

LOLA REYES IS SO NOT WORRIED

Educators' Guide



ABOUT THE BOOK



In this magical middle grade adventure by Cindy L. Rodriguez, a Guatemalan American girl fights to stop her cursed worry dolls before they blanket her friends and neighbors in anxiety—and the grief she carries over the loss of her father. Perfect for fans of *The Doll People* and *The Total Eclipse of Nester Lopez*!

Lola Reyes doesn't want to leave Guatemala, a place full of warmth and sun, laughter and music—where her abuela and prima and tíos and tías surround her with love. Back in Sunnyside, it's cold. There's schoolwork and chores. And her mama transforms into Lola's super-serious school principal, Dr. Reyes.

Back at home...Lola can see, crystal clear, the empty place where Pop used to be. So Lola decides to bring a little bit of Guatemala—and Pop—back with her. She discovers his box of childhood worry dolls and sneaks them into her luggage, ignoring the warnings on the box not to use them. Later, when she tells them all her worries, from her friendship woes to the way Mama won't talk about how sad she is, the worry dolls come to life. Worse—they escape.

Lola has to enlist her neighbor and nemesis, Chance Townsend, to recapture the dolls because she discovers they're cursed. And as they absorb worries, they'll grow bigger and bigger. If Lola can't find a way to stop them, they'll burst, releasing all the worries they've absorbed a hundredfold on everyone in town. But when breaking the curse might mean confronting her own anxieties and grief, will Lola be able face her emotions before it's too late?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cindy L. Rodriguez is a lifelong book nerd and longtime advocate for Latinxs in children's literature. She is the author of the YA novel *When Reason Breaks* and the award-winning picture book *Three Pockets Full: A Story of Love, Family, and Tradition*. She has also written several projects for Capstone. Cindy, who is of Puerto Rican and Brazilian descent, has degrees in English and journalism from UConn and Central Connecticut State University and has worked as a journalist and middle school teacher. She is now a senior editor for an educational publisher. When she's not working, reading, or writing, she's hanging out with her family and two dogs in Connecticut. She is super fond of the three Cs: coffee, chocolate, and coconut. Find her online at cindylrodriguez.com.



ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The Common Core Standards push readers to look closer when reading a text including examining key ideas & details, craft & structure, and integration of knowledge & ideas. Cindy L. Rodriguez's novel *Lola Reyes Is So Not Worried* includes opportunities to look at characterization, cause/effect, figurative language, and more which allow the reader to deeply delve into the text. This teaching guide includes discussion questions and English language arts activities to be used in grades 3-7 as this text is read as a whole group, small group, or a combination. This guide could also be modified to be used with a student who is reading the novel independently.

The Common Core Anchor Standards in English Language Arts that can be addressed using the discussion questions and activities in this guide are:

English Language Arts

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1

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.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3

Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4

Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.10

Read and comprehend complex literary texts independently and proficiently.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.7

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Use these questions as reading check-ins, writing prompts, or classroom discussions throughout *Lola Reyes Is So Not Worried* by Cindy L. Rodriguez.

1. What is the best hiding spot in your house for hide and seek?
2. What do the interactions between Maria Elena and Lola during hide and seek, right at the beginning of the book, tell you about both characters and their relationship?
3. When Lola runs by her Pop's picture (page 4), it makes her halt. What are the powers of photographs?
4. Why do adults push themselves so hard and forget to take breaks or show weakness? What are some ways that we see this happening with Lola's mama?
5. How is it that there are symbols that we all know, like zipping our lips and "locking" it to indicate keeping a secret (page 5)?
6. Different families greet each other differently. How does your family greet? How is it similar or different from Lola's (page 23)?
7. There was foreshadowing that there may be something foreboding happening with Doña Hilda and the worry dolls before we actually knew what was happening. What were some of the incidents that gave us clues that something was up?
8. Lola shares many reasons why Guatemala is her favorite place to visit. What is your favorite place to visit? Why?
9. In the book summary, Guatemala is described as warm, and Sunnyside is described as cold. What about each place, specifically when Lola first returned to Sunnyside, lends to those settings being described with those adjectives?
10. Why was Ashlynn's use of the pronoun "we" (page 46) a punch to the gut for Lola? What is the connotation of using "we"?
11. Why is the new house such a lonely place for Lola? Why was the move so hard?
12. What is the difference between being bilingual vs. biliterate (page 51)?
13. Do you think everyone gets back-to-school jitters (page 59)? Why do you think that is?
14. What do classroom decorations tell you about the teacher?
15. What do you feel about Chance's and Lola's plan that first night (page 85)? The next days?
16. Why do you think yawns are contagious (page 98)? Feel free to do some of the same research Lola did to figure out the answer!
17. Why is it important to eat throughout the day (page 100)?
18. Why do you think Lola didn't listen to Maria Elena and still brought the dolls home (Page 102)?
19. Lola really wants to solve the worry doll problem by herself, as it is important to try to fix your own problems yourself, but when should you ask for help (Page 111)? Do you think Lola waited too long to ask for help? Why do you think she waited so long?

20. On page 124, Lola contemplates checking in with a classmate who she sees crying. What do you think the right thing to do is?
21. Why do people, in our society, apologize for having emotions even though we all do (page 126)? What does this tell you about our society? What can we do to make this better for the future?
22. One page 128, readers have now seen a doll grow and shrink in size. What is your prediction about why they change?
23. What is the definition of bravery? Do you agree with the definition on page 151?
24. Chance reminds Josie that she may need to change her definition of success for herself (page 171) because the weight she is putting on herself is too heavy. How does this rethinking help Josie?
25. Why are some parents not supportive of their students focusing on the arts (Page 197)?
26. When Dr. Reyes's suit is described as a "Kamala Harris-type pant suit (page 218)" what do you picture in your head? Why would these specific words be used to describe the suit? What would the author want you to know about the outfit and the character?
27. Should Josie have been the one apologizing (page 243)? What does her going to Lola and forgiving her tell you about her as a person?
28. What does Lola mean by "You can't put lava back into a volcano. You can only hope to survive once it's erupted" (page 258)?
29. How did Chance's hobby of cryptozoology (study of mythical creatures such as Big Foot) help in the search for the worry dolls?
30. There were a lot of assumptions about Doña Hilda in the book, but by the end we know more about her. What did you think of her at the beginning of the book and how did that change by the end?
31. One of the themes of the book is that it is okay, and often important, to have multiple friends. Why is that true and how does the book support it?
32. Another theme of the book is how something that may seem small to one person could be huge for another. What are some examples of this within the book that support this theme?
33. The author used figurative language throughout the book (examples: personification page 7, simile page 58 & 256, and pun pages 24 & 68). How does figurative language add to the story? What other examples of figurative language did you encounter while reading?
 - **Extension:** Have students complete a figurative language scavenger hunt while reading! This is when they try to find figurative language throughout the book and share it with each other.

CLASSROOM EXTENSIONS

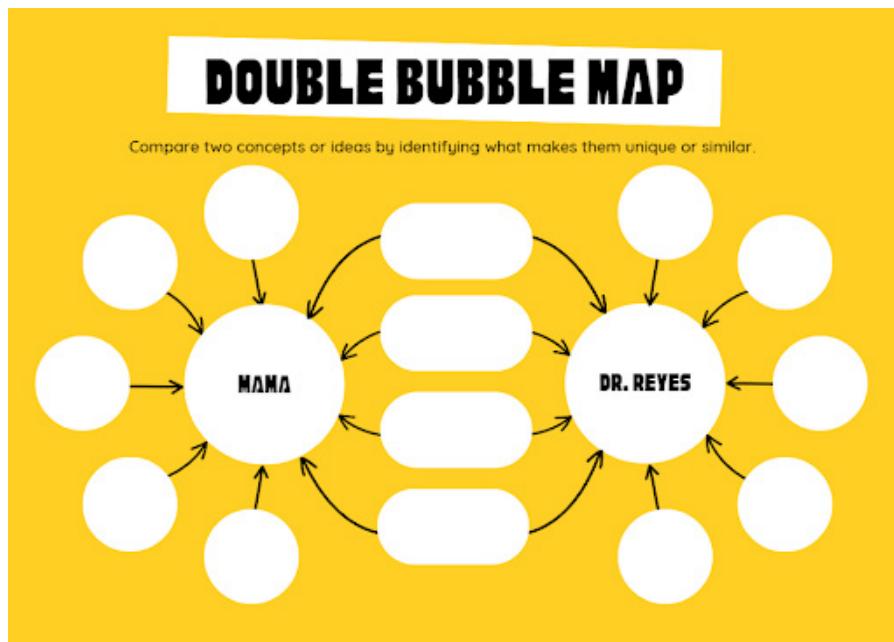
Use these activities to extend your students' thinking and experience with *Lola Reyes Is So Not Worried* by Cindy L. Rodriguez.

Mayan Mythology/History

- On pages 12-13 and 25, the reader is introduced to some Mayan Mythology and history; however, there is so much more to learn!
- Further introduce students to Mayan people using [Britannica](#), [National Geographic's Ancient Maya 101](#), and/or [Free School's Exploring Maya Civilization for Kids](#) then ask students to pick one myth, mythological being, or historical event to further research.
- Students then, individually or in pairs, will research their chosen topic to create a presentation to share with their classmates.

Mama vs. Dr. Reyes

- Lola never knows if she is going to get Mama or Dr. Reyes at home once school begins (page 58, 61, 70). Have students create a comparison/contrast graphic organizer looking at the differences between "Mama" and "Dr. Reyes."
- Example:



- Reflection Question: Why was it important for Mama to realize that she needed to leave Dr. Reyes at home for Lola's sake? How was bringing Dr. Reyes home affecting their relationship and home?

Acrostic

- Mrs. DasGupta was all about frogs, and she even had an acrostic poem showing class procedures using the word FROGS (Page 68).
- Have students create an acrostic poem for your class procedures!

Worries

- Mama shares with Lola that it is “Dangerous to teach children that their worries are going to disappear like magic. That doesn’t happen (page 55),” but there are ways to work through out worries!
- Use this as an opportunity to have a brainstorming session with students on ways for them to effectively deal with their worries/stress.
 - Guiding questions related to the book:
 - Why does Lola feel better after talking to Zoraida (page 76)?
 - How does meditation help Lola’s mom throughout the book (page 62, 63, 220)?
 - How can art therapy help (page 239)?

Read Around the World

- When Lola visits her school library, she shares that there is a “Read Around the World” bulletin board to celebrate the library’s theme. This map includes every country in the world and different books that take place in the country or authors who are from the country.
- Have your students create their own READ AROUND THE WORLD map!
- Extra activity: Just like Lola’s school librarian, students can help curate a book list for National Latinx/e month and other months throughout the year.

Worry Dolls

Have students complete this chart as they get the information about each of the Worry Dolls. This chart will help students keep track of the dolls while reading.

Worry Doll’s Name	Who they are connected to	What type of worries affected them	What they needed to shrink
Isabel			
Carlos			
Mercedes			
Zoraida			
Ricardo			
Mateo			

This guide was created by Kellee Moye, a middle school librarian in Orlando, FL. Kellee is the author of various teaching guides for all levels; the co-author of the blog [Unleashing Readers](#); Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of NCTE (ALAN) 2024 President and a member of the 2016-2018 ALAN Board of Directors; a jury member then co-chair of the 2020-2021 Schneider Family Award Jury; a member then chair of the Amelia Elizabeth Walden Book Award committee from 2012-2014; and a member of NCTE, ALAN, AASL, and ALA. Kellee can be reached at Kellee.Moye@gmail.com.