



Rise of the Halfling King (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #1)

written by David Bowles

illustrated by Charlene Bowles

About the Book

Genre: Fiction

Format: Paperback, 64 pages

ISBN: 9781947627376

Reading Level: Grade 5

Interest Level: Grades 4–8

Guided Reading Level: U

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:

3.3 – 0.5

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

Themes: Animals, Courage, Fantasy, Folktales/Fairy Tales, Grandparents, Heroism, Latino/Hispanic/Mexican Interest, Middle Grade, Overcoming Obstacles

Resources on the web:

leeandlow.com/books/rise-of-the-halfling-king- Tales-of-the-feathered-serpent-1

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

SYNOPSIS

Sayam has always been different from other kids--he's very short for his age, his best friend is a monkey, and most curious of all: he was born from an egg! His grandmother, a witch, found him and taught him all the ancient magic she uses to help her people. So when a giant snake starts terrorizing a nearby city, Sayam decides it's time for him to use his knowledge to help others, and steps into action. But the beast might not be Sayam's biggest problem: the ruthless King Kinich Kak Ek sees Sayam as a threat to his throne. Prophecy declares that whoever succeeds at three impossible tests will be king. Monstrous snakes and impossible tests are a lot for a boy to handle, but Sayam is brave and has a loyal monkey, a wise grandmother, and magical knowledge on his side!

Fans of adventure tales with a mythological focus--such as Bowles' previous work with Latin American myths, *The Chupacabras of the Rio Grande* and the *Garza Twin* series, as well as *Rick Riordan Presents*, especially the *Storm Runner* novels--will love this exciting and accessible graphic novel. *Rise of the Halfling King* is also an invaluable educational tool for middle school students--it's a well-researched introduction to Maya culture, made accessible by an expert in Mesoamerican culture and Juvenile literature. Bowles previously stitched together tales from Maya, Aztec, and other ancient mythology from pre-Columbian Mexico in the critically-acclaimed Young Adult book, *Feathered Serpent, Dark Heart of Sky*.

Awards include:

- Kirkus Reviews' Best Middle-Grade Graphic Novels of 2020
- Center for the Study of Multicultural Children's Literature (CSMCL) Best Multicultural Children's Books of 2020
- 2021 Texas Library Association Little Maverick list
- 101 Great Books for Kids List of 2020, Evanston Public Library

BACKGROUND

From Afterword by David Bowles

"At the time of the Spanish Conquest, most indigenous cultures in Mesoamerica preserved their sacred stories and histories with images and a handful of glyphs icons that represented key names, places, objects. Two thousand years earlier, however, Maya kingdoms had developed an actual writing system based on an elite dialect of the Ch' olti' Maya language. You can see Sayam the Halfling use those hieroglyphs in the pages of this book as he studies to become a healer like his grandmother.

Time changes things, of course. Fewer and fewer Maya groups could read as centuries passed and the major civilizations collapsed in what's now southern Mexico. Yet the hieroglyphic script was still in use until the Spanish burned most books written with it. I tell you these facts because when I consider the highly visual way Mesoamericans recorded their stories, the closest modern equivalent that comes to mind is the graphic novel. Blending written words and images, comics and other sorts of graphics allow our brains to process stories more like our ancestors did, using multiple parts of our brains to understand more fully.

You may find this surprising (and perhaps ironic), but grown-ups (yes, even English teachers) are starting to take graphic novels seriously. *The New York Times* recently declared the medium as possibly "the next new literary form." Of course, you and I know that there's nothing new about it. Indigenous people used it for thousands of years.

To honor those folk—whose sacred lore I retranslated and retold in *Feathered Serpent, Dark Heart of Sky*—I have decided at the urging of my editors to collaborate with various illustrators to bring you adaptations of key stories from that book. The series is called *Tales of the Feathered Serpent*, and it will consist of ten full- color graphic novels full of adventure, humor, beauty, and truth.

I hope that reading the books, you'll find the stories settling deep in your hearts, inspiring you to learn more about the mighty, brilliant, complex peoples of Mesoamerica."

—David Bowles

February 21, 2020

Characters

Almah - The Witch of Kabah

Trained since she was young to be a healer for her people, Almah is selected by the aluxes for a very special task: raising Sayam.

Sayam - The Halfling Boy

Able to speak the moment he hatches from an egg, this fun-loving and kind halfling boy was created by the aluxes to bring peace.

Kinich Kak Ek - The King of Uxmal

The first king of Uxmal in a hundred years, Kinich Kak Ek is an ambitious and cruel man who will let nothing stand in his way

Zaatan Ik - The Chief Sorcerer

Knowledgeable in all the dark arts, this wizard helped put Kinich Kak Ek on the throne, but he would much rather unleash chaos.

Maax - Clever Spider Monkey

Smart and agile, spider monkeys were revered by the Maya. Maax is one of the smartest, if not all that agile.

Chulul - Leader of the Elfin Aluxes

When humans arrived, Aluxes retreated into jungles and caves, led by wise ones like Chulu. She watches humanity, hopeful.

Lobil - Old Shaman of the Aluxes

The ancient Aluxes have great magical lore. Lobil has lived thousands of years and remembers it all.

Maya Civilization and Teaching Resources

The Maya civilization existed around 250 AD to 900 AD in what is now present day Honduras, Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize (<https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-americas/maya>).

For more information about teaching about the Maya Civilization and Maya History, educators should read author David Bowles' *Feathered Serpent, Dark Heart of Sky* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/feathered-serpent-dark-heart-of-sky>). This is a well-researched, critically acclaimed introduction to Maya culture, made accessible by an expert in Mesoamerican culture and juvenile literature. Bowles stitched together tales from Maya, Aztec, and other ancient mythology from pre-Columbian Mexico.

Additionally, consult PBS Learning's "The Maya Empire" (<https://ny.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/2bedcdd4-9465-4065-afe6-26f8530cf3cc/the-mayan-empire/>). PBS also has a video and other resources dedicated to writings of the Ancient Maya (<https://ny.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/midlit10.soc.splmaya/writings-of-the-ancient-maya/>). National Geographic's episode, "Lost World of the Maya" provides additional information about the pyramids that the Maya constructed, as well as their cities and systems of astronomy and mathematics (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7MFky7DJsCY>).

When referring to the Maya civilization it is important to note that "Maya" is used when it is related to the people and their culture and "Mayan" is used when relating to the language family and its script.

NOTE: *Rise of the Halfling King* is also available in Spanish:

El ascenso del rey enano (<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/669781/el-ascenso-del-rey-enano--rise-of-the-halfling-king-by-david-bowles/>)

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 what they know about the ancient Maya civilization and their language
- Ask students what they know about Mesoamerica.
- Explain what resilience means to you. How do you continue to be resilient, even when something is difficult or hard?
- What does resistance mean to you? Has there ever been a time(s) you stood up for what was right, even when it would be easier to stay quiet?
- What does the word "justice" mean? What does justice mean to you?
- Have you ever had to overcome something that other people did not agree with? What emotions emerge?

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 Title Exploration: Talk about the title of the book, *Rise of the Halfling King (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #1)*. 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?

Picture Walk: Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, title page, and illustrations.

Read Author and Illustrator Biography: Read about David Bowles and Charlene Bowles. What other children's books have they done? Learn more about the creators at <https://davidbowles.us/> and charlenebowles.com/.

Encourage students to stop and jot in their reading notebooks during the read-aloud when they: learn new information, see a powerful image, have an emotional reaction or an idea, have a question, or hear new words.

Have students write a feeling in their notebook during reading. After reading, ask students why they wrote that feeling down and have them write a journal entry about it.

Graphic Novel: Introduce students to the main elements of a graphic novel. Spend time defining these elements and pointing to each in the book until students are able to identify them:

- Panel: A distinct segment of the comic, containing a combination of image and text.
- Frame: The lines and borders that contain the panels.
- Gutter: The space between framed panels.
- Speech balloon: These enclosed words come from a specific speaker's mouth to show dialogue between characters.
- Thought balloon: These enclosed words show private thoughts with a series of dots or bubbles going up to it from a specific character.
- Caption: These are boxes containing a variety of text elements, including scene-setting, description, etc.
- Special-effects lettering: This is a method of drawing attention to text; it often highlights drama or exaggeration and reinforces the impact of words such as "bang" or "wow."
- Foreground: The art can be perceived as closest to the viewer within the panel.
- Background: Provides additional, subtextual information for the reader.

Check out the panel interview with David Bowles on why he adapted this story into a graphic novel for young people: "License to Thrill: Graphic Novel Adaptations for Kids" from Comic-Con@Home 2020: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LrceWULIU-0>.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

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

Have students read to find out:

- who Sayam is and what his purpose is
- who is Almah is and how she is important to the development of Sayam
- what is special about the Maya civilization and what role do they have in this novel
- why are the surrounding cities of Uxmal important to Kinich Kak Ek, the king of Uxmal
- what types of challenges did the king present to Sayam
- why is it important to tackle difficult challenges even when fear is present

Encourage students to consider why the author, David Bowles, 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.

Content Specific

lowlands, peninsula, apprentice, grottoes, mystic, elfin, wield, coronation, prophecy, limestone, halfling, sastun, sorcerer, vassals, dwarf, cocoyoles, realm, figurines, statuettes, blight

Academic

bustling, nestled, foretold, usurp, bountiful, doted, crafting, governing, uncoil, diversion, puny, infernal, fret, summoning, staggered, enlightenment, enchantment

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. Where is the city of Uxmal located? Who was it home to?
2. What city is twenty kilometers away from Uxmal? What is this city known for?
3. Where does Almah live? Where did she travel to when she became of age?
4. Why did Almah need to go into Loltun?
5. Who are the Aluxes? Where do they live? Are they welcome to humans?
6. What do the Aluxes say to Almah about helping her with the stone? What do they give her?
7. What is so special about the drum that the Aluxes give to Almah? What does Almah think about this?
8. How was Almah special to her community?
9. Who was named king in Uxmal?

10. What prophecy did sorcerer Zaatán Ik announce?
11. Why did the king set out to conquer the surrounding cities?
12. How would you describe the way the king ruled?
13. What happened as Almah grew older?
14. What hatched from the egg that Almah found in the Puuc Hills?
15. Why did Sayam not have anyone to play with? Who was his friend?
16. What did Sayam realize? What did she teach him?
17. What did Sayam read and practice?
18. What did the small city of Xkukikan refuse to do? Who did the king summon to help him?
19. What is happening to Xkukikan? Who is attacking them?
20. What did Sayam decide to do to help the Xkukikan people?
21. What does the sorcerer tell Almah to do?
22. What happens when Sayam confronts the Metnalkan?
23. What does the King say to the sorcerer after the serpent fails to take over the city?
24. As time passed, what did Sayam notice about his grandmother? What does he discover?
25. What happens when Sayam hits the drum? What does the king request?
26. What does Almah explain to Sayam when he asks about who made the magical instrument?
27. In order to challenge the King, what does Almah tell Sayam to read?
28. What is the first test that Sayam must go through to challenge the king? How does Almah help Sayam with this test? Who wins the first challenge?
29. What is the second test Sayam must go through to challenge the king? How does Almah help Sayam with the test? Who wins this challenge?
30. What is the final test Sayam must go through? How does Almah help him? Who wins this challenge?
31. Who tries to steal the throne from Sayam? What does Sayam do?
32. How did the people feel about Sayam being the king of Uxmal?
33. What all did Sayam accomplish as king? How did he rule as king?
34. What tradition do the aluxes continue to do to honor Sayam?

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. After reading the graphic novel, what is the significance of the title *Rise of the Halfling King (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #1)*?
2. How are the illustrations in a graphic novel different from those in other illustrated books? How do the illustrations support the text? How is this different from a picture book format?
3. What is the purpose of the rectangular text boxes in a graphic novel? How are they important to the story? How do they affect pacing and plot development?
4. How does the illustrator, Charlene Bowles, convey sound through her art? What elements or techniques does she use in her illustrations?
5. How does the illustrator, Charlene Bowles, use expressions and gestures to convey character traits? Use evidence from the text to support your claims.
6. Find these graphic novel elements in the book: panels, gutters, text boxes, speech balloons, sound effects, and motion lines. How do these elements work together? If you remove any one of these elements, what is the effect? How does each and all of them taken together enable comprehension of the story?
7. What is the role of geography in this story? Why is it important that this story takes place in the Yucatan Peninsula?
8. Why was it important for the author to show the reader a map of the Yucatan Peninsula and to create a list of the characters in *Rise of the Halfling King (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #1)*? How do these features support your reading of the story?
9. Why do you think the Aluxes welcomed Almah into their realm despite her being human?
10. Why do you think Almah was valuable to her community?
11. Why do you think many people shunned Almah after king Kinich Kak Ek took power?
12. How did Almah guide and encourage Sayam throughout the story to discover his prophecy?
13. What kind of relationship did Sayam and Almah have?
14. Why do you think it can be difficult to overcome obstacles and fears? Have you ever had to overcome obstacles? How did you feel? Did you have anyone to help you?
15. How would you describe the ruling of King Knich Kak Ek? What type of king was he?
16. What strong characteristics does Sayam possess? How would you describe Sayam's character to someone who hasn't read the book? Did you connect with Sayam's character? Why or why not?
17. How does being a halfling impact Sayam? What obstacles does he face because of who he is?
18. How does the afterword by author David Bowles help us better understand the story, *Rise of the Halfling King (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #1)*?

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 David Bowles's afterword. What do you think he 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?
3. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books while you read *Rise of the Halfling King (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #1)*?
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 *Rise of the Halfling King (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #1)*?

ELL 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.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
 - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
 - 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.
4. Have students give a short talk about Almah or Sayam. Have them discuss what characteristics they admire about the person they chose.
5. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students, and several words are printed in bold. 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.

6. For Spanish speaking students, *Rise of the Halfling King* is also available in Spanish: *El ascenso del rey enano* (<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/669781/el-ascenso-del-rey-enano--rise-of-the-halfling-king-by-david-bowles/>)

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. In what ways is Almah able to stay persistent and resilient throughout the novel?
2. What Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) skills does Sayam exhibit over the course of the book? Some examples of SEL skills include problem-solving, grit and perseverance, and perspective taking. How does Sayma demonstrate these skills? Why was it important for him to demonstrate these skills?
3. How has a family member impacted your life? How do you think Almah helped Sayam? Provide evidence from the story to support your thoughts.
4. Who helps you when you are in a difficult or challenging situation? What do they do to help you?
5. Which illustration in *Rise of the Halfling King (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #1)* best shows an emotion? Explain which emotion you think it shows. How does the image portray that emotion?
6. 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 *Rise of the Halfling King (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #1)*.

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)

- **Conduct a graphic novel study with Lee & Low's other graphic novels, including *Yummy* ([leeandlow.com/books/yummy](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/yummy)), *I Am Alfonso Jones* ([leeandlow.com/books/i-am-alfonso-jones](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/i-am-alfonso-jones)), and *Grand Theft Horse* ([leeandlow.com/books/grand-theft-horse](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/grand-theft-horse)). Have students answer the following questions in an analytical essay:** what was it like to read these stories as graphic novels? How would it have been different if these stories were written in prose, as chapter books? How did the authors convey the struggles that the characters were going through in each of the graphic novels? How are graphic novels powerful as an art form? What social justice issues did each graphic novel present? What was it like to read about these issues through a graphic novel format?
- **Conduct an Author's Study on David Bowles with his following title from Lee & Low: *The Witch Owl Parliament; Clockwork Curandera Volume 1* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-witch-owl-parliament-clockwork-curandera-1>).** How are the main characters similar? How are they different? What themes do both books have in common? How are the topics similar? How are they different? Provide students with a graphic organizer to differentiate the two titles, and then have students write an essay answering the previous questions.
- **Have students compare Sayam and King Kinich Kak Ek characters using a Venn diagram.** How are the two kings similar and different? What does their character development look like throughout the story? How do they change over time? Based on the diagram, encourage students to explain who is the better King for Uxmal. Why? Provide evidence from the text to support your argument.
- **Select a scene in which you disagreed how a character handled a situation, person, or event.** In the voice of that character, rewrite the scene as you think it should have happened. What made you want to rewrite that scene? What do you think should have happened? Have students discuss their writing pieces after and discuss what it was like to take on the perspective of another character different from the one presented in the story.
- **Have students rewrite the tests in the prophecy that both Sayam and Kinich Kak Ek complete in *Rise of the Halfling King (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #1)*.** Have students take note of the three tests in the prophecy. Then have students create 3 different tests in small groups. After students are done crafting their own prophecy tests, have them present their

ideas to the class. If possible, students can recreate these scenes using Reader's Theatre. You can find and read more about using Reader's Theatre here (<https://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/readers-theatre>)

- **Create a story map that will help students follow the different elements in *Rise of the Halfling King (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #1)* during their reading of the graphic novel.** Discuss the main components of the story (characters, setting, problem/solution, theme). You can do this together as a class on chart paper or you can provide students with individual copies of a blank story map organizer. You can find and read more about using story maps graphic organizers here (https://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/story_maps).
- **Encourage students to imagine they can interview the author, David Bowles.** Students should design interview questions they would ask the creators of *Rise of the Halfling King (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #1)* if they were on a talk show, news show, or radio show. What do students want to learn more about in terms of the writing process or the illustration process?
- **Have students read the Afterword from David Bowles.** What did they learn from the Afterword after reading the story? How did it make them think differently about *Rise of the Halfling King (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #1)*? Why did he decide to write this story? Have students write a reaction essay to the Afterword, and present 3 follow up questions for David Bowles.
- **Provide students with a panel sequence or page from the book.** Have students examine the illustrations and text (word boxes and speech balloons) separately. What information do you get from the illustrations alone? From the text alone? How do the illustrations and text work together to express information?

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, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, 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)

- **Ask students to research the people and cultures of Mesoamerica.** How did the Spanish conquest affect their stories and histories? (<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/resource-library-mesoamerica>). Discuss how this information helps students understand the *Rise of the Halfling King (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #1)*.
- **Have students research the Maya Civilization in Southern Mexico.** What was the Maya Civilization like? When were they around? What type of writing system did they have? What is unique about how they developed their writing system? What influences of Maya culture do we see today? (<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/modern-day-maya>)

- **Encourage students to examine how Maya text is used throughout *Rise of the Halfling King (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #1)*.** Why do you think David Bowles chose to include the Maya language in the graphic novel? How is the Maya language critical to the story? How is the Maya language important in different regions in Mexico today? Students can refer to the Background Information section of this guide to begin their research and learn about Maya civilization, history, and culture.
- **Have students look at the map of the Lowlands in the Yucatan Peninsula in the Introduction of *Rise of the Halfling King (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #1)*.** Have students take note of where the cities are, on the map in the graphic novel. Then have students look up present day Mexico and the Yucatan Peninsula. What cities are there now? What has stayed the same? What has changed? Is Maya culture present in the area?
- **Have students research the Maya city of Uxmal.** What is the history of this Maya city? What is it like now? Have students make observations about how the author and illustrator present Uxmal in *Rise of the Halfling King (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #1)*. Students can compare and contrast past and present Uxmal and present their findings to the class through a visual presentation. *Smithsonian Magazine* provides a look at the city of Uxmal today to help inform students' research (<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/uxmal-maya-ruins-180974992/>).

Art/Media

(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)

- **Have students explore the maps at the beginning of the graphic novel.** Have them create and write their own postcards from one of those places using the Postcard Creator from ReadWriteThink.org (<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/student-interactives/postcard-creator-30061.html>). Have students write the following about the following questions: how are maps helpful? How did maps help to support their reading of the story? Why is it important to refer to maps throughout the book?
- **Photocopy one scene in the book, selecting one with multiple panels in a plot sequence.** Cut the panels apart and shuffle them so they are out of order. Place the mixed-up panels into an envelope. Prepare whatever number envelopes you need to distribute them to pairs of students. After collecting their books, have students work in pairs to organize the panels in proper sequence. Prompt students to use cues and context provided by the illustrations and text, as well as their recall of the story. Walk around asking questions and giving feedback.
- **Have students illustrate a feeling one of the characters experienced in the story.** What do they want to convey? What kinds of materials do they want to use? Have students share their pieces with a partner, small group, or whole class.

- **Consider having students come up with questions to interview the illustrator, Charlene Bowles.** What is her process behind creating the illustrations for a graphic novel? How did she work with author, David Bowles, on pairing the illustrations with the text? Students can learn more about Charlene Bowles and her work on her website (<https://www.charlenebowles.com/>).
- **Encourage students to select the illustration from *Rise of the Halfling King (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #1)* that resonated with them the most.** Have students write a reflection about the illustrations chosen. What stood out to them? How did their illustrations make them feel? What did the illustrations make them think about?
- **Have students create their own Kingmaker Drum.** First have students create a sketch of what they would like their drum to look like then allow students to find the materials around the classroom or outside to help create the drum. Students can reflect on what process they went through in creating the drum. How did they decide what shape they wanted their drum to be? How did they decide what material to make their drum out of? What sound will the drum make? Is it like the sound of the kingmaker drum? Different? If time allows, have students test out their drums and compete to see whose drum is the loudest.
- **Have students recreate the clay figurine of Sayam as shown at the end of the graphic novel.** If possible, with materials in your setting, encourage students to create their own version of this clay figurine. Students can use clay, as used in *Rise of the Halfling King (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #1)* or whatever medium is available.

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)

- **Ask students to create portraits of people who are their personal role models through drawing, collage, or photograph.** In writing, students should describe what actions and qualities they admire about this person. They can also give their role models special abilities and powers. Students can write in prose or submit a poem or song.
- **Have students interview a parent, guardian, or adult mentor about their experiences with fighting for something they believe in or going through a hardship.** How did this person react to and handle the situation when they were faced with obstacles? What advice do they have for someone trying to stand up for justice? What advice do they have for someone who has been shunned from their community?
- **Have students bring home a copy of *Rise of the Halfling King (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #1)*.** Ask students to read with adults at home. Encourage conversation and discussion after reading. What did they like about reading a graphic novel? What did they learn from the story? What was it like to examine the text and illustrations together?



Ordering Information

General Order Information:
leeandlow.com/contact/ordering

Secure Online Ordering:
leeandlow.com/book/rise-of-the-halfling-king-tales-of-the-feathered-serpent-1

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

David Bowles is a Mexican American author from south Texas, where he teaches at the University of Texas Río Grande Valley. He has written several award-winning titles, most notably *The Smoking Mirror* and *They Call Me Güero*. His work has also been published in multiple anthologies, plus venues such as *The New York Times*, *School Library Journal*, *Strange Horizons*, *English Journal*, *Rattle*, *Translation Review*, and the *Journal of Children's Literature*. In 2017, David was inducted into the Texas Institute of Letters. He is online at davidbowles.us and on Twitter at @DavidOBowles.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Charlene Bowles is a comic artist and illustrator based in Texas. She graduated from The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in 2018. *Rise of the Halfling King* is her debut graphic novel and her work has also been featured on the covers of the award-winning *Garza Twins* books. She is currently developing many of her own comic projects. Learn more at charlenebowles.com/.

REVIEWS

"A respectful, engaging interpretation of ancient Mesoamerican folklore accessible for younger readers." – *Publishers Weekly*

"It's fast, vivid, and action-laden." – *School Library Journal*

"A tale of wonder, courage, and ultimately the power of goodness. I was completely spellbound by the imagery and storytelling. Cannot wait to see what magic is woven into the next installment!" – JC Cervantes, *NYT*-bestselling author of the *Storm Runner novels*

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