

6E: Summer of the Mariposas

In this unit, students read *Summer of the Mariposas* by Guadalupe Garcia McCall, a novel that follows the journey of the Garza sisters into Mexico and back. The story takes the sisters on a journey to find themselves, each other, and their family. Using the hero's journey structure and Homer's *Odyssey* as inspiration, McCall creates a world in which Mexican folklore and Aztec legends are woven into the more realistic experiences of Odilia and her sisters.

Over the course of the unit, students consider how characters change and develop, compare McCall's retelling to episodes from Homer's *Odyssey*, contrast the sisters' fictional journey to the non-fiction account of a migrant boy's journey, and research Aztec mythology. After completing the novel, students write an essay explaining what allows one of the heroes of *Summer of the Mariposas* to be successful in specific moments.

Note: The excerpt from Sonia Nazario's *Enrique's Journey* describes a part of the migrant journey of a teenage Honduran boy traveling by himself. Certain students may have family members who have gone through similar experiences and this content may be sensitive for them. Be sure to preview selections and prepare students for what they will read.

Core texts your student will read:

- *Summer of the Mariposas* by Guadalupe Garcia McCall
- Excerpt from *The Odyssey*, a graphic novel by Gareth Hinds
- Excerpt from *The Odyssey* by Homer, translated by E.V. Rieu
- Excerpt from *Enrique's Journey* by Sonia Nazario

What my student will do/learn:

- Students explore characterization, tracking the actions and dialogue of characters throughout *Summer of the Mariposas*, and analyze the author's use of symbolism.
- Students connect the plot and characters of *Summer of the Mariposas* with those from Homer's *Odyssey* and consider how *Summer of the Mariposas* fits the hero's journey structure.
- Students read an excerpt from the non-fiction book *Enrique's Journey*, considering how the experiences of a migrant teen contrast with those of the Garza sisters in *Summer of the Mariposas*.
- Students research Aztec mythology and create Lotería cards to present key figures.
- Students engage in fishbowl discussions to discuss the major themes of the novel, including the ideas of a family being "lost" and "made whole."
- Students continue to use key classroom routines, including the sharing routine, during which classmates respond to shared writing by noting one effective way the writer used details or evidence.

- Students continue to write in response to prompts 2–3 times weekly, and practice analytic writing in response to text by developing a controlling idea or claim and providing support with details or evidence.
- Students write an end-of-unit essay responding to the following prompt: What is a special characteristic or source of strength for one of the Garza sisters? How does this characteristic or strength help her succeed in any two moments of her hero's journey?

Here are some conversation starters that you can use during this unit to promote discussion and encourage continued learning with your student.

1. How would you describe the relationship between the sisters in *Summer of the Mariposas*? What about their relationships with others, including their mother and father? How do those relationships change throughout the novel?
2. What are some of the stages of the hero's journey? Can you give me an example of how something or someone from *Summer of the Mariposas* fits one of the stages?
3. McCall includes a number of Aztec or Mexican mythical characters. Why do you think she includes them? Who are some characters from your culture or heritage that might be interesting to include in a book or movie?
4. Can you share a piece of writing with me in which you provide evidence from the text to support your controlling idea or claim? (Provide feedback to your student by finding something in their writing that you can respond to as a reader. For example, "Using the detail about Odysseus's actions and the detail about Odilia crying because she feels guilty about her mother is a good way to show your idea about how they are different.")
5. Who do you think the hero is in *Summer of the Mariposas* and why? What qualities help her to be successful in difficult situations?