



## The Witch Owl Parliament: Clockwork Curandera Volume 1

written by David Bowles and Raúl the Third  
illustrated by Stacey Robinson and Damian Duffy

### About the Book

**Genre:** Fantasy, Graphic Novel

**Format:** 112 pages, 7-1/4 x 9-1/2

**ISBN:** 9781620145920

**Reading Level:** Grade 8

**Interest Level:** Grades 7–College

**Guided Reading Level:** Z+

**Spanish Guided Reading Level:** Z+

**Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:**  
N/A

**Lexile™ Measure:** N/A

\*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

**Themes:** Conflict resolution, Coping with Death, Courage, Families, Fantasy, Fiction, Heroism, Latino/Hispanic/Mexican Interest, LGBTQ, Mexico, Overcoming Obstacles, Paranormal, Spanish, Teen Interest, YA interest

**Resources on the web:**

[leeandlow.com/books/the-witch-owl-parliament-clockwork-curandera-1](http://leeandlow.com/books/the-witch-owl-parliament-clockwork-curandera-1)

[leeandlow.com/books/el-parlamento-de-lechuzas-curandera-mecanica-1](http://leeandlow.com/books/el-parlamento-de-lechuzas-curandera-mecanica-1)

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.

### SYNOPSIS

In the Republic of Santander, non-Christian magic is frowned upon, if not outright prohibited. But when Cristina Franco, an apprentice shaman, is killed by witch owls, her brother Enrique cannot let her go. With forbidden alchemy and engineering, Enrique brings her back to life: part human, part machine. Though her very existence is an abomination to Santander's citizens, Cristina vows to use her new abilities to protect her country from attack.

With help from a handsome skinwalker named Mateo, Cristina and Enrique track down the witch owl coven and uncover a sinister plot to bring Santander under the rule of *The Witch Owl Parliament*, whose legendary cruelty would dismantle the country's hard-won freedoms. At the same time, Indigenous folks and immigrants are disappearing from Santander—including Enrique's beloved, Gaspar. Could the attacks and the disappearances be related? As the witch owls attack more trains and more refugees go missing, the trio must uncover the witch owls' origins to understand their weakness.

Energetic illustrations by Pura Belpré Award winner Raúl the Third bring to life the words of award-winning author and poet David Bowles. Don't miss this amazing first volume of the Clockwork Curandera trilogy!

For the Spanish version of *The Witch Owl Parliament*, please visit the book page for *El parlamento de lechuzas (Curandera mecánica #1)*: <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/el-parlamento-de-lechuzas-curandera-mecanica-1>

## BACKGROUND

### Author's Note from David Bowles

"Let me be clear in case you don't know: curanderas are real. I grew up on the border between Texas and Mexico. My childhood was marked—as was my father's and grandfather's—by visits to these capable healers. With weird-smelling herbs and quirky prayers and oils that warmed my muscles beneath their deft hands, the curanderas cured me again and again, no matter what ailed me.

Not just physical sickness, understand. They knew how to grapple with my emotional or psychological issues as well, providing ancestral therapy that rivaled any counselor or psychiatrist.

And of course, there was the spiritual side of their craft. Many promised they could remove curses or counter attacks by dark forces. Time and again, they seemed to prove their powers to our community.

Curanderas struck me as more than human. They were living, breathing superheroes.

Now, I was a huge comic book fan as a kid. I was particularly drawn to magical, horror-tinged DC series like *House of Mystery*, *Swamp Thing*, and *Hellblazer*.

Then cyberpunk manga like *Akira* and *Ghost in the Shell* began to get published in English, and I had found my new love. By the time *Battle Angel Alita* came out, I was a convert.

All along, I was reading the greats of science fiction, including the mother of the genre: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. And when the steampunk genre steamed down the tracks of popular culture, I was an early adopter of the aesthetic.

As will happen in a mischievous mind like mine, all these elements eventually came together, morphing slowly in the recesses of my subconscious. One day, an idea bubbled to the surface.

What if a curandera—whose power to heal comes from her connection to nature—had to become a cyborg to survive? How would she deal with that new identity?

What if she lived in a steampunk version of the nineteenth century, not in some industrial European city, but here where my family has existed for centuries, in northern Mexico and south Texas?

I couldn't get her out of my head, this *Clockwork Curandera*. When I shared my ideas with illustrator Raúl the Third, he got her, immediately. His incomparable art captured her spirit and strength, her dedication to community, her desire to heal even as she fights to protect.

What a delight that Tu Books saw in Cristina Franco and her world a story they wanted to foster and bring to readers like you.

I hope you've enjoyed your time in the Republic of Santander, among its deserts and monsters, its monasteries and cantinas. There's so much more to see when you return. Robots and airships, shapeshifters and thunderbirds. Quite an adventure.

And like the curanderas of my childhood, Cristina will be there, too, ready to fend off the darkness. Ready to heal our hearts and minds as well as our bodies.

Until then, dear friends—steer clear of the screech owls.”

### Curanderas and Curanderismo

Curandismo is a form of traditional medicine within Mexican communities as well as other Latinx communities within the Americas. “Curar” means “to heal” in Spanish. Curanderas, female healers, and curanderos, male healers, have existed throughout history and use elements from nature as well as spiritual and psychological counseling to heal ailments and illnesses. Curandismo is based on the belief that the body, mind, and soul are all connected, and that to heal one, the others must be addressed. Indigenous cultures in North America practice similar medicine, calling their healers medicine men or women. In curandismo, women specifically have upheld prominent roles as healers, particularly through their involvement with midwifery and their special knowledge of healing properties. To learn more about curanderas and curanderismo, consult the Western Journal of Medicine’s article, “Curanderismo and Latino Views of Disease and Curing” (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1011018/>) as well as the VISTAS online article, “Cultural Awareness: Understanding Curanderismo” ([https://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/vistas/article\\_396cfd25f16116603abcacff0000bee5e7.pdf?sfvrsn=f2eb452c\\_4](https://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/vistas/article_396cfd25f16116603abcacff0000bee5e7.pdf?sfvrsn=f2eb452c_4)).

Set the example of what culturally responsive teaching looks like:

## BEFORE READING

### Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)  
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

Teachers must be aware and prepared that by teaching this novel (and the corresponding topics addressed in it) they may be addressing a legacy of harm and violence, specifically within largely minority and underrepresented socioeconomic groups.

- Why are some things forbidden and others are not?
- Ask students what they know about alchemy.
- Have you ever had to overcome something that other people did not agree with? What emotions emerge?
- How do you connect to nature?

- Who decides what is natural and unnatural within a culture?
- Explain what resilience means to you. How do you continue to be resilient, even when something is difficult or hard?
- What does resistance mean to you? Has there ever been a time(s) you stood up for what was right, even when it would be easier to stay quiet?
- As a hook for readers, consider showing students *The Witch Owl Parliament* (Clockwork Curandera #1) book trailer, posted on YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EKjA\\_w0GUXQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EKjA_w0GUXQ)

You may want to have students journal their responses to these questions or pose the final question as a KWL discussion and chart so that you can refer back to it throughout and after the reading of the book to further their thinking on the topic(s).

### Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1; Craft & Structure, Strand 5; and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)  
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

- **Book Walk:** Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, title page, author and illustrators' dedications, foreword, illustrations, and author's note at the end. Display the book and read aloud the title.
- **Book Title Exploration:** Talk about the title of the book. Go over the bolded words on the cover. What do the words "witch" "parliament" "clockwork" and "curandera" mean? Ask students what they think this book will most likely be about. What do they think might happen? What makes them think that? Discuss the cover illustration and have students talk about what they notice. How does the image relate to the title of the book?
- **Author/Illustrator:** Introduce students to David Bowles and Raúl the Third (the authors). Introduce students to Stacey Robinson and Damian Duffy (the illustrators). You can find information in the "about the authors" and "about the illustrators" section of this guide.
- Encourage students to stop and jot in their notebooks when they: learn new information, have an emotional reaction or an idea, have a question, or see new words.
- **Graphic Novel:** Introduce students to the main elements of a graphic novel. Spend time defining these elements and pointing to each in the book until students can identify them:
  - **Panel:** A distinct segment of the comic, containing a combination of image and text.
  - **Frame:** The lines and borders that contain the panels.
  - **Gutter:** The space between framed panels.
  - **Speech balloon:** These enclosed words come from a specific speaker's mouth to show dialogue between characters.
  - **Thought balloon:** These enclosed words show private thoughts with a series of dots or bubbles going up to it from a specific character.

## Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- who is a curandera?
- how does religion impact the characters in the story?
- how does Cristina Franco use her new abilities?
- what is the role of nature and healing throughout this story?

Encourage students to consider why the authors, David Bowles and Raúl the Third, would want to share this story with young people.

The students can also write down some questions of their own that they think the story might answer.

## VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word. (Many of the Spanish words can be found in the book glossary, but there are also some that are not included. Students could be encouraged to create a log of these words—they will not be listed here.)

### Content Specific

curandera, mages, lore, seize, resurrection, monastery, reverend, pagan, alchemy, bishop, alchemical, Aztecs, heathen, shaman, sentries, espionage, corrido, shapeshifter, rebozo, convalescing, diocese, chronophotographs, resin, carrizo, glyphs

### Academic

parliament, seize, blessing, recuperating, trauma, municipal, industrial chemistry, warped, expelled, aberrant, meager, inheritance, cesspool, tolerance, enlightenment, virtues, espouse, abomination, revive, hybrid, blasphemous, keenly, sacrilege, cloistered, realms, apprentice, essence, inquisition, refugees, tether, galvanic, corruption, plague, executed, inquiry, endurance, intercede, archivists, idolatry, Indigenous, indigenious, carouse, contingency, cryptic, despise, dandy, inscrutable, despotic, infestation, interlopers, fraught, recuperating, tedium, prejudice, treacherous, distributary, incursions, vengeance, espionage

## AFTER READING

### Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite textual evidence with their answers.**

### Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. How does the story begin? Where is Cristina and who is she waiting for?
2. What is the relationship between Cristina and Enrique?
3. Who attacks Cristina and Enrique?
4. Who is Teresa Franco?
5. What concerns does Bishop Vera have about Enrique?
6. How does Enrique bring Cristina back from the dead?
7. What role does Cristina have in society?
8. What are the three souls Cristina has learned about?
9. What new abilities does Cristina have after her resurrection?
10. Who does Enrique write a letter to?
11. How do Enrique and Cristina first learn of *The Witch Owl Parliament*?
12. Who is Mateo? Where is he from and what is his power?
13. Why is Enrique worried about Gaspar?
14. In Chapter 2, where does Cristina go to seek help?
15. How does Mama Conchita react to seeing Cristina?
16. Does Mama Conchita help Cristina? How?
17. Does Cristina get to keep her apprenticeship? Why or why not?
18. What code words does Mama Conchita use?
19. How do Enrique and Gaspar meet? What is their relationship?
20. Why does Enrique get expelled?
21. What happened to Cristina and Enrique's mother and father?
22. What did Mateo write for Cristina? What was it titled?



23. How does Mateo feel about Cristina?
24. How does Cristina learn to train with her new abilities?
25. Who is Demetria Noriega?
26. What does Enrique learn about Gasper in Laredo?
27. What threat does a witch owl issue at the end of the book?

### Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. What is the significance of the title *The Witch Owl Parliament: Clockwork Curandera Volume 1* after reading?
2. Why is Cristina so upset about her resurrection? What does she feel she has lost?
3. What is the relationship between alchemy and the church? Why are they opposed to one another? How does power impact the divisions between the two?
4. What strong characteristics does Enrique possess? How would you describe Enrique to someone who hasn't read the book? Did you connect with Enrique's character? Why or why not?
5. Why is it significant that Cristina and Enrique's parents fought against injustices? How does this inspire Cristina and Enrique?
6. On page 56 when Cristina says, "I hate fighting. I'm a healer" and Mateo replies, "can't you do both," why is this significant? Is it possible to be committed to healing and be a fighter?
7. Do you think Aunt Teresa is empathetic towards Enrique and Cristina? Why or why not?
8. On page 59, Enrique tells Gasper that close-minded people "forbid what they cannot understand." What evidence in the book supports Enrique's claim?
9. How does being a refugee impact Mateo? What obstacles does he face because of where he comes from?
10. What is the role of community in this story?
11. Both Cristina and Enrique are connected to other forms of knowledge that is connected to ancestors. What makes ancestral healing powerful in this story?
12. What is the role of geography in this story? Why is it important that much of the story takes places in Mexico and South Texas?
13. How does the prologue help better understand Cristina? What does it reveal about the world of *The Witch Owl Parliament*?
14. Find these graphic novel elements in the book: panels, gutters, text boxes, speech balloons, sound effects, and motion lines. How do these elements work together? If you remove any one of these elements, what is the effect? How does each and all of them taken together enable comprehension of the story?

15. Why do you think the authors and illustrators, choose the graphic novel format to explore the story of a curandera?

### Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. **Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion.** You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. What do you think the author's message to the reader is? Think about David Bowles' reader's note. What do you think he wanted to tell young readers?
2. Have students make a text-to-self connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to your own life? Have you witnessed an injustice and fought against it? What are ways you express yourself after an emotional event?
3. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books while you read *The Witch Owl Parliament (Clockwork Curandera #1)*? Why did you make those connections?
4. Have students make a text-to-world connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to what you have seen in the world or on the news? Why did *The Witch Owl Parliament (Clockwork Curandera #1)* make you think of that?
5. How has reading *The Witch Owl Parliament (Clockwork Curandera #1)* impacted your understanding of justice? What are some other ways people define justice? How would you define justice?
6. Prejudice results in the mistreatment and isolation of people based preconceived ideas and beliefs. Have you or someone you know ever been treated differently based on something they had no control over? How did you feel experiencing this or witnessing it? How did you react? What can we do to confront this kind of prejudice?
7. Cristina, Enrique, and Mateo come to rely on the support and knowledge of others at different points throughout the story. What does community mean to you? Think of the people in your life who you look to for guidance and support. How do these people support and help you? How have these people helped you overcome obstacles and challenges?

### ELL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)  
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.



3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
  - Review several chapters and have students summarize what happened, first orally, and then in writing.
  - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about either Cristina, Enrique, or Mateo. Have them discuss what characteristics they admire about the person they chose.
5. Have students illustrate a prejudice they want to fight against.
6. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.
7. Link concepts of discomfort and persistence, such as Cristina learning to embrace her new form, to the student's learning of a new language.
8. Complete frequent checks of understanding.
9. Read aloud a sentence and have students repeat the sentence after you, pointing to each word as they speak.
10. If possible, have students translate the English dialogue of a few pages from *The Witch Owl Parliament* into their birth language. Have students experiment with making their translated phrase fit in the given speech bubble. Students can share their graphic novels in different languages in a small group or with the whole class.
11. *The Witch Owl Parliament* is also available in a Spanish edition, *El parlamento de lechuzas* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/el-parlamento-de-lechuzas-curandera-mecanica-1>) if this is applicable to your classroom or relevant setting. Have students who can read the books in both languages think about the following questions: How do the English and Spanish editions differ? What was it like to read the book in English and separately in Spanish? Did you think about the story any differently in either version? Why or why not? Why do you think the author and illustrator wanted the story available in both English and Spanish?

### Social and Emotional Learning

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4-6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1-3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4-6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of this book.

1. Mateo's family experienced prejudices because of their ethnicity. How do you respond to prejudice or discrimination? When you experience it yourself and/or when you see it happening to others?
2. In what ways is Cristina able to be persistent and resilient throughout the novel?
3. Enrique and Cristina both deal with the loss of their parents. Have you ever dealt with a loss of someone you love? Why do some people become angry during times of sadness or trauma? What causes their anger? What are some other grieving processes people usually go through when dealing with the loss of someone they love?
4. Which illustration in *The Witch Owl Parliament* best shows an emotion? Explain which emotion you think it is. How does it portray that emotion?
5. How did Cristina deal with being in her new body? How do people in her life support her as she comes to terms with her resurrection? What did you learn about dealing with change and alteration after Cristina's experience?
6. Choose an emotion that interests you: happiness, sadness, fear, anxiety, frustration, hope, and so on. Illustrate or act out what that emotion looks like in *The Witch Owl Parliament*.
7. Who makes you feel better when you are sick? How do they do that? What are other ways besides taking medication that can be helpful?

## INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

### English/Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Challenge students to explore the characters more deeply with writing tasks that require perspective-taking:**
  - Write a dialogue between Cristina and her parents or Enrique and his parents. Have students discuss in small groups about how their dialogues are different and reflect on how the parents may have different things to say to Cristina and Enrique.
  - Write a letter to Gaspar, from Enrique, expressing his feelings and concern for him.
- **What real-life people or events are you reminded of by characters or events in the story?** Prepare a critical essay, citing examples from the novel and your chosen event to justify the similarities.
- **Have students compare Cristina and Enrique's characters using a Venn diagram.** How are the two siblings similar and different? Based on the diagram, encourage students to explain what factors might have led to different choices and life experiences.
- **Select a scene in which you disagreed how a character handled a situation, person, or event.** In the voice of that character, rewrite the scene as you think it should have happened.
- **Have students read this quote from the Author's Note, where David Bowles says curanderas "knew how to grapple with my emotional or psychological issues as well, providing ancestral therapy that rivaled any counselor or psychiatrist."** Have students discuss the power of ancestral healing and how its role in *The Witch Owl Parliament*.
- **Provide students with a panel sequence or page from the book.** Have students examine the illustrations and text (word boxes and speech balloons) separately. What information do you get from the illustrations alone? From the text alone? How do the illustrations and text work together to express information?
- **Encourage students to imagine that they have the opportunity to interview the authors and the illustrators.** Students should design interview questions they would ask the creators of *The Witch Owl Parliament* if they were on a talk show, news show, or radio show. What do students want to learn more about in terms of the writing process, the illustration

process, or the graphic novel format?

- **Conduct a graphic novel study with Lee & Low's other graphic novels, including *Yummy* ([leeandlow.com/books/yummy](https://leeandlow.com/books/yummy)), *I Am Alfonso Jones* ([leeandlow.com/books/i-am-alfonso-jones](https://leeandlow.com/books/i-am-alfonso-jones)), and *Grand Theft Horse* ([leeandlow.com/books/grand-theft-horse](https://leeandlow.com/books/grand-theft-horse)).** Have students answer the following questions in an analytical essay: what was it like to read these stories as graphic novels? How would it have been different if these stories were written in prose, as chapter books? How did the authors convey the struggles that the characters were going through in each of the graphic novels? How are graphic novels powerful as an art form?
- **If students read *Frankenstein* in their English Language Arts unit, compare the two texts together.** How is *The Witch Owl Parliament* similar to *Frankenstein*? What themes are common in the books? How are the main characters similar? How are they different? What problems do they experience, and how do they solve them? How do both stories use technology? Students can also compare the book trailer to the original *Frankenstein* and compare how these stories are presented. (<https://stanmed.stanford.edu/2018winter/why-issues-raised-in-Frankenstein-still-matter-200-years-later.html>)

### Social Studies & Geography

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3; Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9; and Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3; Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6; Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9; and Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, and Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Design a lesson or unit on Mexican immigration to the United States, specifically Texas.** Learning goals should highlight key aspects such as the origins, different ethnic groups, time periods, role of labor, critiques, political narratives, media coverage, as well as connections to other immigrant histories. What challenges did immigrants from Mexico face due to race, gender, class, sexuality or other factors? Consult the American Immigration Council (<https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-in-texas>) as well as *Time Magazine* (<https://time.com/3742067/history-mexican-immigration/>).
- **Ask students to research Mexico in and around 1865** (<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1861-1865/french-intervention>). What was going on socially and politically at that time in history? What were the different religions and spiritual practices at the time? Discuss how this information helps students understand the world of *The Witch Owl Parliament*.
- **Encourage students to research when Texas becomes a state of the United States (1845) and its effects on people of the Mexico and United States** (<https://www.nationalgeographic.org/thisday/dec29/texas-becomes-state/>). In a graphic organizer, have students list the cause and effects of Texas becoming a state, particularly for people from Mexico.
- **Have students research the Indigenous populations in Northern Mexico and the Southern United States.** How did their communities change when Mexico became independent of Spain, when Mexico lost lands to the United States, and when Texas became a state? (<https://indigenoumexico.org/>) Students can also research and look up videos of their languages spoken.

- **Have students compare map of the United States and a map of Texas to the maps found at the beginning of the text.** Have students share what they found. What were the similarities? What were the differences? How do maps help us to visualize what's happening in the story? Why do you think the author chose to include them?
- **Religion and curanderismo in Mexico: Have students research curanderismo throughout history and in Mexico today, and connect it to what they learned from *The Witch Owl Parliament*.** What are the core elements of curanderismo? Why was curanderismo created? Who practices curanderismo? What kind of techniques are used in curanderismo? What kind of herbs and other natural elements are used in curanderismo? Have students prepare a visual presentation of the information they learned. Refer to the Background section of this guide for more resources about curanderismo.
- **Encourage students to examine how Mayan text is used throughout *The Witch Owl Parliament*.** Why do you think David Bowles chose to include the Mayan language in the graphic novel? How is the Mayan language critical to the story? How does the Mayan language important in different regions in Mexico today?

### STEM

(3-5-ETS1-2 Engineering Design: Generate and compare multiple possible solutions to a problem based on how well each is likely to meet the criteria and constraints of the problem) (5-PS2 Motion and Stability: Forces and Interactions)

- **Examine other stories that use chemistry and different scientific procedures as part of the narrative.** "With engineering and ancient spells, with alchemy, I brought life back to your hybrid body." What other stories have you read or do you know about that fuse chemistry as part of the story? Students can compile a list of texts that use chemistry and create an Annotated Bibliography, providing a summary of each text that uses chemistry in the narrative.
- **How is technology used throughout *The Witch Owl Parliament*?** Explore the different ways that technology is integrated within the narrative. Students can brainstorm together in small groups and come up with a list, and then students can select a topic from the list. Some interesting elements to explore include: how prosthetics have evolved in technology throughout the years, and how prosthetics have changed drastically. Additionally, students can research the actual technical instruments that are used to create the prosthetics, and how those machines have changed. Some places where students can start their research are from the National Library of Medicine (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7340716/>), the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (<https://share.upmc.com/2015/03/timeline-prosthetic-limbs-years/>), and Business Insider (<https://www.businessinsider.com/the-evolution-of-prosthetic-technology-2014-8#another-artificial-big-toe-the-greville-chester-toe-dates-back-to-before-600-bc-the-prosthetic-device-is-fashioned-from-a-type-of-paper-mach-called-cartonnage-which-is-made-from-a-mixture-of-linen-glue-and-plaster-the-toe-is-on-display-at-the-british-museum-in-london-2>).

### Arts/Performing Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, and Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Have students explore the maps at the beginning of the graphic novel.** Have them create and write their own postcards from one of those places using the Postcard Creator from ReadWriteThink.org. (<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/student-interactives/postcard-creator-30061.html>)
- **Citing textual evidence, select a theme portrayed in the novel, *The Witch Owl Parliament*.** Create a visual media presentation to reflect how this theme is developed over the course of the text.
- **Photocopy pages of a chapter (or chapters) in the book, selecting one with multiple panels in a plot sequence.** Cut the panels apart and shuffle them so they are out of order. Place the mixed-up panels into an envelope. Prepare whatever number envelopes you need to distribute them to pairs of students. After collecting their books, have students work in pairs to organize the panels in proper sequence. Prompt students to use cues and context provided by the illustrations and text, as well as their recall of the story. Walk around asking questions and giving feedback.
- **Have students create and write their own comics or graphic novels, based on a superpowered version of themselves, with the Comic Creator from ReadWriteThink.org** (<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/student-interactives/comic-creator-30021.html>).
- **Steampunk is subgenre of science fiction that blends steam powered machines and technology in a fantastical way. Have students research the aesthetic and literary characteristics of steampunk and create a poster based on their findings** (<https://www.writersdigest.com/whats-new/everything-you-wouldve-asked-about-steampunk-had-you-known-it-existed>).
- **Put students in small groups.** Have them discuss reactions to the sketches at the end of the novel. Why were those particular sketches chosen? What stood out? How do they think it relates to the next installment of *The Witch Owl Parliament*?
- **Have students illustrate an image in nature that is meaningful to them.** How does this image make them feel and why?



### School-Home Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **Ask students to create portraits of people who are their personal role models through drawing, collage, or photograph.** In writing, students should describe what actions and qualities they admire about this person. They can also give their role models special abilities and powers. Students can write in prose or submit a poem or song.
- **Have students interview a parent, guardian, or adult mentor about their experiences with fighting for something they believe in or going through a hardship.** How did this person react to and handle the situation when they were faced with obstacles? What advice do they have for someone trying to take up a cause and stand up for justice? What advice do they have for someone who has been abused or silenced?
- **If accessible, have students and families research other titles featuring Mexican heroes and heroines.**
- **Have students create a care package for someone who is sick and write a note.** What does the package include and why?



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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**David Bowles** is a Mexican American author from south Texas, where he teaches at the University of Texas Río Grande Valley. He has written several award-winning titles, most notably *The Smoking Mirror* and *They Call Me Güero*. His work has also been published in multiple anthologies, plus venues such as *The New York Times*, *School Library Journal*, *Strange Horizons*, *English Journal*, *Rattle*, *Translation Review*, and the *Journal of Children's Literature*. In 2017, David was inducted into the Texas Institute of Letters. He is online at [davidbowles.us](https://davidbowles.us) and on Twitter at @DavidOBowles.

**Raúl the Third** is the two-time Pura Belpré award-winning author/illustrator of *Lowriders to the Center of the Earth* and *Vamos! Let's Go to the Market*. His work centers the contemporary Mexican American experience and his memories of growing up in El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. He lives in Boston, Massachusetts, with artist Elaine Bay and their son Raul El Gonzalez IV. Find him online at [raulthethird.com](https://raulthethird.com) and on Instagram at @raulthethird.info.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATORS

**Stacey Robinson** is an assistant professor of graphic design at the University of Illinois and an Arthur Schomburg Fellow with an MFA from the University at Buffalo. As part of the team "Black Kirby," he works with fellow artist John Jennings to create graphic novels, gallery exhibitions, and lectures that deconstruct the work of comic book legend Jack Kirby into re-imagined Black resistance spaces inspired by hip-hop, religion, the arts, and sciences. Robinson lives in Illinois and can be found on Twitter (@ProfSARobinson) and Instagram (@StaceyARobinson).

**Damian Duffy** is a cartoonist, scholar, writer, curator, lecturer, teacher, and a Glyph Comics, Eisner Comics, and Bram Stoker Award-winning, #1 *New York Times* bestselling graphic novelist. He holds a MS and PhD in Library and Information Sciences from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he teaches courses on computers & culture, and social media & global change. Find him online at [damianduffy.net](https://damianduffy.net) and on Instagram at @DamianD2Duffy.

### Awards & Reviews

- Best Books for Teens, *New York Public Library*
- Maverick Graphic Novel List, *Texas Library Association (TLA)*

"VERDICT: For teens who enjoy intellectually stimulating, action-packed tales." –*School Library Journal*

"In this electric series opener, an all-star team of Latinx creators tells the story of Cristina, a curandera who is killed by witch owls and revived by her brother, who couldn't bear to lose her." –*Booklist*

## ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

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