

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



Includes Pre-Reading Activities and Discussion Questions

About the *Love Sugar Magic Series*

Love Sugar Magic: A Dash of Trouble

Leonora Logroño's family owns the most beloved bakery in Rose Hill, Texas, spending their days conjuring delicious cookies and cakes for any occasion—and no occasion is more important than the annual Día de los Muertos festival. Leo hopes that this might be the year that she gets to help prepare for the big celebration...but, once again, she is told she's too young.

Sneaking out of school and to the bakery, she makes a startling discovery: her mother, aunt, and four older sisters have in fact been keeping a secret. They're brujas—witches of Mexican ancestry— who pour a little bit of sweet magic into everything that they bake.

Leo knows that she has magical ability as well, and she's more determined than ever to join the family business—even if she can't let her mamá and her hermanas know about it yet. And when her best friend, Caroline, has a problem that needs solving, Leo has the perfect opportunity to try out her craft. It's just one little spell, after all....What could possibly go wrong?



"I found out that we have *magic*, and what's the point of having magic if you can't use it to fix things?"

Love Sugar Magic: A Sprinkle of Spirits

Leonora Logroño has finally been introduced to her family's bakery bruja magic—but that doesn't mean everything is all sugar and spice. Her special power hasn't shown up yet, her family still won't let her perform her own spells, and they now act rude every time Caroline comes by to help Leo with her magic training.

She knows the family magic should be kept secret, but Caroline is her best friend, and she's been feeling lonely ever since her mom passed away. Why should Leo have to choose between being a good bruja and a good friend?

In the midst of her confusion, Leo wakes up one morning to a startling sight: her dead grandmother, standing in her room, looking as alive as she ever was. Both Leo and her abuela realize this might mean trouble—especially once they discover that Abuela isn't the only person in town who has been pulled back to life from the other side.

Spirits are popping up all over town, causing all sorts of trouble! Is this Leo's fault? And can she reverse the spell before it's too late?

Love Sugar Magic: A Mixture of Mischief

It's spring break in Rose Hill, Texas, but Leo Logroño has a lot of work to do if she's going to become a full-fledged bruja like the rest of her family.

She still hasn't discovered the true nature of her magical abilities, and that isn't the only bit of trouble in her life: Her family's baking heirlooms have begun to go missing, and a new bakery called Honeybees has opened across town, threatening to run Amor y Azúcar right out of business.

What's more, everyone around her seems to have secrets, and none of them want to tell Leo what's going on.

But the biggest secret of all comes when Leo is paid a very surprising visit—by her long-lost Abuelo Logroño. Abuelo promises answers to her most pressing questions and tells Leo he can teach her about her power, about what it takes to survive in a world where threats lurk in the shadows. But can she trust him?



"Our family solves problems. We do not give up."

"There's *power* in something passed down through the generations."

About the Author

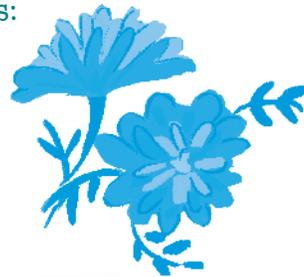
Anna Meriano is the author of the books in the *Love Sugar Magic* series, *A Dash of Trouble*, *A Sprinkle of Spirits*, and *A Mixture of Mischief*. She grew up in Houston, Texas, and earned her MFA in creative writing with an emphasis in writing for children from the New School in New York. She has taught creative writing and high school English, and she works as a writing tutor. Anna likes reading, knitting, playing full-contact quidditch, and singing along to songs in English, Spanish, and ASL. Her favorite baked goods are the kind that open hearts. You can visit her online at www.annameriano.com. (PHOTO BY RITA MERIANO)



A Letter from Anna Meriano

Hello educators! I'm so happy to share this guide to the complete "Love Sugar Magic" series with you and your students. If you've been following the series, thanks for making it this far. If you're jumping in now, welcome! This series has been a joy to write, and not just because I got to research so many delicious baked goods. I hope that joy reaches the readers who meet Leo, the Logroño family, and the rest of Rose Hill, Texas.

This series was conceived to be a celebration of Texas and Mexican American heritage, an acknowledgement of the power of loving families and good food and special traditions. But of course it can't all be sweetness, and Leo faces plenty of challenges from herself, her community, and outside forces. I hope that readers following along with the adventures will learn what Leo learns: that you have the power to right your mistakes, that big problems become smaller when you share them with loved ones, and that secrets and sneaking won't get you as far as an open heart.



Anna Meriano



Pre-Reading Activities for *Love Sugar Magic: A Dash of Trouble*

Have students research Día de Los Muertos customs as practiced by Mexicans and Mexican Americans. What is the significance of this day? What images are part of the observances? What legends? What foods? What types of activities take place?

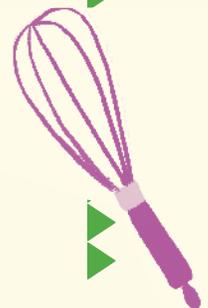
Discussion Questions for *Love Sugar Magic: A Dash of Trouble*

1. When Leo's mother invites her to help make cinnamon rolls for Sunday breakfast, Leo wants to tell her she knows about her family's magical abilities. But she hesitates. Why? How does she think her mother might react? Is she right?
2. Leo thinks: "What was the point of having magic powers if you couldn't use them to help your friend?" (Page 120) Do you think Leo is using good sense? Why or why not? Is she being realistic when she says, "There's no way anyone would know it was us"? (Page 120) Does the plan to cast a spell on Brent seem as though it is likely to go off without a hitch?
3. Impatient Leo has a hard time waiting to find out if the magic cookies she and Caroline made for Brent will work. Ask students to imagine they are in Leo's situation. How would they feel? Would they take the risks she takes, or would they be more cautious?
4. Considering Caroline's reaction to the foul-up with Brent, Leo thinks: "Friends were different from sisters, because no matter how angry you made your sisters, they would always be your sisters." (Page 192) Do students agree or disagree with this?
5. As Leo scrambles to reverse the spell on Brent, she feels awful. "Guilt from all her lies grew bigger and bigger like rising dough in her stomach, but she didn't have a choice if she wanted to fix her mistake." (Page 196) Discuss with students. If they were in Leo's situation, would they keep going on by themselves trying to fix things, or would they ask for help?
6. When Abuela (Leo's late grandmother) appears in Leo's bedroom, Leo does not seem disturbed to see a ghost. Why might that be? How does Leo feel when Abuela tells her that it is only Leo herself who can reverse the spell? How does that make Brent feel?
7. As Leo struggles to fix Brent's situation, she faces the fact that "she alone...had started this whole mess, and now she had to work alone to fix it." (Page 266) If Leo had it to do all over again, do students think she would have made the same choices? Discuss.

9. Discuss Leo's mother's reaction to Leo's actions and her capabilities. Consider together the good and the bad of what Leo did. Ask students if they can imagine why Leo's mother reacted the way she did. Were they surprised? Do they agree with her reaction?

10. Leo does not speak much Spanish. How do the few Spanish words she understands—especially the word *magia*—affect her? How would her efforts to uncover her family's secret be helped if she spoke a bit more Spanish?

11. Discuss this sentence: "She didn't know all the rules about being a witch, but the rules of being a good person meant she had to do whatever she could to fix her mistakes." (Page 238.)



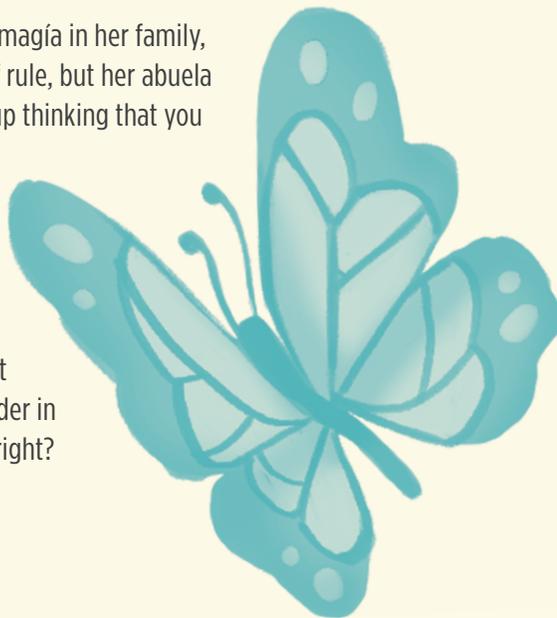


Pre-Reading Activities for *Love Sugar Magic: A Sprinkle of Spirits*

In the “Love Sugar Magic” stories, the main character Leo often finds herself pulled between the world of her friends and the world of her family. Both are very important to her, and the two worlds aren’t always compatible. Talk with students about the ways in which differing loyalties and priorities can create problems. Is this something they have experienced? If so, how have they dealt with it?

Discussion Questions for *Love Sugar Magic: A Sprinkle of Spirits*

1. Some people in Leo’s family resent the presence of her best friend Caroline at the bakery. Ask students to reflect on how attitudes change as the story goes along. Whose attitude changes the most?
2. “Leo didn’t want to lie and keep secrets anymore. She was tired of being a good bruja and a bad friend.” (Page 95) Discuss what this means.
3. In the story, the spirits who come to Rose Hill are glad to be back, in one sense, but in another sense they long to return to the place they have come from, el Otro Lado (“The Other Place”). Why do students think the spirits might feel more at home there than in the “real” world?
4. Leo and Abuela have many heart-to-heart conversations throughout the book. But even to Abuela, Leo can’t always admit how she feels, deep down: “‘It makes me wish...’ [Leo] shook her head. ‘Wish what?’ Abuela asked. Leo felt her throat squeeze inward. ‘Wish I had never found out about magic.’” (Page 181) Why do students think Leo hesitates to admit this feeling to her abuela?
5. Caroline observes that there are a lot of restless spirits in their town. Abuela offers a theory: “I think it has to do with the bakery. With our family taking root here and weaving our magic into the community...Many people here in town actually eat magic for breakfast. That’s got to rub off on you after a while.” (Page 205) In what ways might a town with a “magic bakery” affect what it is like to live in that town?
6. At first, when Leo tells her friends about the magia in her family, she worries that she is breaking some sort of rule, but her abuela reassures her: “I don’t want you all to grow up thinking that you have to choose between being a bruja and having good friends, isolating yourselves because of something that should be connecting you.” (Page 185) How do students think Abuela’s words help Leo?
7. Mayor Rose surprises Leo when he says about her: “Seems like we have one passionate leader in Rose Hill’s future, at least.” (Page 229) Is he right? In what ways can Leo be seen as a leader?



8. When Leo encounters the spirit of Caroline’s late mother, Mrs. Campbell tells her she does not want her daughter to see her. She explains: “If Caroline sees me now, then all the progress of the past months... will be shaken. She’ll be back to wishing for a life she can’t have, for all the things I can’t give her.” (Page 245) While Leo respects Mrs. Campbell’s wishes, she does not agree with her approach. What do students think?



9. During this story, Leo becomes increasingly confident in her abilities as a bruja: “When she focused on a spell, she wasn’t worried or confused or stressed or embarrassed. She wasn’t a baby sister or a mess maker or a secret teller or a young leader. She was Leo. She was a bruja. And she had a job to do.” (Page 262) Talk with students about skills they are working to master. How do they feel when they make progress? Can they empathize with how Leo feels?

10. “‘Leonora Elena, you are growing up to be quite a remarkable bruja,’ Abuela said. ‘And I have to say, this birth-order power is going to be the envy of all your sisters.’” (Page 283) Discuss with students the ways in which Abuela has helped Leo gain self-confidence and self-awareness.

Pre-Reading Activities for *Love Sugar Magic: A Mixture of Mischief*

In the “Love Sugar Magic” stories, the importance of family legacy is examined from many perspectives. In *Love Sugar Magic: A Mixture of Mischief*, Leo meets her estranged grandfather, Abuelo Logroño, for the first time, and his presence in her life causes her to question much of what she has learned about her family. Ask students to consider their own concepts of family legacy, customs, and history.



Discussion Questions for *Love Sugar Magic: A Mixture of Mischief*

1. As Leo takes her independent baking test with Mamá at the beginning of this book, she is very nervous. Why is she so worried about what might happen when Mamá tastes her bolillos?
2. What are students’ first impressions of Abuelo Logroño? Do their impressions change as the story progresses? If so, how?



3. Leo’s friends and JP are learning about the Logroño family’s magical powers throughout this story. Why are their reactions so important to Leo? How do students think they would react if a friend or family member revealed a big secret to them?
4. After Leo tells her parents about the visit she had from Abuelo Logroño (Chapter 5), Mamá explains that she does not agree with his perception of the relationships between magical creatures. She says, “The only conflict comes from folks like him who don’t want to let old prejudices die.” (Page 68) What does Abuelo Logroño tell Leo, and why does Mamá disagree with him?

5. Abuelo Logroño tries to convince Leo that one side of her family is more important and more powerful than the other side. What motive might he have for trying to persuade Leo that this is true?

6. In response to Abuelo Logroño's opinions about her family, Leo says, "Her antepasada had done something original, and now Leo's family could bring love and magic to the town. Wasn't that more important than some old tradition?" (Page 109) Ask students to explain what Leo means by the reference to her antepasada—her ancestor.

7. How does Leo feel when she becomes invisible for the first time? How do her feelings about this ability change throughout the story?

8. Caroline mentions Juan Santamaría on page 99. Who was he and why is he an important historical figure?

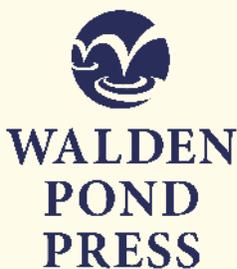


9. Why does Leo become suspicious of JP at one point in the story? Ask students to consider if they would have felt the same way if they were in her shoes. Why or why not?

10. When Leo and her family speak with the duendes, one of the duendes says, "When humans have power, they tend to see anyone unfamiliar as a threat to that power." (Page 218) Discuss what the duende means by this. Can students think of examples of this from history, or from other stories?

11. The old duende says, "We do not like fights. But we recognize that even inaction can cause harm..." (Page 255) Ask students to explain what the duende means by this. How did inaction from the duendes cause harm to the Logroño family?

12. How do students think Leo feels about getting to place her own recipe in the Logroño's recipe book at the end of this story? She has been working towards this moment for a long time. What might this moment mean to her mother?



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