms? (p. 273)
3. Where do Sierra and Robbie find Wick? What is he doing? (p. 274)
4. How does Wick trap the spirits? (p. 275)

#### Chapter Forty | Pages 277-282

1. How does Robbie respond when Sierra tells him she is the new Lucera? (p. 278)
2. What is Sierra's plan? (p. 278-279)
3. Does Sierra's chalk figure work? (p. 279)
4. What happens when Sierra realizes she can be the vessel? What does she remember that helps her to realize what she is capable of? (p. 279-281)

#### Chapter Forty-One | Pages 283-289

1. Who does Sierra recognize when the dragon painting comes to life? (p. 283)
2. Wick claims that he and Sierra want the same thing. How does Sierra counter this and prove him wrong? (p. 287)
3. What words from Mama Carmen help Sierra to defeat the throning haint? (p. 288-289)

#### Chapter Forty-Two | Pages 290-293

1. What is happening to Sierra's family while she battles Wick in the Tower? (p. 290-291)
2. What does Sierra learn about the dead as they leave her and swarm Wick? (p. 291-292)
3. What becomes of Wick? Does Sierra kill him? What would you have done in that situation? (p. 292-293)

#### Epilogue | Pages 294-297

1. What are they celebrating when they gather at the beach? (p. 295-

**Reflective  
Writing  
Questions**

296)

2. How has María changed from the beginning to the end of the story? Explain. (p. 295-297)
3. Do you think Sierra will eventually make peace with her grandfather? How would you feel if you were Sierra in that situation? Would you be able to forgive him? (p. 295)

Reflective Writing Questions:

1. How does *Shadowshaper* compare to other fantasy books you've read? Discuss the differences and similarities. *Shadowshaper* is specifically urban fantasy. How does this make it different from other types of fantasy? What makes it *urban* fantasy?
2. Older uses his novel as a means to critique gentrification. Identify the ways in which he does this. What do you think about gentrification? Do you agree with Older that it is problematic? Explain. Or, do you think it is a positive change? Explain.
3. In what ways does Older weave in statements of protest for the lived reality of youth and communities of color? Think about the way he engages the ideas of police violence, the deaths of young men of color, stereotypes, and the ways in which Sierra feels like an outsider in certain neighborhoods.
4. One of the critiques made of fantasy novels is the predominance of white characters and a lack of characters of color. Older's *Shadowshaper* counters this by creating a book that focuses on a community of color. He also counters many of the negative stereotypes about youth of color that are perpetuated through media, music, and even books. How does he contradict these stereotypes? Think about the main characters. For example, take the following quote about Izzy, "Izzy wrapped up with a triumphant and brutal verse rhyming spastic, sarcastic, and less than fantastic, and the crowd erupted in thunderous applause" (p. 13). Think about the stereotypes often presented about the academic abilities of youth of color. How does this contradict those?
5. Often times when a book does include a Latin@ character, this person is presented as if there is a universal Latin@ identity. How do Older's characters complicate this idea? Think about the conversations they have about where they're from and who their ancestors are (pages 162-163). The idea of a 'pan-Asian' identity has been critiqued. Should we also critique the idea of a 'pan-Latin@' identity? Explain.
6. In what ways is the story a critique of patriarchy and sexism? Use examples from the text to support your answer.

## **ABOUT US & THIS GUIDE**

The Latin American & Iberian Institute (LAI) receives resources from the U.S. Department of Education to support K-12 teaching about Latin America. Our goal is to provide a supportive environment for teaching across grade levels and subject areas so educators can bring regional and linguistic knowledge of Latin America into their classrooms. For more information and materials that support teaching about Latin America in the classroom, visit our website at <http://laii.unm.edu/outreach>

Written by staff at the LAII, **Vamos a Leer Educator's Guides** provide an excellent way to teach about Latin America through literacy. Each guide is based upon a book featured in the Vamos a Leer book group. For more on Vamos a Leer, visit our blog at [bit.ly/vamosaleer](http://bit.ly/vamosaleer). This guide was prepared by Katrina Dillon, LAII Project Assistant and Alice Donahue, LAII Graduate Assistant.

To complement this guide, the LAII oversees the **Vamos a Leer blog**, which provides a space for exploring how to use literature to teach about Latin America, the Caribbean, and Latinos in the United States. In addition to promoting discussion, the blog shares relevant resources and curriculum materials. Visit the blog at the following address: <http://bit.ly/vamosaleer>.