

TEACHER'S GUIDE



Includes Discussion Questions

About the *Love Sugar Magic Series*

Love Sugar Magic: A Dash of Trouble

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



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

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

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

Love Sugar Magic: A Sprinkle of Spirits

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

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

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

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

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

About the Author

Anna Meriano is the author of *Love Sugar Magic: A Sprinkle of Spirits* and *Love Sugar Magic: A Dash of Trouble*. She grew up in Houston, Texas, with an older brother and a younger brother but (tragically) no sisters. She graduated from Rice University with a degree in English and earned her MFA in creative writing with an emphasis on writing for children from the New School in New York. She has taught creative writing and high school English and works as a writing tutor. Anna likes reading, knitting, playing full-contact quidditch, and singing along to songs in English, Spanish, and ASL. Anna still lives in Houston with her dog, Cisco. Her favorite baked goods are the kind that don't fly away before you share them with your family.



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

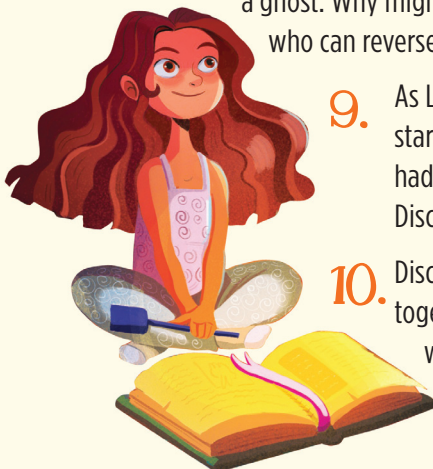
Have students research Día de Los Muertos customs as practiced by Mexicans and Mexican Americans. What is the significance of this day? What images are part of the observances? What legends? What foods? What types of activities take place?

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

1. Leo does not speak much Spanish. How do the few Spanish words she understands—especially the word *magía*, affect her? How would her efforts to uncover her family's secret be helped if she spoke a bit more Spanish?
2. When Leo's mother invites her to help make cinnamon rolls for Sunday breakfast, Leo wants to tell her she knows about her family's magical abilities. But she hesitates. Why? How does she think her mother might react? Is she right?
3. Leo thinks: "What was the point of having magic powers if you couldn't use them to help your friend?" (p. 120) Do you think Leo is using good sense? Why or why not? Is she being realistic when she says, "There's no way anyone would know it was us"? (p. 120) Does the plan to cast a spell on Brent seem as though it is likely to go off without a hitch?
4. Impatient Leo has a hard time waiting to find out if the magic cookies she and Caroline made for Brent will work. Ask students to imagine they are in Leo's situation. How would they feel? Would they take the risks she takes, or would they be more cautious?
5. Considering Caroline's reaction to the foul-up with Brent, Leo thinks, "Friends were different from sisters, because no matter how angry you made your sisters, they would always be your sisters." (p. 192) Do students agree or disagree with this?
6. As Leo scrambles to reverse the spell on Brent, she feels awful. "Guilt from all her lies grew bigger and bigger like rising dough in her stomach, but she didn't have a choice if she wanted to fix her mistake." (p. 196) Discuss with students. If they were in Leo's situation, would they keep going on by themselves trying to fix things, or would they ask for help?
7. Discuss this sentence: "She didn't know all the rules about being a witch, but the rules of being a good person meant she had to do whatever she could to fix her mistakes." (p. 238)
8. When Abuela (Leo's late grandmother) appears in Leo's bedroom, Leo does not seem disturbed to see a ghost. Why might that be? How does Leo feel when Abuela tells her that it is only Leo herself who can reverse the spell? How does that make Brent feel?

9. As Leo struggles to fix Brent's situation, she faces the fact that "she alone...had started this whole mess, and now she had to work alone to fix it." (p. 266) If Leo had it to do all over again, do students think she have made the same choices? Discuss.

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

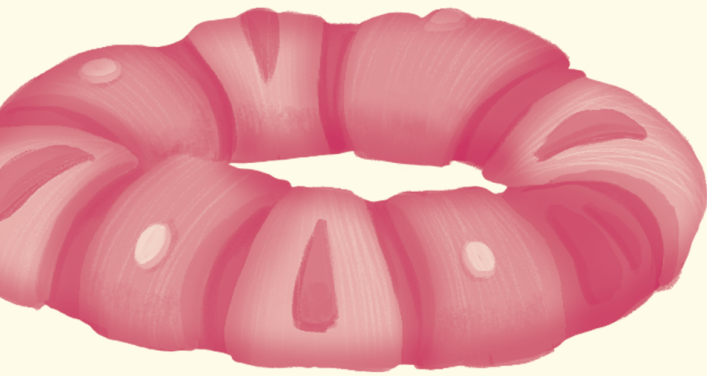


Pre-Reading Activities for *Love Sugar Magic: A Sprinkle of Spirits*

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

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

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





8. When Leo encounters the spirit of Caroline's late mother, Mrs. Campbell tells her she does not want her daughter to see her. She explains: "If Caroline sees me now, then all the progress of the past months...will be shaken. She'll be back to wishing for a life she can't have, for all the things I can't give her." (p. 245) While Leo respects Mrs. Campbell's wishes, she does not agree with her approach. What do students think?
9. During this story, Leo becomes increasingly confident in her abilities as a bruja: "When she focused on a spell, she wasn't worried or confused or stressed or embarrassed. She wasn't a baby sister or a mess maker or a secret teller or a young leader. She was Leo. She was a bruja. And she had a job to do." (p. 262) Talk with students about skills they are working to master. How do they feel when they make progress? Can they empathize with how Leo feels?
10. "Leonora Elena, you are growing up to be quite a remarkable bruja," Abuela said. 'And I have to say, this birth-order power is going to be the envy of all your sisters.'" (p. 283) Discuss with students the ways in which Abuela has helped Leo gain self-confidence and self-awareness.



The discussion questions in this guide correlate to the following Common Core State Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.5, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6

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