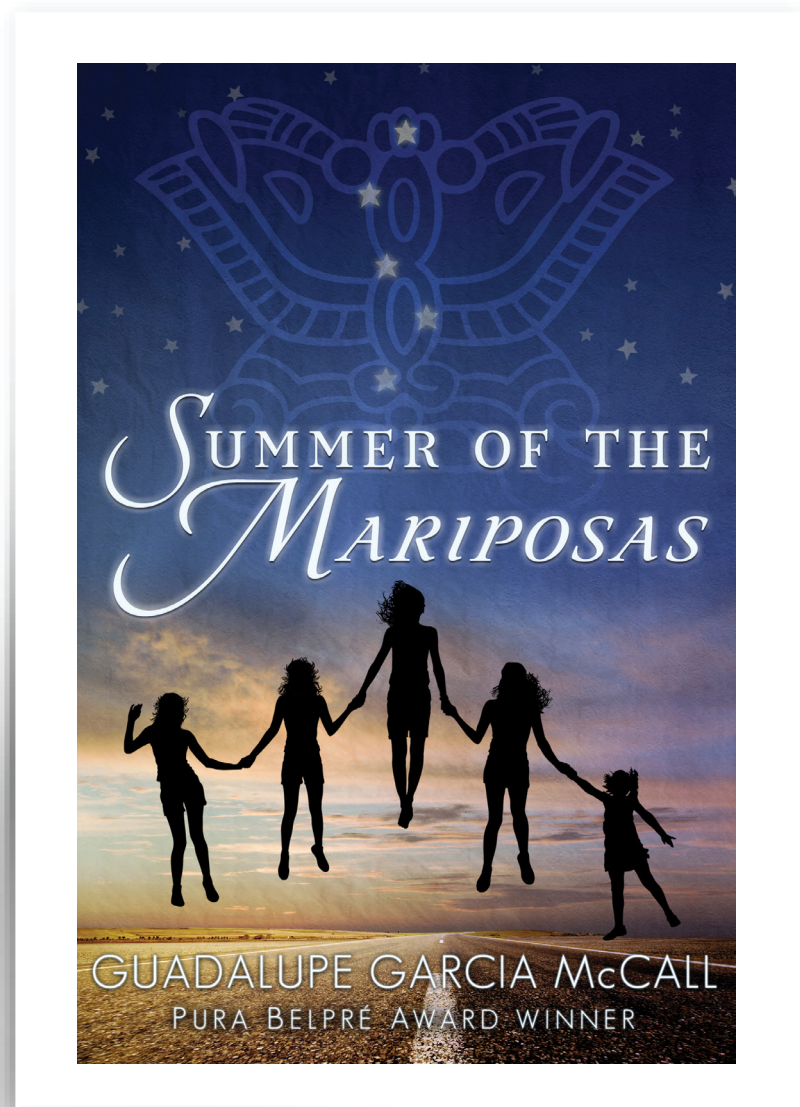


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Educator's Guide

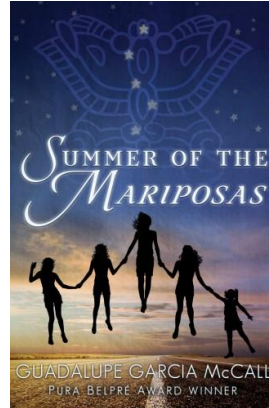
Summer of the Mariposas

Written by Guadalupe Garcia McCall

Published by Tu Books (Lee & Low Books), 2012

ISBN: 9781600609008

Age Level: Grades 5 and Up



BOOK SUMMARY

When Odilia and her four sisters find a dead body in the swimming hole, they embark on a hero's journey to return the dead man to his family in Mexico. But returning home to Texas turns into an odyssey that would rival Homer's original tale.

With the supernatural aid of ghostly La Llorona via a magical earring, Odilia and her little sisters travel a road of tribulation to their long-lost grandmother's house. Along the way, they must outsmart a witch and her Evil Trinity: a wily warlock, a coven of vicious half-human barn owls, and a bloodthirsty livestock-hunting chupacabras. Can these fantastic trials prepare Odilia and her sisters for what happens when they face their final test, returning home to the real world, where goddesses and ghosts can no longer help them?

Summer of the Mariposas is not just a magical Mexican American retelling of The Odyssey, it is a celebration of sisterhood and maternal love.

AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS:

- 2013 Andre Norton Award Nominee
- Westchester Fiction Award
- 2012 School Library Journal List of Best Books

AUTHOR'S CORNER

About Guadalupe Garcia McCall:

Guadalupe Garcia McCall was born in Piedras, Negras, Coahuila, Mexico. Her family immigrated to the United States when she was six years old. She grew up in Eagle Pass, a small border town in South Texas, and the setting of *Under the Mesquite*. Trained in theater arts and English, she now teaches English/Language Arts at a junior high school. Her poems for adults have appeared in more than twenty literary journals. *Under the Mesquite*, her first book, is a contemporary novel inspired by the difficult experiences her own family went through during her teen years. McCall lives with her husband and their three sons in the San Antonio, Texas area.

A little more about the author in her own words:

My name is Guadalupe Garcia McCall, but most people call me Loop. I like to sit on my porch, listen to the sounds of nature, and write stories about the complexities and magic of growing up. When I write, I think about how important and valuable life and all of its experiences are, so I try to write stories that give meaning to those experiences. My debut novel, *Under the Mesquite*, is not just a story about personal loss; it is a story about the blessings of family and the power of memory and love. I hope you enjoy reading it.



Check out [Guadalupe Garcia McCall's website](#) for more information about the author.

USING SUMMER OF THE MARIPOSAS IN THE CLASSROOM

Summer of the Mariposas is the second book by Guadalupe Garcia McCall that we've featured for our monthly book group. Last May we read *Under the Mesquite*, and loved it. Thematically there are some similarities, however these are two very different novels. While *Under the Mesquite* is a realistic novel in verse, *Summer of the Mariposas* is a novel of magical realism, which is one of the things that makes it so special. Magical realism is one of my favorite genres. I fell in love with it during my first semester of Latin American Literature. As much as my students loved fantasy, I would have loved to have shared some examples of magical realism with them, but unfortunately, I never knew of any books that would be appropriate for my elementary school students. It's not like I could have used *One Hundred Years of Solitude* for read aloud with my 3rd graders. Garcia McCall's novel offers us just such a book—and one that I think many of my students would have really enjoyed. While they loved a variety of books from various genres, fantasy was almost always a hit for read aloud. They talked about *The Headless Cupid* by Zilpha Keatly Snyder all year. Harry Potter and Percy Jackson were always well-loved and popular heroes. There are lots of discussions as to the lack of imagination and creativity in schools today, and the effect this is having on our students, but despite this, many of my students never seemed to have

trouble suspending disbelief when it came to a well-told tale. While they loved the stories I mentioned above, I believe they would have been ecstatic over a fantastical story like *Summer of the Mariposas* that included La Llorona, the chupacabras, and lechuzas because these were myths they knew, that they'd grown up hearing about. I loved how Garcia McCall took the story of La Llorona and made it more complex. As the guide or mentor for the girls, La Llorona was no longer just an evil woman, but a woman who had suffered the devastating loss of her own children. It's an interesting premise that could be explored further—how often do we oversimplify someone's story to the point that we no longer have an authentic representation of that person?

As an adult reader, perhaps I wanted a more complex plot, and I'm not going to deny occasional frustration with the fighting among the sisters, and their tendency to make the same mistakes over and over again. But, I'm not sure if those are necessarily issues for the target age group of the novel. As a teacher, I saw some of my students act in similar ways to the sisters—so maybe it might help them to see someone else learning from those mistakes!

Like *Under the Mesquite*, family relationships are an important theme, especially the relationships between sisters and between mother and daughter. By the end of the novel, the sisters have found themselves and seem to have a better understanding of how they are and their importance to each other. One of my favorite parts of the book is how Odilia's relationship with her mother develops and changes. I think mother-daughter relationships can be difficult and as daughters we don't always understand our mothers or why they are the way they are. Odilia comes to learn a great deal about herself and her mother, allowing her relationship with her mother to grow and deepen.

If you'd like to read what others have thought about the book, check out the links to other reviews below:

- [Review in Spanish from La Bloga](#)
- [Kirkus Review](#)
- [School Library Journal Review](#)

And to hear more about what the author has to say on the novel, check out:

- [Guadalupe Garcia McCall on How Writing Heals](#) (an excerpt from her 2012 Pura Belpré acceptance speech for *Under the Mesquite*)
- [Interview from Lee & Low Books](#)

**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.

In addition to the lesson plans and activities included here, check out the following resources provided by [Lee & Low Books](http://www.leeandlow.com/books/484/hc/summer_of_the_mariposas) (http://www.leeandlow.com/books/484/hc/summer_of_the_mariposas):

- [Mythological Glossary](#)
- [Discussion Questions](#)
- [First three chapters of the novel](#)

The author also runs a Facebook page for the novel where you can join others in conversation and hear from Garcia McCall herself:

- [FB Page for *Summer of the Mariposas*](#)

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.

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

Social Studies

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

Geography:

The girls live in Eagle Pass, Texas and drive to El Sacrificio, Mexico. Find Eagle Pass on a map, and then find El Sacrificio. Trace a possible route the girls may have traveled. Can you imagine traveling that distance on your own? How would you have felt attempting that trip without an adult?

La Llorona:

La Llorana is an important character in McCall's book. Students may or may not be familiar with the many versions of legends surrounding La Llorona. There are a number of excellent books based La Llorona legends. I've listed some examples below. Read some of these books with your students, discussing what the story of La Llorona is and what the purpose of such a legend may be. As students read *Summer of the Mariposas* discuss how McCall's version of La Llorona differs from others. Create a Venn Diagram comparing and contrasting McCall's version of La Llorona with another book's portrayal. Discuss why McCall may have wanted to change the legend. Think about what role La Llorona plays in the novel.

- [La Llorona / The Weeping Woman](#) (English and Spanish Edition) by Joe Hayes, Vicki Trego Hill and Mona Pennypacker
- [La Llorona: The Crying Woman](#) (Multilingual Edition) (English and Spanish Edition) by Rudolfo Anaya, Amy Córdova and Enrique R. Lamadrid
- [El Arroyo de la Llorona y otros cuentos](#) by Sandra Cisneros
- [Prietita and the Ghost Woman/Prietita y la llorona](#) by Gloria Anzaldua and Maya Christina Gonzalez

For a more in-depth study of La Llorona, I've linked to possible lesson plans below.

- [Teaching the Epic through Ghost Stories](#) by Traci Gardner
- [The Mexican legends of "La Llorona and La Ixtabay"](#)
- [Folktales: A Bilingual Literature Unit](#) by Julianne Hammink

Literary Analysis

Make a Prediction and La Loteria:

The game La Loteria is mentioned frequently throughout the novel. If students are unfamiliar with how the game is played use either of these links to explain the game to them:

- <http://zonezero.com/exposiciones/fotografos/loteria/loteria.html>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loter%C3%ADa_%28board_game%29

McCall begins each of her chapters with a riddle that would accompany a specific Loteria card. At the beginning of each chapter read the riddle. Then, ask students to predict what they think will happen in that chapter based upon the riddle. Once students have finished a chapter, return to the riddle and discuss how it foreshadows what happened in the chapter.

Magical Realism:

Magical realism is an important part of McCall's novel. As the name suggests, magical realism is blending of the magical or fantastical with the realistic, not limiting itself to either of the two genres. As students read the novel, ask them to pick out the realistic from the magical. Which parts of the story could actually happen? Which are less likely to be possible? Why do you think the author chose this genre for her novel? What does this genre allow her to do? For a more in-depth look at magical realism click on the links below for lesson plans.

- [Do you really believe in magic?](#) By Ann Gerber and Tericia Summers
- [Introduction to Magical Realism: Welcome to the world where reality as we know it is invaded by something strange to believe!](#) By Natasha Rubens

Part One:

Guided Reading Questions

1. Why can Mama no longer be a housewife? What does she have to do? (p. 2)
2. How do the five sisters spend their summer? Compare it to how you spend your summer break—how is it alike or different? (p. 3-4)
3. What would you have done if you'd been swimming and discovered a dead body in the water? (p. 6-7)
4. What are the girls afraid of if they report the dead man to la migra? What are the rumors? (p. 12-13)
5. Who does the dead man remind the girls of? Do you think this influences their decision on what to do? (p. 16-19)
6. What do the girls hope to find out if they go to El Sacrificio? Who lives there that they know? (p. 21)
7. What is the sisters' motto? Think about how they get along, does it surprise you that they've chosen this? (p. 25)
8. When they return home, the four youngest sisters start packing and planning for the trip to Mexico, but Odilia, the oldest says, ". . . I knew very well how this was going to turn out. They weren't going anywhere. They just didn't know it yet" (p. 26). Predict what you

think will happen: will the sisters go to Mexico? What will become of the dead man's body?

9. The girls reference the code of the cinco hermanitas numerous times throughout the book. As you read, keep a list of the different rules of the code. At the end of the book answer the following questions: Are these rules that you would include in your code? What rules would you add? Would you get rid of any of the girls' rules? Explain your answer.
10. How does Odilia feel about being the oldest? Do you think she has too much responsibility? (p. 36-37) How would you feel if you were Odilia?
11. What do you think the five shooting stars symbolize? (p. 37)
12. How do the four younger sisters coerce Odilia into going on the trip to Mexico? (p. 41-43)
13. When the girls return to get the dead man's body, what does Odilia see along the riverbank? Does Odilia think that the children she sees are real? How do you know? (p. 45-46) What do you think—are the children and the woman real? Explain your answer.
14. Who is the woman that Odilia sees? (p. 48) What do the stories say that she did to her children? (p. 49) What is her version of the story? (p. 49-50)
15. What does La Llorona tell Odilia that the sisters must do? What will happen if they do not take this path? (p. 52-53)
16. What does La Llorona give to Odilia to help her on their travels? How does it work? (p. 54-55)
17. What happens to make Odilia realize that La Llorona and her magic were real? (p. 66)
18. Who remembers how to get through the check point at Piedras Negras? What does the officer want? (p. 71)
19. What does Odilia find when she returns to where she's left the girls to get lunch? (p. 77)
20. How do the girls imagine they will be received when they bring the dead man back to his family? (p. 81) Predict what you think will happen.
21. What clue do the girls get that the family may not be excited about the dead man's return? (p. 83-84)
22. What kind of party is the dead man's family having? Explain why it surprises the girls so much? (p. 87)
23. Explain what the saying "too much cream spoils the tacos" means (p. 88). Why does Odilia remind the sisters of this before they go in to meet the family?
24. Describe the scene where the family realizes their father has returned. Do they know he's dead? How do they find out? (p. 96-98)

Part Two:

1. How does Odilia get the family to stop pressuring them to call their mother? What do the sisters learn then? (p. 108-110)
2. What does Odilia find when she goes to get the paper for Ines?

- How will this complicate the girls' plan to visit their grandmother? (p. 117)
3. Who are two of the people of interest in the sisters' disappearance? Imagine you are Mama. How do you think she is feeling? (p. 120-122)
 4. What happens 15 miles outside of El Sacrificio? (p. 127)
 5. What do you think of the woman the girls meet on the side of the road? (p. 129-130) Would you trust her? Think about the Loteria clue for this chapter (p. 118). Predict what you think is going to happen.
 6. Why do you think Cecilia keeps feeding the girls? What do you think is in the food? (p. 135)
 7. How does Odilia finally realize that something is wrong about Cecilia and her house? (p. 141)
 8. Who helps Odilia rid herself of Cecilia's potion? What does her potion do? (p. 142-146)
 9. How does Cecilia respond when the girls try to leave in the morning? (p. 151-153)
 10. What mistake do the girls make when leaving Cecilia's? What were the girls warned about? What do you think will happen now? (p. 157-159)
 11. If you were the girls would you trust Teresita and the old man? Explain why or why not. (p. 159-161)
 12. Teresita tells the girls "It's a difficult road you've taken, one riddled with hardships and painful ordeals, but then again, you are difficult children" (p. 162). Do you agree, do you think the girls are difficult? Explain.
 13. Do you think the girls' behavior is really Odilia's fault? Think about how the sisters have acted so far. Do you think they would have heeded Odilia's warning and not taunted the witch? (p. 164)
 14. What is the nagual? What must they do to defeat him? (p. 165-166)
 15. What are the lechuzas? What must they do to escape them? (p. 166)
 16. What is the chupacabras? What must they do to save themselves from it? (p. 168-169)
 17. What do you think about the donkey? Do you think the girls should trust it? (p. 171-173)
 18. How do the sisters learn what the donkey really is? (p. 181-183)
 19. Why does the nagual need the five sisters? What will sacrificing them do for him? (p. 185)
 20. What happens when the girls sing the song of the cave? Describe what the scene looked like. (p. 189-190)
 21. Predict what you think is going to happen when the girls go in the barn. (p. 198-199). What would you do in their situation—it's getting dark and you need shelter, but you know there is the threat of the lechuzas. Would you stay in the barn or not? Why?
 22. Describe what the lechuzas look like. Have you ever seen anything like that? (p. 201-202)
 23. What do the lechuzas sound like? What kinds of things do they say? Why do you think they do this—what does it achieve with the girls? (p. 202-207)

24. What do you think about Delia's and Velia's tendency to always think everything is okay? Think about when they met Cecilia, the nagual, and some of the other characters. Do they ever heed Odilia's warning? How do they act when they meet the boy? Do they trust him? Would you trust him after everything the sisters have been through? (p. 214-219)
25. What does Chenchó tell the sisters about the chupacabras? (p. 226-227)
26. What does Odilia wake up to find? (p. 231-232)
27. Why do the girls decide not to kill the chupacabras? (p. 236) Do you think this was the right decision? Why or why not?
28. How does Abuela Remedios take care of Pita's wound? (p. 246)
29. What was the main reason the girls wanted to find Abuela Remedios? By the time they get there is that the most important thing to them? Explain. (p. 249)
30. What do they learn from Abuela about their father? How does Abuela describe Papa? (p. 249-251)
31. After talking to Abuelita, the girls have greater insight into why their mother has acted the way she has. What do they learn about her? What do they realize about themselves and their own actions? (p. 253-257)

Part Three:

1. What does Abuelita give to Odilia to take home? (p. 262)
2. What do the girls realize they don't have that they need to get back home? Why do they need these? How do they solve the problem? (p. 267-271)
3. Describe the scene when the girls see Tonantzin. (p. 271-273)
4. Tonantzin speaks in riddles to the girls. What do you think her riddles or messages mean? (p. 273-276)
5. How do the girls get across the border? (p. 278-281)
6. Do the roses change Mama as Odilia expected? (p. 291-291) Do you think the roses were meant for Mama? Or a different mother?
7. How do the girls react to Papa's return? How do you think you would have reacted? Should the girls trust him? (p. 296-298)
8. What was Papa hiding from the girls? Who else is in the house? (p. 300-304)
9. Think about the confrontation between the sisters, Mama and Papa. How have the sisters changed since the beginning of the story? How has Mama changed? Do you think the changes are for the better? (p. 305-311)
10. Who does Odilia realize the roses were meant for? (p. 321) What happens when Odilia gives the right mother the roses? (p. 323-325)
11. How does the story end? Do you think that was the best way to bring the girls' journey to a close? (p. 328-334)

**Reflective
Writing
Questions**

1. La Llorona tells Odilia that she and her sisters must go on this journey in order to find happiness. Having completed the novel, why do you think La Llorona said that? What happened as a result of their experiences during their travels? How did the girls change? What do you think would have happened if the girls hadn't gone to Mexico?
2. In *Summer of the Mariposas* McCall changes the traditional legend of La Llorona and the chupacabras. Instead of simply being a horrible mother cast as an evil person or a monster, McCall complicates the stories showing that things often aren't as simple as we think they are, people aren't just good or bad. Think of the myths, fables or fairy tales you've heard with traditional villains or 'bad guys.' How would you re-write your story so that the villain's story was more complex?
3. Who was your favorite character in the novel? Explain why.
4. Which character do you think changed the most? Explain how they changed and why you chose that person.

**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 LAI, **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. This guide was prepared May, 2013 by Katrina Dillon, LAI Project Assistant.

To complement this guide, the LAI 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>.