

When a Woman Rises

written by Christine Eber

About the Book

Genre: Adult

Format: Hardcover
208 pages, 6 x 9

ISBN: 9781941026847

Reading Level: Grades 12+

Interest Level: Grades 12+

Guided Reading Level: Adult

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:
Adult

Lexile™ Measure: Adult

*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

Themes: Animals, Breaking Gender Barriers, Courage, Families, Latino/Hispanic/Mexican Interest, LGBTQ, Mexico, Persistence/Grit, Poverty

Resources on the web:

leeandlow.com/books/when-a-woman-rises

SYNOPSIS

Magdalena summons the soul of her friend, Lucia, who migrated north to find work and disappeared. She tells daughter Veronica how they yearned to be teachers. How poverty and gender roles stole away their dreams. Yet, each woman remained true to herself, Lucia as a Zapatista leader and curandera, Magdalena as a weaver and community organizer. But poverty is cruel.

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

BACKGROUND

The Tzotzil Maya are an Indigenous group from Mexico. The Tzotzil live predominantly in central Chiapas of southern Mexico. After the Spanish conquest, the Tzotzil people were stripped of their lands and rights and exploited for centuries as laborers. With the collapse of coffee prices in the 1980s, along with unfair labor conditions, sustainable employment has been very hard to find. Many Tzotzil people have had to leave their traditional culture and villages behind in search for a better life in the big cities. Like with many other indigenous ethnic groups around the world, this has put the Tzotzil people in a precarious predicament as they hold onto their culture and ways of living. For more on the legacy and lives Tzotzil people, refer to <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Maya-people>.

Additional Background & Resources

Below are resources for those who may be affected or who wish to support someone through addiction and mental health issues.

- Suicide Prevention: suicidepreventionlifeline.org (1-800-273-8255)
The Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals in the United States.
- The Trevor Project: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org> (1-866-488-7386)
The Trevor Projects focuses on suicide prevention efforts among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth.
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): [samhsa.gov/](https://www.samhsa.gov/)
SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities.
- Mental Health Awareness Month: <https://www.nami.org/Get-Involved/Awareness-Events/Mental-Health-Awareness-Month>
The month of May is Mental Health Awareness Month. This initiative aims to fight stigma, provide support, educate the public and advocate for policies that support people with mental illness and their families.

The themes in this story must be addressed and handled with deep sensitivity and open mindedness.

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.

Set the example of what culturally responsive teaching looks like:

- Collaborate with students to establish guidelines early on. This will serve as a reminder for

discussion etiquette as thought-provoking topics are developed.

- Anticipate how your students will respond to controversial topics presented in the novel (suicide, substance abuse, etc). While teachers should encourage students to share their views without fear of judgment, teachers should consider how to respond to emotion, and use this to guide instruction and for future instructional planning.
- Don't be afraid to share your own learning journey as it pertains to cultural identity and grief. This will create a positive classroom climate and an overall feeling of sameness.
- Aim to include and discuss outside materials that align with the text and essentially address underrepresented groups' experiences in ways that do not trivialize or marginalize their experiences.

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:

- Ask students to think about their family and what family means to them. How is family important to you? How do you interact with your family members? Does your family live close or far apart? What brings your family together? How do you help them? What do you know about your family history or your ancestors? How did you learn about them?
- Think about the different Indigenous communities in the state that you live in. What do you know about their histories?
- If applicable: What tribal nation do you belong to? What does belonging to your tribal nation mean to you?
- Why do you think learning family stories is important? Have you ever asked your grandparents, aunts or uncles, parents, or other adults in your life about what it was like for them when they were kids? What did you learn?
- How can storytelling influence a person's life? What kind of stories do you wish to see more of in the world?
- Describe a time you had a significant change in your life. What caused the change? How did the change make you feel? Over time did you adjust to the change? Why or why not?
- Ask students why it's important to acknowledge traditions and cultures that are different from their own. Why is it essential to learn about different cultures in the United States and around the world even if you do not identify with that particular culture or tradition?
- As a hook for readers, consider showing students a video of Christine Eber discussing Tzotzil Maya women, posted on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/tY712qXSg2g>

When a Woman Rises

Teacher's Guide [leeandlow.com/books/when-a-woman-rises](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/when-a-woman-rises)

Note: This book is meant for grades 12 and up.

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)

- Talk about the title of the book, the book cover image, and the map of Lokan. Ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?

Setting a Purpose for Reading

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

Have students read to find out:

- how young people show resilience through difficult times
- about the cultural dynamics of Tzotzil Maya communities
- what friendship means to Magdalena and how it changes over the course of the story
- the importance of the gift of healing in communities
- how faith and spirituality can influence a person's life
- the impact of Zapatistas in Mexico

Encourage students to consider why the authors Christine Eber, would want to share this story with young people.

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 words can be found in the glossary at the end of the book, 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

Agave, antsetike, antsil vinik, atole, chayote, comadre, compadre, comal, compañeros, costal, Doña, elote, j'ilol, joyol, kaxlan, kexol, lum, masa, matz, mestizo, nagual, petate, pinole, pox, tamales, tsotsil, Zapatistas, zocalo, copal, castellano, apostle, genuflected, ceiba, hymns, Zapatista, rectory, promotora, paramilitary, sentries

Academic

embroider, bartered, cholera, bough, veer, gourd, chasm, defied, callouses, commissioned, loom, relented, boasting, diocese, ladled, prophecy, fathom, linguist, chasm, despair, scripture, tethered, parched, anguished, quarreling, convoy, crevice, migrate, condolences

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 long has Lucia been missing?
2. What is feast of the souls?
3. Why does Magdalena recount Lucia's story?

4. What does being a Believer mean?
5. Who did Magdalena live with as a child?
6. Who did Lucia live with as a child?
7. What happened to Lucia's father?
8. What was Lucia's grandfather known for?
9. What are cargo dreams?
10. Describe Lucia's first cargo dream in your own words. How did this dream impact Lucia?
11. What happened to cousin Rosa?
12. How many girls and boys graduated on graduation day?
13. Why did many children drop out of school before 6th grade?
14. Why did Magdalena and Lucia want to go to San Cristóbal after graduation day?
15. Who is Doña Dolores and what does she offer Lucia?
16. How did Hilario feel about Lucia continuing her education in San Cristóbal? Why?
17. Who is Rodrigo? Describe his relationship with Verónica.
18. What helped Veronica heal after her marriage to Rodrigo?
19. How are hugs treated in Magdalena and Verónica's community?
20. How do Magdalena and Lucia meet Madre Ester?
21. What does Veronica want to buy with her first paycheck?
22. What languages do Magdalena and Lucia speak?
23. What is the significance of the high voice?
24. How did Victorio get a scar on his face?
25. Who in Magdalena's family wanted to marry Lucia? What happened during the joyol?
26. Why does Magdalena see Lucia as a different kind of woman?
27. What is the relationship between the Jaguar woman and Lucia?
28. Why does Lucia start drinking pox more heavily?
29. How did Lucia feel about Madre Ester?
30. What was the saddest day in Lucia's life? What circumstances led to this?
31. Why did Madre Ester leave Lokan?
32. What is the significance of the Zapatista co-op? Why did Lucia have to pray for the store?
33. Why did Magdalena consider getting an abortion when she was pregnant with Veronica?

34. Why did Magdalena and Lucia join the Zapistas?
35. Who is Ángel de Jesús and why is he significant to Lucia?
36. What does Magdalena hope Verónica learns from Lucia's story?
37. Where did Lucia go when she left in October 1997?
38. Describe Magdalena's nightmare the last day of her fast.
39. How long does it take to complete the telling of Lucia's story?
40. How did Verónica choose to celebrate after she finishes writing Lucia's story?
41. When and how did Lucia die?
42. How did Veronica feel writing the last part of Lucia's story?
43. How do people in Lokan say goodbye to Lucia?
44. What job opportunities did Verónica get and which she did she choose? Why did she choose it?
45. What role does Doña Dolores play at the end of the story?

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. Return to the book cover. What do the title and illustration mean to you after reading the book?
2. A frame story is a literary technique that serves as a companion piece to a story within a story. It is where an introductory or main narrative sets the stage for a second narrative or set of shorter stories. What is the frame story in the book? How does it allow for other stories to be told? Why do you think Christine Eber chose this literary device? How do these choices impact the reading experience?
3. Describe the dynamic between Magdalena and Lucia. Support your descriptions with evidence from the text.
4. How does the Magdalena teach her daughter about the importance of different kinds of knowledge and ways of living?
5. What does *When a Woman Rises* teach readers about the importance of community? How does tradition connect to the power of community and honoring past ways of living in the present?
6. Have you had a parent, a grandparent, a teacher, a peer, or an elder that has been impactful in your life? What did they teach you? How did you show them respect? What kind of stories did they tell you? How are they meaningful to you?
7. How do difference religious and spiritual beliefs play a role in *When a Woman Rises*? What do you learn from these beliefs?

8. What is Verónica's significance throughout the story? Who and what does she represent?
9. What different feelings come up for Magdalena as she tells Lucia's story? Support your descriptions with evidence from the text.
10. Analyze the evolution of the character Lucia. Is there any evidence over the course of the novel that reveals a different layer to her character? How so? How not? Provide examples from the story.
11. Interpret and analyze the meaning of the song lyrics from "I'm a drunk woman, I'm a drunk girl" (p122-123).
12. Magdalena believes "we need the old ways as well as the new ways to make sense of all the bad and suffering in the world" (p134). Do you agree with Magdalena? Why or why not? Give examples.
13. Interpret and analyze Lucia's prayer against envy (p143-150). Refer to Christine Eber's the note on the copyright page.
14. How are mestizos positioned in this story?
15. How does being a Zapatista impact men and women differently?
16. The story is told from Magdalena's perspective. How would the story have been different if it were told from Lucia's perspective? Verónica's perspective? How does the perspective of the narration affect how you experience the story?
17. How did you feel about the way *When a Woman Rises* ended? Were you satisfied with the ending? Why or why not?
18. Christine Eber is a trained anthropologist. Discuss how an anthropological background impacts how the story is written. Refer to Diane Rus' introduction.
19. What does Magdalena learn about herself through telling Lucia's story?
1. What does Verónica learn about herself through writing Lucia's story?

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 authors' message to the reader is? Think about possible motivations to write the book. What do you think they wanted to tell her readers?
2. Have students make a text-to-self connection. How do you react to change? What is your role in your own community? What do Magdalena and Lucia's experiences, thoughts, and feelings mean to you?
3. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books while you read *When a Woman Rises*? 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 *There's When a Woman Rises* make you think of that?
5. What is one big thought that you have after reading this book? Think about different character changes, the setting, and the relationships. What did you learn from reading *When a Woman Rises*?
6. Loss can result in deep sorrow and harmful behavior. Have you or someone you know experienced loss? What behaviors did you notice? Why is loss a powerful emotion? What are some ways get support as someone processes their loss?
7. If you could interview the author, Christine Eber, what questions would you ask her? Why? What do you want to know about their writing process and how they came up the ideas to write *When a Woman Rises*?

Multilingual Learners 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 each chapter as they read the book. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Have students give a short talk about what community and heritage means to them, and how they have overcome obstacles in their life with support of people who are important to them.
4. 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.

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. How does *When a Woman Rises* show positive community relationships? What are the qualities of a positive community relationship? What are the different ways that they show respect and care to one another? Students can brainstorm ideas on chart paper that can be presented and accessible for the whole class. Alternatively, students can create a word cloud and see what qualities come up the most and are the largest (<https://www.wordclouds.com/>).
2. What one part of your heritage, culture, or identity are you most proud? Do you think your school or classroom has been a safe place to share that part of yourself? Why or why not?
3. Magdalena says Lucia learned to accept loss as a part of life (p133). Why is it important to accept loss? What can loss teach us?
4. How does the Mayan concept of love inform your own understanding of what love is?
5. Storytelling is used throughout *When a Woman Rises*. How does listening to a story make you feel? What do you like about listening to stories? What's it like to listen to a story versus telling a story? What kinds of skills do you need to do those things? Have students work with a partner and tell each other a story of their choosing. Afterwards, students can reflect on what it felt like to listen to their partner's story and then tell their own story.

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)

- **Assign students in groups for an in-depth character study analyzing Magdalena and Lucia.** Have the groups and/or partnerships brainstorm about a guiding question: What and how can this character teach us? Encourage students to think about how these characters have made mistakes and also have done good things in the book, and ultimately what they learned from these characters. Have students share their findings: How is this character important to the book, and what lessons did they teach us over the course of the story? How did their actions develop the narrative, and why are they crucial to understanding the meaning of the book? Students can present their findings to the class.
- **Students can complete a critical essay.** Have students identify 3 major themes of the story and use details from the novel to support each theme. Why did students select those 3 themes? How did they come to understand that they were the most important events?
- **Have students summarize the Mayan way of understanding love, as it is presented in the novel.** In your opinion, what does this conceptualization reveal about Magdalena and Lucia's culture? Compare and contrast this definition to your own cultural definitions and understanding of love.
- **The title of the book comes from the saying, "When a woman rises, no man is left behind." (p. 173).** In a persuasive essay, analyze this quote. Show whether the characters in the text demonstrate the message of this quote.
- **Lucia and Magdalena have an significant impact on one another.** How has a family member or friend close to you impacted your life? Have you had a friend, family member, or other person who really changed your life? What were some things that person did that were significant to you? Students can write a poem, essay, or display their work in any other visual format that works best for their learning needs.
- **Create your own guide for teaching this book.** What grade would you teach this book to? What themes would you highlight? What activities would you create for students? What other books would you pair with *When a Woman Rises*?

Social Studies

(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)

- **Design a lesson or unit on Tzotzil Maya communities.** Learning goals should highlight key aspects including, but not limited, to historical origins as well as contemporary living conditions, religious demographics, gender roles, sources of labor, educational opportunities, and understandings of sexuality.
- **Many Tzotzil people, but not all, live in Chamula, San Cristóbal de las Casas and Zinacantán in the Mexican state of Chiapas.** Create a map of these three different municipalities. Note the similarities and differences between the three places.
- **The Zapatista Army of National Liberation is a revolutionary movement for Indigenous autonomy.** The Zapatista movement has influenced grassroots activism and social movements since its inception in 1994. Their main goal is to combat centuries of poverty and inequality, racism, and exploitation that have directly impacted Indigenous communities in Chiapas. As a hook for readers, watch: https://youtu.be/pTzC_QqSqwC. Design a lesson or unit on Zapatista Army of National Liberation. Pay particular attention to the founding of the movement, the political goals of the movement, and its relationship to other social movements.
- **Take a virtual tour of “At Home: A Day in a Tzotzil Life”** (<https://artsandculture.google.com/story/at-home-a-day-in-a-tzotzil-life-museo-del-chocolate/jQUx91rGpzBLGQ?hl=en>). After students and their families have experienced the photo series, select a medium of your choice to share what was learned. This share-out can be done in numerous forms: iMovie, YouTube Video, Twitter story, Instagram story, Facebook photo montage, Facebook Live (during your trip), diary entry, PowerPoint, brochure, etc. . . Students and families can get creative!

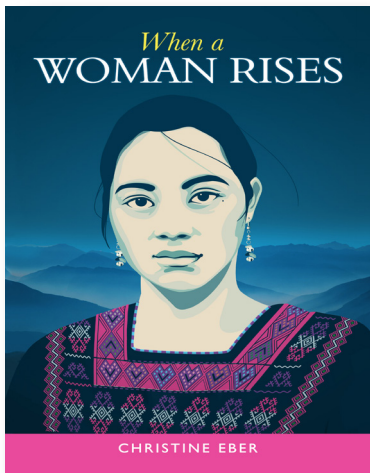
Art/Media

(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)

- **Create a scrapbook honoring the life and legacy of Lucia.** Think about all the kinds of mementos you would put in a scrapbook for her. Use pictures from magazines, online resources, and items from home to create a scrapbook. Be sure to have students explain the significance of what they've included.
- **Encourage students to draw another cover for the current book, *When a Woman Rises*.** What would students want to see on the cover? What was the most important or exciting thing that resonated with them in the book that they would want to show potential readers? Students can create alternate covers based on their reactions after reading the story.



Ordering Information

General Order Information:

leeandlow.com/contact/ordering

Secure Online Ordering:

leeandlow.com/books/when-a-woman-rises

By Phone: 212-779-4400 ext. 25

By Fax: 212-683-1894

By Mail:

Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue,
New York, NY 10016

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christine Eber lived for a year, in 1987, with a family in San Pedro Chenalhó, doing fieldwork for her PhD in Anthropology. She shared daily life with women and their families, witnessing the difficulties they faced. It changed her life. Now, as a respected anthropologist, she continues to work with the indigenous women of Chiapas, visiting communities on a regular basis and supporting the woman-organized weaving collectives. She lives in Las Cruces, New Mexico, with her husband, Mike, and dog Sami.

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