

# TEACHER'S GUIDE

Disney · PIXAR

# COCO

## A STORY

ABOUT

## MUSIC

## SHOES, AND

## FAMILY



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## ABOUT THE BOOK

Sometimes Miguel thinks he's cursed. For generations, the Riveras have banned music from their home because of a terrible betrayal, focusing instead on their successful shoemaking shop. Miguel's abuelita, his parents, and his tíos and tías all want him to join the family shoe business. And yet, Miguel has a secret dream: he longs to play guitar, just like his idol, Ernesto de la Cruz.

But when a mysterious chain of events leads him to the stunning and colorful Land of the Dead, Miguel finds there may be a way to become a musician *and* get his family's blessing. Soon he meets charming trickster Héctor, and together, they set off on an extraordinary journey to unlock the real story behind Miguel's family history. But will they learn the truth before Miguel is stuck in the Land of the Dead for good?

Inspired by Pixar Animation Studios' film *Coco*, this middle grade novel tells the story of Miguel's daring adventure and features exciting new scenes about his family.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. A major source of conflict for Miguel is whether to become a shoemaker or a musician. Why does this choice present a problem? What are the benefits and disadvantages of each? Which role, shoemaker or musician, does Miguel choose? Do you believe he makes the right choice? Explain.
2. When Miguel crosses the Marigold Bridge, he enters a new world, the Land of the Dead. Besides being occupied by skeletons, in what ways is the Land of the Dead different from the Land of the Living? Think in terms of setting, new laws or rules, and details about the skeletons' abilities and limitations.





3. What role does music play in this book? How do the different characters—Miguel, Mamá Imelda, Héctor, Ernesto, Abuelita, and Mamá Coco—relate to music? For each character, think of the emotions music brings about and of their motivations for loving or hating it.
4. The Riveras are talented shoemakers and their imaginations really shine when it comes to shoes. Discuss their creative uses and/or designs for shoes. Which character do you think is most creative when it comes to making or using shoes?
5. The story takes place in Mexico. List the different cultural elements from the book. Which were familiar to you and which were new?
6. Discuss the theme of fame. How do the communities in the Land of the Living and the Land of the Dead express their admiration for Ernesto de la Cruz? What actions does Ernesto take in order to become famous? How does he feel about these actions? How do Héctor and Mamá Imelda feel? How about Miguel?
7. In the book, why is memory so important? What actions do the characters take to make sure their loved ones are remembered? How does your family keep the memory of loved ones alive?
8. The book has some interesting graphic elements. How do the various pictures and colors relate to the settings and/or the events in the book?

## PERSONAL RESPONSE QUESTIONS

1. Miguel feels torn between listening to his family and listening to his heart. Write about a time when you felt the same struggle. Has there ever been an instance when you disagreed with something your family wanted you to do? Explain.



2. Miguel loves music, but when he's faced with an audience during the Battle of the Bands, he freezes. Luckily, he has Héctor to help him out. Have you ever felt stage fright? It could be for a musical or school performance, a presentation in class, or a sports activity. How did you overcome your fear? Was there someone like Héctor to help you out or did you solve your problem on your own?
3. The story takes place during the celebration for el Día de los Muertos. What did you learn from reading the book about how people celebrate this holiday? In what ways does your family or community celebrate the lives of those who have passed away?
4. Miguel has a very large family and seems to have a unique relationship with each family member. Describe your own family. Is it large like Miguel's or small? Do your relatives live nearby or in other cities? Is there a special someone who understands and shares your hopes and dreams like Miguel's Mamá Coco?

## CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

1. The novel opens and closes with the Rivera family tree. Talk to members of your family and draw your own family tree.
2. Create your own alebrije. You can write a description, draw a picture, or use various items to make a sculpture.
3. Miguel finds, repairs, and decorates his guitar. Follow his example by designing and making your own instrument. It does not have to be a guitar. You can make another instrument or invent something new.
4. In the ofrenda room, the Riveras leave pictures and offerings for their loved ones. If you were to create an ofrenda, what would you include? Write a description, draw a picture, or design an ofrenda in your home.





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Diana López** is the author of award-winning middle grade novels *Confetti Girl*, *Ask My Mood Ring How I Feel*, and *Nothing Up My Sleeve*. Her latest book is *Lucky Luna*. Visit her at [www.dianalopezbooks.com](http://www.dianalopezbooks.com)



## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**Jenna Huerta** is a graphic designer at Pixar. Since getting her BFA in graphic design, she has worked with Walt Disney Imagineering, runDisney, and Disney Publishing. Jenna currently lives in Northern California and likes to spend her time working on her letterpress or seeking out new adventures in the Bay Area.