

The Smell of Old Lady Perfume

written by Claudia Guadalupe Martínez

About the Book

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Format: Paperback
256 pages, 5 x 7

ISBN: 9781933693880

Reading Level: Grades 5–6

Interest Level: Grades 5–12

Guided Reading Level: U

Spanish Guided Reading Level: U

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:
N/A

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

Themes: Coping with Death, Families, Fathers, Fiction, Friendship, Grandparents, Latino/Hispanic/Mexican Interest, Middle Grade, Realistic Fiction

Resources on the web:

leeandlow.com/books/the-smell-of-old-lady-perfume

SYNOPSIS

Claudia Guadalupe Martínez's debut novel for young adults is a bittersweet story about death, family, and the resilient emotional strength of the human heart. Chela Gonzalez, the book's narrator, is a nerd and a soccer player who can barely contain her excitement about starting the sixth grade. But nothing is as she imagined--her best friend turns on her to join the popular girls and they all act like Chela doesn't exist. She buries herself in schoolwork and in the warm comfort of her family. To Chela, her family is like a solar system, with her father the sun and her mother, brothers, and sister like planets rotating all around him. It's a small world, but it's the only one she fits in.

But that universe is threatened when her strong father has a stroke. Chela's grandmother moves in to help the family. The smell of her old lady perfume invades the house. That smell is worse than Sundays. Sundays were sad, but they went just as sure as they came. Death was a whole other thing, and Chela doesn't understand that's what everyone is waiting for. In her grief and worry, Chela begins to discover herself and find her own strength.

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

A Note Prior to Reading

The Smell of Old Lady Perfume is a story of family, new beginnings, love, and loss. Illness and death are topics that may affect students deeply. Teachers are encouraged to plan for how they will address these topics in class. Seek out resources, both in-district and off-site, that may address coping with the death of a parent. Your school's social worker or interventionist may have specific protocols regarding this issue. Be sure to seek their advice prior to introducing the novel. Additionally, The New York Life Foundation offers resources for helping students cope with the death of a family member or friend. To learn more, visit:

<https://www.newyorlife.com/assets/foundation/docs/pdfs/supporting-your-child.pdf>

The National Association of School Psychologists "Addressing Grief: Tips for Teachers and Administrators" (<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis/mental-health-resources/addressing-grief/addressing-grief-tips-for-teachers-and-administrators#:~:text=Be%20brief%20and%20patient,share%20their%20feelings%20and%20grief.>), Edutopia's "5 Tips for Supporting Grieving Students" (<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/tips-grief-at-school-2-chris-park>) and Your Teen Magazine's "How To Talk About Death With Your Teens" (<https://yourteenmag.com/health/teenager-mental-health/how-to-talk-about-death>) all provide different strategies and tips on how to discuss grief, trauma and death with older students.

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.

- Have you ever lost someone? How did that loss make you feel?
- 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? Why are some family relationships complicated? How do you help and support your family? How do they help and support you?
- Class Art and Discussion: Who are you? What is your identity? Create a self-portrait, complete with words or phrases that define the way you see yourself in the world. The teacher will lead the class in a discussion regarding how identity will play a role for the novel's main character, Chela. Once whole group or small group reading ensues, students are encouraged to use a

character trait graphic organizer to record examples from the text.

- Invite students to share stories of their families' experience in moving to this country from their homeland(s) or staying connected to their culture(s) if they were born in the United States. What are some ways of life that are different or similar? What role does language play in staying connected to different aspects of students' culture? If applicable, have students ever visited their homeland? What does homeland mean? What are some ways homeland can be a complicated or difficult term? What are some differences in cultural expectations?
- As a hook for readers, consider showing students a book trailer for *The Smell of Old Lady Perfume*, posted on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HqbckMFp1ZE>
- Bilingual Easter Egg Hunt: This activity can be done prior to reading the novel and during whole class or guided reading groups. *The Smell of Old Lady Perfume* contains many Spanish words, as well as English words with Spanish cognates. Present the students with a vocabulary list of content specific words. Which ones do they know? Which ones do they not know? Invite them to look up the meanings of the words using a translation website. Students may keep records of the translations. Once they've been introduced to the vocabulary, introduce the Easter Egg Hunt. The teacher may stuff the eggs with both Spanish and English vocabulary. During the reading, student(s) who identify the word or translation will pause the lesson and go on an Easter Egg Hunt. The first student to locate the proper egg wins a prize.
- 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, and author's dedication. Display the book and read aloud the title.
- Book Title Exploration: Talk about the title of the book. Ask students what they think this book will most likely be about. What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that? Discuss the cover illustration and have students talk about how the picture might relate to the title of the book.
- Title and Cover Analysis: What words or ideas come to mind when reading the title of the novel? What do you think *The Smell of Old Lady Perfume* symbolizes?
- Read the novel's book jacket. Make predictions of the problems Chela will face and how you think she will resolve them.
- Browse through the text. Select and write one word from the text that is unfamiliar to you. Write the sentence that the word is featured in. Use context clues to determine the meaning. (Student answers may not be repeated.)

- 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.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

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

Have students read to find out:

- how death impacts families
- how young people show resilience through difficult times
- what lessons Chela learns about confronting difficult feelings

Encourage students to consider why the author, Claudia Guadalupe Martínez, 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.

Content Specific

dibs, penitents, cicada, incense, convent, Hail Mary, vinyl, avalanche, scowl, hauling, hypnotized, absentminded, nagged, mutated, dehydrator, portables, squirm, fidget, pervert, sanitary napkins, potluck, innards, honorary, caulk, pedigree, deadlocked, rosary, molasses, florid, deacon, pews

Academic

inseparable, bilingual, unhinged, renovated, crater, vicious, fortress, shawl, chastised, unbearable, regimen, temptations, dissatisfaction, predictions, scolded, wander, immigrant, pioneers, orphan, chaperone, tapestry, expectantly, infinite, nauseous, conceited, mutating, inspection, unveiling, cradled, thaw, gravel, unraveling, roster, contagious, uproot, castigate, mourn, diversions, shawl, reconciliation, fraud, withered

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. Who is the narrator of the novel? What do you learn about her in the first chapter?
2. Who are Apá and Amá? What do they do for work at the beginning of the story?
3. Where do Chela and her family live?
4. Who are Chela's siblings? What do the twins tell her about sixth grade?
5. How is Chela's relationship to Angel Jr. different than her relationship to Silvia at the beginning of the story?
6. What sport does Chela love?
7. Who is Chela's best friend?
8. What is A-class and why is Chela nervous to be in it?
9. Why does Chela want to be the All-School Girl?
10. Describe the conversation between Chela and Apá the night before the first day of sixth grade.
11. What happened to Apá on Chela's first morning of sixth grade?
12. How do Chela and her siblings spend the day when Apá first goes to the hospital?
13. Whose mother is Aabelita? How does Chela feel about Abuelita?
14. What does old lady perfume represent for Chela?
15. What is La Fe? Why does Amá want to go there?
16. What does Chela learn about Apá's condition after visiting La Fe?
17. How does Amá feel about driving?
18. What parts of Apá's life make him a survivor?
19. What is Chela's relationship to church?
20. What happens on the seventh day of Apá being in the hospital?
21. How does Apá feel after returning home? What habits does he have to change?

22. How does Chela feel when she is able to go back to school and start sixth grade?
23. Who is Ms. Hamlin?
24. How does Apá surprise Chela and her siblings on their first day back to school?
25. How does Nora embarrass Chela?
26. Why does Nora say she can no longer be friends with Chela?
27. Why does Chela not share with anyone how her first day in sixth grade went?
28. Why does Chela start to hate lunch?
29. Where is Amá's new job?
30. What does Apá want to build?
31. Who was Benito Juarez?
32. Why does Chela dream of having a whole new life?
33. What feelings does Chela's experience when she reads out loud in class? What causes those feelings?
34. What program does Ms. Hamlin want Chela to participate in? Does Chela get accepted?
35. Describe Chela's visit to Juarez.
36. Who are the other girls in the gifted and talented program? How does Chela feel about them?
37. Which boy becomes Chela's friend? How do they become friends?
38. How does Chela feel about her changing body and why?
39. What gift does Chela receive at her class Christmas party? What Christmas gifts does she receive from her parents?
40. What help does Apá rely on to build his family's house?
41. What happens to Chela as a result of winning the soccer tournament at school?
42. What makes Apá's second stroke different than his first?
43. What did Apá want to be done with his body when he passed? What actually happens?
44. How does Chela feel when she sees Apá in a casket? What does she notice about him?
45. How do Chela and her family mourn Apá's death in different ways?
46. How do Nora and Roy support Chela after she loses her father?
47. How has the family changed since Apá's death? What roles have shifted? How so?
48. How does Chela celebrate her twelfth birthday?
49. Who wins the All-School trophy? What contradictory feelings does Chela have in this moment and why?
50. Why does Chela go to the cemetery? What does she understand after her visit?

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. How does Chela's father inspire her throughout the book?
2. Summarize Chela's experience during her first few months in sixth grade. What effect does this have on her friendship with Nora? What effect does this have on Chela's sense of identity?
3. How would you define bullying? What are some examples of bullying? What effect does bullying have on the person being bullied? On others? Why was Chela bullied and teased at school? What should you do if you're being bullied? How might others help when a person is being bullied?
4. Different kinds of friendships are featured in this story. How are they different? Do any of these friendships change over the course of the book? If so, how?
5. Chela feels embarrassed as her body goes through changes. Why is it hard for Chela to embrace her body?
6. What are the different family traditions that Chela describes throughout the story? What are some of your favorite family traditions?
7. What does Chela learn about friendship after her father's death?
8. What differences do you notice between Silvia and Angel Jr. even though they are twins. How are they treated differently? How does gender account for the differences in treatment?
9. What is Apá's relationship to being American? What values does he wish to instill in his children about where he comes from?
10. How does Chela's relationship to her siblings change over the course of the story?
11. What role does family play in Chela's ability to cope with her father's death?
12. Analyze the structure in which the author, Claudia Guadalupe Martínez, writes the book. What literary devices are used? How do these devices impact the reading experience?
13. How might the story have been different if Chela's family stayed in Mexico? What components of the plot would need to be changed in order for it to align with the setting?
14. Why do you think Amá won't allow Chela and her siblings to visit Apá in the hospital?
15. How does Chela transform over the course of the novel? Cite specific events and examples.
16. If you could give the novel a new title, what would it be? Rationalize your reasons for the new title.
17. Compare and contrast the novel's main character, Chela, with a real person you know or with a similar character in another book. What factors contributed to your choice?
18. How does being bilingual impact Chela's experience of school?
19. How does Chela deal with the loneliness of school?
20. What is the role of family and friendship in helping Chela become who she is by the end of

the book?

21. How does Amá change over the course of story and how does Chela's relationship to Amá change?
22. The story is told from Chela's perspective. How would the story have been different if it were told from Silvia's perspective? Angel Jr.'s perspective? Clark's perspective? How does the perspective of the narration affect how you experience the story?
23. How did you feel about the way *The Smell of Old Lady Perfume* ended? Were you satisfied with the ending? Why or why not?
24. What is the significance of the title '*The Smell of Old Lady Perfume*' after reading?
25. What was your favorite part of *The Smell of Old Lady Perfume*? Why?

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 possible motivations behind Claudia Guadalupe Martínez's intentions to write the book. What do you think they 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? What do Chela's experiences, thoughts, and feelings mean to you? What are ways you express yourself after experiencing difficult emotions?
3. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books while you read *The Smell of Old Lady Perfume*? 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 Smell of Old Lady Perfume* make you think of that?
5. How has reading *The Smell of Old Lady Perfume* impacted your understanding of friendship? What are some other ways people define friendship? How would you define friendship?

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 the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.

- Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
- Have students give a short talk about their relationship to the United States. Do they feel a part of America? Why or why not? What is their family's relationship to living in the United States?
- 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.
- Have students illustrate or discuss a loss and/or major challenge they have experienced and had to deal with.
- Link concepts of discomfort and persistence, such as Chela being teased when reading out loud, to the student's learning of a new language. Ask students how they felt when reading about a bi-lingual character.
- 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.
- Complete frequent checks of understanding.
- Read aloud a sentence and have students repeat the sentence after you, pointing to each word as they speak.
- For Spanish speaking students, *The Smell of Old Lady Perfume* is also available in Spanish: *Olor a perfume de viejita* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/olor-a-perfume-de-viejita>).

Actividades en Español para apoyo en programas bilingües y de inmersión dual

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

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

For the CCSS in Spanish, please check out <https://commoncore-espanol.sdcoc.net/CCSS-en-Espanol/SLA-Literacy>

Estas estrategias se pueden usar en su clase de español o en su clase de inmersión dual igual cómo el resto de la guía de actividades.

- Asigne el libro *Olor a perfume de viejita* a sus estudiantes. Coloque dos estudiantes juntos para leer el libro en voz alta. Compare las palabras en inglés y en español. ¿Cómo se comparan las palabras? Pida que sus estudiantes practiquen las palabras que tengan dificultad en pronunciar. Estudiantes pueden tener un cuaderno con las palabras difíciles para hacer referencia en el futuro.
- Durante el tiempo de cuentacuentos, haga preguntas de comprensión a los estudiantes en inglés y en español para medir el nivel de comprensión en los dos idiomas. Preguntas pueden incluir: ¿de qué se trata el cuento? ¿Conectaste con uno de los personajes en el cuento? ¿Por qué sí o no? ¿Qué parte te gusta más en el cuento?

3. Elija palabras de vocabulario. Los libros ilustrados bilingües son una excelente manera para que sus estudiantes aprendan nuevas palabras de vocabulario porque el idioma se presenta en contexto. Mire a través del libro y asigne las palabras de vocabulario a las ilustraciones del libro. Si es posible, haga fotocopias de las páginas. Estudiantes pueden usar subrayadores en un color para inglés y un color para español para las palabras nuevas. También, puede recordar las palabras en un póster para referencia. Reflexione con sus estudiantes sobre cual palabras ya sabían y cuales palabras aprendieron.
4. En casa sus estudiantes pueden pre-leer el libro con sus familias y pueden sugerir que lean el libro juntos. Esto ayuda a practicar en leer y en el aprendizaje del vocabulario de los dos idiomas, inglés y español.
5. El uso de cognados puede ser útil en libros bilingües, en español y en inglés. En esta actividad estudiantes pueden buscar cognados en el libro. Los estudiantes pueden trabajar en parejas para identificar y formar una lista si las palabras son cognados verdaderos o falsos. Al final de la actividad es importante distinguir cómo clase la lista de los cognados verdaderos o falsos.

Estas actividades solo son sugerencias y puede encontrar más recursos para apoyar a sus clases de inmersión dual y bilingües. Puede leer más en (<https://blog.leeandlow.com/2013/11/04/using-dual-language-and-bilingual-books-in-third-and-fourth-grade/>). Estas actividades solo son sugerencias. Puede encontrar más recursos para apoyar las clases de inmersión dual y bilingües.

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. Mourning is the expression of deep sorrow for someone that has died. Why is it important to mourn? What are the different ways to mourn? Have you ever had to mourn? How did that make you feel?
2. Chela is saddened when she feels as though Nora does not want to be friends anymore. What are ways to deal with difficult emotions when you feel let down by those closest to you?
3. Which chapter/scene in *The Smell of Old Lady Perfume* best shows an emotion? Explain which emotion you think it is. How does it portray that emotion?
4. What are somethings you feel responsible for in your household? How do these responsibilities make you feel? Write a journal entry explaining these feelings.
5. Choose an emotion that interests you: happiness, sadness, fear, anxiety, frustration, hope, perseverance and so on. Illustrate or act out what that emotion looks like in *The Smell of Old Lady Perfume*.

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 letter to Apá, after he dies, from a family member (i.e. Chela, Amá, Silvia, Angel Jr., Clark, etc). Have students discuss in small groups about which characters they chose and why. Have students read share their letters with the class.
- **Prepare a persuasive essay that explains your views on which character changed the most throughout the course of the novel.** Defend your views by citing specific examples. Track their change through evidence from the book over the course of the story. What did you notice about how they changed? Readwritethink.org “Inferring How and Why Characters Change” lesson plan provides additional details and ideas on how to teach about character change (<https://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/inferring-characters-change>).
- **Have students identify a place where Chela’s character changes in the book.** Why do students think that was a point where Chela’s character changed? How does Chela feel before the change, what causes the change, and then how does she feel after? Create a graphic organizer with a column on the left that says “Before,” a column in the middle that says “Event—what happened that caused the change,” and then a column that says “After.” Afterwards, students can write an essay detailing their findings from the graphic organizer, and what they learned from analyzing Chela’s character change.
- **Have students come up with a list of questions to ask author Claudia Guadalupe Martínez.** What do students want to know about the process behind writing a novel? How did the author come up with the idea to write *The Smell of Old Lady Perfume*? Consider contacting Claudia Guadalupe Martínez and inviting her to your school, library, or other relevant setting for a virtual author visit (<https://claudiaguadalupe martinez.com/>).
- **The rich, varied, and poetic language used in *The Smell of Old Lady Perfume* provides an opportunity for students to develop their vocabulary skills in authentic contexts.** Challenge students to learn and practice using the academic and content-specific words listed in this teacher’s guide: 1) Before reading: Provide students with a list of the vocabulary words to sort into categories (e.g. very familiar, somewhat familiar, unfamiliar). 2) During reading: Have students make note of the vocabulary words as they encounter them in *The Smell of Old Lady Perfume*. They can underline, highlight, or keep a

The Smell of Old Lady Perfume

Teacher's Guide [leeandlow.com/books/the-smell-of-old-lady-perfume](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-smell-of-old-lady-perfume)

log. Have students predict what the words mean based on context clues. 3) After reading: Have students work in pairs to look up the definitions of the “unfamiliar” words on their combined lists. Were their predictions correct? Post the new vocabulary words on your word wall.

- **Identify three major themes of the story.** Use details from the novel to support each theme. Why did students select these themes? How do they influence the story?
- **Apá tells Chela, “you don’t need many friends, you just need good ones” (p159).** Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Write your answer in a persuasive essay. Use examples from the book.
- **Write an alternative ending to the story that is different from the one the author wrote.** Have students reflect on why they chose to write the ending in this way and discuss their pieces with a partner or small group.
- **Have students read *Thirty Talks Weird Love* ([leeandlow.com/books/thirty-talks-weird-love](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/thirty-talks-weird-love)), which is a coming-of-age story about a thirteen year old girl living in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico who figures out how to love and accept herself.** As students reflect on the story, ask them to compare it to *The Smell of Old Lady Perfume*. What are the differences and similarities between Chela and Anamaria? What does each story demonstrate about family and friendship?

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)

- **Chela’s family moved from Ciudad Juárez, México to El Paso, Texas.** Encourage students to research when Texas becomes a state of the United States (1845) and how that decision impacted people in Mexico and the United States. National Geographic (<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/texas-becomes-state/>) and the US Office of the Historian (<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1830-1860/texas-annexation>) provide additional information about this particular time in history. In a graphic organizer, have students list the cause and effects of Texas becoming a state, particularly for people from Mexico.
- **Chela and her family appear to travel between the United States and Mexico with ease.** Do you think this is still the case for many families? What current societal issues would impact such travel today? Present your findings to the class.
- **Conduct research and create a reading list featuring immigrant stories and books featuring bicultural teenagers.** Students can begin with Lee & Low titles such as *Thirty Talks Weird Love* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/thirty-talks-weird-love>), *Echoes of Grace* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/echoes-of-grace>), *Summer of the Mariposas* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/summer-of-the-mariposas>), and *Gabi, A Girl in Pieces* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/gabi-a-girl-in-pieces>). What did students

find? What do they want to include in their reading list? What cultures are presented in the stories, and what did students learn or connect with about those books? Have students share their lists with the whole class and include those books in their classroom library.

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)

- **Use a movie or video platform to create a book trailer for the novel.** Refer to Read-WriteThink.org (<https://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/book-report-alternative-creating-c>) for more ideas on inspiring students to create their own book trailers.
- **In Chapter 12, Chela is asked to draw pictures of Ciudad Juárez.** If possible and not triggering for students, have students draw their own neighborhoods or communities, or where they are from originally. How did it make students feel? What did they want to include in their pieces?
- **Create a poster that highlights the healing properties of different plants.** The University of Rochester (<https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/encyclopedia/content.aspx?contenttypeid=1&contentid=1169>), Denver Botanic Gardens (<https://www.botanicgardens.org/blog/top-10-medicinal-plants>), and the United States Department of Agriculture (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/wildflowers/ethnobotany/medicinal/index.shtml>) all have resources on medicinal plants, herbs, and botany. Be sure to include details about where the plant grows, common uses, etc.
- **Several of the chapters in *The Smell of Old Lady Perfume* are accompanied by pictures/drawings.** Bring a picture from home and write a story about it.

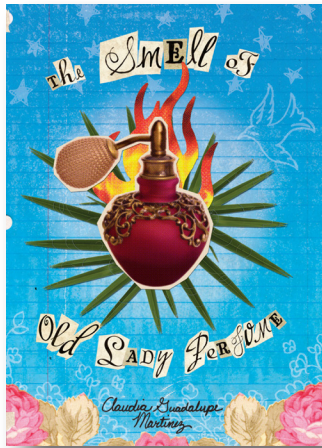
School-Home Connection

(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)

- **Interview a friend or family member who has lost a loved one in the past.** Question their strategies for how they coped both before and after the loss. What lessons were learned? What memories will always be cherished?
- **If accessible, have students and families research other titles featuring the experiences of people from Mexico.**
- **Have students make a list of special foods, stories, and objects that relate to their families.** Ask them to choose the one they feel most strongly about and write about why it is so important to them and their family.



Ordering Information

🌐 General Order Information:

leeandlow.com/contact/ordering

🔒 Secure Online Ordering:

leeandlow.com/books/the-smell-of-old-lady-perfume

📞 **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

Claudia Guadalupe Martínez has called Mexico and the US home. Her core childhood memories are set in El Paso, Texas. This dynamic of growing up between borders inspires her writing. She is the recipient of two Texas Institute of Letters Best Young Adult Book Awards, a Paterson Prize for Books for Young People, an Américas Award Commendation, a Junior Library Guild Award, and multiple starred reviews. She now lives with her family in Illinois. You can find her at claudiaguadalupe.com.

ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

LEE & LOW BOOKS is the largest children's book publisher specializing in diversity and multiculturalism. Our motto, "about everyone, for everyone," is as urgent today as it was when we started in 1991. It is the company's goal to meet the need for stories that children of color can identify with and that all children can enjoy. The right book can foster empathy, dispel stereotypes, prompt discussion about race and ethnicity, and inspire children to imagine not only a world that includes them, but also a world where they are the heroes of their own stories. Discover more at leeandlow.com.