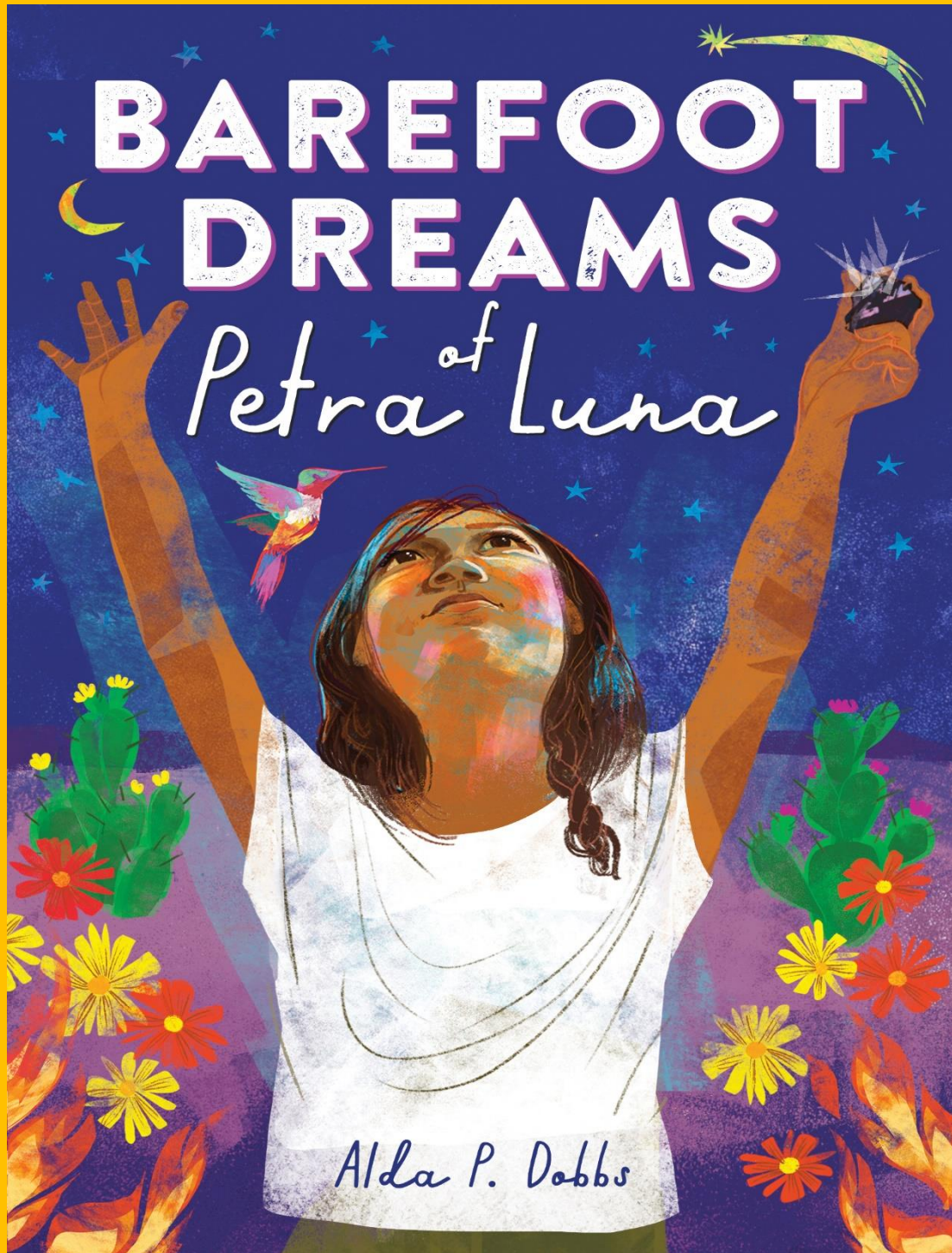




An Educator's Guide to





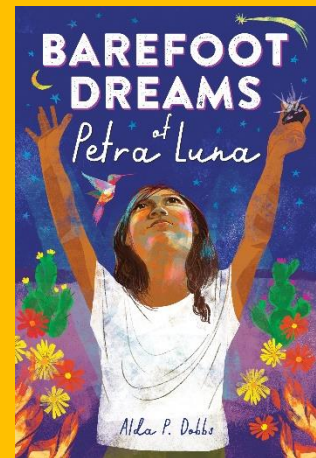
Dear Educators

Barefoot Dreams of Petra Luna is a unique and captivating story of just how much a young girl can accomplish in the face of adversity. Surrounded by uncertainty, danger and hopelessness, Petra's courage and determination help guide her family to safety and opportunity. In this guide, you will find ties to both the Common Core Curriculum and the Texas Educational Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) curriculum for English and Language Arts, Writing, History and Social Sciences. There are several versions of the questions and concepts to help you adapt them to the appropriate grade level. The guide is written so that it can be used to teach individual activities from excerpts of the book or in its entirety as part of an English or History/Social Studies curriculum. The goal is to make this material more accessible and enjoyable for you and your students.

About the Book

In 1913, during the Mexican Revolution, twelve-year-old Petra Luna and her family flee their burning village. They cross desert plains and battlefields, desperate to escape the wrath of the Federales. Every night, when Petra closes her eyes, she hangs tight to her dreams. In one of them, she can read, and she reads everything – books, newspapers, EVERYTHING. But all of her dreams will have to wait as long as she stays true to her promise to Papa.

Barefoot Dreams of Petra Luna was inspired by the experiences the author's great-grandmother endured during the Mexican Revolution.



About the Author



Alda P. Dobbs is the author of the upcoming novel *Barefoot Dreams of Petra Luna*. She was born in a small town in northern Mexico but moved to San Antonio, Texas as a child. Alda studied physics and worked as an engineer before pursuing her love of storytelling. She is as passionate about connecting children to their past, their communities, and nature as she is about writing. You can visit her website at www.aldapdobbs.com to learn more.





Key Ideas and Themes

- The importance of resilience, perseverance, and family
- Leadership and Self-Determination
- Selfishness
- Immigration's impact of the country

Classroom Lesson Plans

The questions below are meant to help students relate to the story and use the book to further their education. They have been sorted into groups and written in a way that can be used as simple question and answer or as writing prompts. These questions can easily be adapted to any level between 3rd and 6th grade and have been linked to both Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and Common Core Standards (CCS) to assist educators in developing lesson plans.

Reading and discussing this text supports TEKS RLA 3-5.1, 3-5.3, 3-5.4, 3-5.5, 3-5.6, 3-5.7, R.2-9 / CCS RL3-6.9, 3-6.10; W6.4; RH6.8, 6.10.

Pre-Reading Assignment

1. Examine the front cover. What do you notice? What do you think the book will be about?
2. Read the synopsis on the back cover. What did you learn from the summary? What words or phrases catch your attention?
3. Looking at the entire cover, colors, text, illustrations. What adjectives would you use to describe it?
4. Write a paragraph describing your initial thoughts about the book. What questions do you have that you hope to answer by reading the book?
5. Indicate whether you think the statements below are true or false before reading the book. After reading the book ask the same questions and see if the students' perspectives have changed. Emphasize that there are no "right" or "wrong" answers, but students should be able to explain their reasoning.

Before Reading	After Reading	Statements
		Children can lead a group even when there are older kids or even adults in the group.
		There is much that can be learned from interacting with people from other cultures or backgrounds.
		People can change their circumstances





Observation

1. What was your first impression of Petra and how did it change throughout the novel? What about Marietta? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.3, 3-6.4; W3-6.1)
2. What were Petra's first impressions of Marietta? Does this impression change? Why does she have these feelings? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.1, 3-6.3, 3-6.4, 3-6.6; W3-6.9, RH6.1)
3. What are some of the themes you noticed in the book? Choose one and explain how it is revealed through character, plot, and/or events. (TEKS RLA3-5.8, 3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.1, 3-6.2, 3-6.4; RH6.2)
4. When the Soldiers enter Petra's house and Petra risks her life to retrieve her "black rock" what do you infer about the rock? Was your inference confirmed when you found out that her father had given it to her as a special gift? (TEKS RLA3-5.8, 3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.1, 3-6.4; RH6.1)
5. When Petra is in the desert, she sees a coyote and a hawk while having specific thoughts. How does the author use these animals to relate to the thoughts Petra is having in those moments? What do these animals represent? What do the descriptions of these animals say about Petra's personality, mood, and attitude when she encounters them? (TEKS RLA3-5.8, 3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.1, 3-6.2, 3-6.4; W3-6.9; RH6.1)
6. In what ways are Petra and Adeline different? In what ways are they similar? Why do you think they were such strong friends even though they were different in many ways? (TEKS RLA3-5.13, SS3-5.15, 6.13 / CCS RL3-6.1, 3-6.3, 3-6.4; W3-6.1, 3-6.2, 3-6.9; RH6.1)
7. When Petra is begging for money while holding her baby brother, she is at a low point in her journey. Who enters the story to help her in her darkest moment? What does this person represent? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.1, 3-6.3, 3-6.4; W3-6.2)
8. What do you think draws Petra to Marietta? What do you think draws her to Adeline? (TEKS RLA3-5.13, SS3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.1, 3-6.3, 3-6.4; W3-6.1, 3-6.9; RH6.1)
9. What is the importance of Marietta's character? What characteristics and values does she represent? (TEKS RLA3-5.8, RLA3-5.13, SS3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.1, 3-6.3, 3-6.4; W3-6.9)
10. Compare and contrast Abuela and Marietta using specific details in the text. Consider their character traits, their relationship with Petra and the possible reasons for their differences. (TEKS RLA3-5.8, RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.1, 3-6.3; RH6.1)
11. How does the weather when Petra and her family cross the narrow train bridge change the mood of the scene? How would the mood be different if they had crossed on a bright sunny day? (TEKS RLA3-5.8, 3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.1, 3-6.4; W3-6.2, 3-6.3; RH6.1)
12. In Chapter 22, the author uses the setting to convey a general mood of the character. What mood do you perceive from reading this chapter? What specific words helps establish this mood and how does it help you better understand the story? (TEKS RLA3-5.8, 3-5.13, SS3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.1, 3-6.2, 3-6.4; W3-6.2; RH6.1)





13. During a flashback, Petra remembers a conversation with her Papa discussing a picture of President Madero and his wife in the newspaper. Petra observes that the wife looks scared for her husband and says "I bet there are plenty of men in that room who covet Madero's power. She probably feels it." This is an example of foreshadowing. What does "foreshadow" mean and what real life event does this scene foreshadow? (TEKS RLA3-5.8, 3-5.13, SS3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.5; W3-6.2; RH6.1)
14. Sometimes supporting characters in a story represent one or two traits that the main character may need to be successful. The supporting characters support the main character in becoming a more "complete" person. Marietta, Abuelita, Amelia, Adeline, Papa, and even Luisito display certain traits that help Petra. What traits do you most closely relate to these characters and how do these help Petra? Are there any other minor characters in the story who add to Petra's character or to the feel of the story? If so how? Use examples from the text to support your answers. (TEKS RLA3-5.8, RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.1, 3-6.3, 3-6.6; W3-6.3; RH6.1)
15. There are many Spanish words used that you may have not known before reading the book. Could you guess what each word meant when you first read it? Could you determine its meaning from the context of the text? How does the author's use of Spanish help establish the setting of the story? Why is this important? (TEKS RLA3-5.8, 3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.4)
16. What is the climax of the story? Explain why you chose that scene? (TEKS RLA3-5.8, 3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.5; W3-6.1, 3-6.9; RH 6.1)
17. What is a metaphor? Can you find an example of a metaphor in the text and explain what it means? (TEKS RLA3-5.8, 3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.1, 3-6.4; W3-6.9; RH 6.1)
18. The author added the story of Luz and Chenchu to the book after she finished the first draft of the book. What elements are added to the book through their story? Do you think this was a good addition? Explain your answer. (TEKS RLA3-5.8, 3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.3, 3-6.5; W3-6.1, 3-6.9)

Visualization

1. After reading the first chapter, make a prediction about how the book will end. At the end of the book compare your prediction to the actual ending. (TEKS RLA3-5.8, 3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS W3-6.3)
2. What point of view is the story told from (1st or 3rd)? Why did the author choose to use this point of view? How would the story be different if told from the other point of view? (TEKS RLA3-5.8, 3-5.10, 3-5.12, 3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.5, 3-6.6; W3-6.3; RH6.6)
3. Pick a character other than Petra (Amelia, Abuelita, Marietta, Papa, etc.) and describe how the story would be different if it were told from their point of view? (TEKS RLA3-5.8, 3-5.10, 3-5.12, 3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.1, 3-6.3, 3-6.5, 3-6.6; W3-6.3)





4. As you read the book, pretend you are Petra and keep a “Diary”. Write down what you think Petra would have written each day along her journey. (TEKS RLA3-5.12, 3-5.13; SS3-15 / CCS RL3-6.3, 3-6.6; W3-6.3, 3-6.10)
5. When Petra arrives at the military camp, the author describes it as a place full of food, music and dancing. Do you think this was always the mood in the camp? Why does the author choose to portray the camp in this way and how does that make Petra’s decision harder? (TEKS RLA3-5.8, 3-5.10, 3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS W3-6.1, 3-6.3, 3-6.9; RH6.6)
6. Marietta offers to teach Petra to be a soldado, a soldier. Adeline offers to help her get to America and reach her dream of learning to read. Petra declines both offers of assistance. What does she want to do? Why does she decide not to accept their assistance? What would you have done in her situation? Have you ever decided not to do something you really wanted to do? Explain. Can you imagine an alternate storyline if Petra had decided to take either of these offers? How might the story have ended? (TEKS RLA3-5.12, 3-5.13; SS 3-5.15, 3-5.16, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.7, 6.9, 6.13, 6.15, 6.16, 6.17 / CCS RL3-6.3; W3-6.1, 3-6.2, 6.9)
7. Make a poster that encourages support for the Federales. Make another that encourages support for the Revolucionarios. Have a debate between two teams representing each point of view. (TEKS RLA3-5.12, 3-5.13; SS3-5.1, 3-5.2, 3-5.15, 6.2 / CCS RL3-6.6; W3-6.1, 3-6.3, 3-6.7, 3-6.9)
8. Using the author’s description, draw a picture of your favorite scene from the book. (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-15 / CCS RL3-6.4; 3-6.9; RH6.6)
9. Using the author’s description, draw a picture of your favorite character. (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-15 / CCS RL3-6.4; W3-6.9; RH6.6)
10. Why do you think the author chose *Barefoot Dreams of Petra Luna* as the title? If you had to choose a different title, what would it be? (TEKS RLA3-5.10, 3-5.12, 3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.2, 3-6.4; W3-6.1, 3-6.3, 3-6.9; RH6.6)
11. What do you think will happen to Petra and her family after the story ends? Write a summary of your imagined story and share it with the class. (TEKS RLA3-5.12, 3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS W3-6.1, 3-6.3, 3-6.9)

Comprehension

1. The name Petra means “rock” in Greek. What are some qualities of a rock? How does this name relate to who Petra is as a person? (TEKS RLA3.13; SS3-5.15)
2. What is an omen? What role do omens play in the story and how do they affect the actions of the characters? Do you believe in omens? Use examples from the text or personal experience or knowledge to support your belief. (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.15, 6.13 / CCS W3-6.1, 3-6.8, 3-6.9)





3. How does the setting influence your understanding and the mood of the story? What emotions or thoughts do you have when Petra is at her hut? The church? The desert? The military camp? On the bridge? Under the flagpole? What are the first words that come to mind when you think of these places? (TEKS RLA3-5.8, 3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.4; W3-6.9; RH6.1)
4. After Petra learns that Amelia has named the donkey the author states that “It was a strict rule: don’t name the animals. Names create bonds and bonds tend to break, especially during war”. What do you think this means and do you think this is a good rule for Amelia and Petra to live by? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.14, 3-5.15 / CCS W3-6.1, 3-6.9)
5. What is the significance of Petra’s black rock? What does it symbolize? Use evidence from the text in your answer. (TEKS RLA 3-5.8, 3-5.13; SS3-5.14, 3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.4; W3-6.1, 3-6.9)
6. Why does Abuelita not want Petra to learn to read, or to climb trees? Use evidence from the text. (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.14, 3-5.15, 6.13 / CCS RL3-6.3; W3-6.1, 3-6.9; RH6.1)
7. In the scene where Petra and Adeline are talking about the revolution, why does Petra not want to say which side her father is fighting on? Use evidence from the text. (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.14, 3-5.15, 3-5.16, 6.13 / CCS RL3-6.3, 3-6.4; W3-6.1, 3-6.9; RH6.1)
8. There are several examples of Petra failing during her journey. Identify one of these failures and explain how Petra used it to ultimately succeed. (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.14, 3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.1, 3-6.2, 3-6.3, 3-6.4, 3-6.5, 3-6.6; W3-6.2, 3-6.9; RH6.1)
9. How does the flashback of Marietta’s father being killed enhance your understanding of the story? What did you learn from the flashback that changed your perceptions? Why are flashbacks important in telling a story. (TEKS RLA3-5.8, 3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS RL 3-6.5; W3-6.9; RH6.1)
10. Luz’s baby, who is called “Chencha”, is named Inocencia. What do you think Inocencia means in English? Why do you think the author chose this name? What other character exemplifies innocence? (TEKS RLA3-5.8, 3-5.10, 3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.4; W3-6.1, 3-6.9; RH6.6)
11. What is the most important factor in Petra’s ability to get her family to safety? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.14, 3-5.15 / CCS W3-6.1, 3-6.9)
12. What is the importance of Petra’s desire to learn to read? What does learning to read represent to Petra? To Abuelita? (TEKS RLA 3-5.13; SS3-5.14, 3-5.15, 6.13 / CCS W3-6.2, 3-6.9)
13. Petra’s father tells her “When life’s big problems squeeze you hard, you grow stronger. You grow up to shine like a diamond.” What does he mean by this? Do you agree or disagree and why? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.14, 3-5.15 / CCS W3-6.1)
14. Choose your favorite scene. What about that scene makes it your favorite? What emotions or mood do you feel when reading that scene? (TEKS RLA3-5.8, 3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.5; W3-6.9; RH6.1)





15. Projection is when a person sees what they want to see in another person, animal, or event. In the schoolhouse, Petra sees a hummingbird flying around and takes this as a sign. How is this an example of projecting? Use the text to explain your answer. (TEKS RLA3-5.8, 3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS W3-6.9; RH6.1)

Application/Extension

1. Which character did you identify most with and why? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.14, 3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.3; W3-6.2, 3-6.8)
2. Describe the character traits of each character? Do any of the characters have only “good” or only “bad” traits? How does this make you think about the character traits of the people in your life? What about your opinions of those you don't know well? (TEKS RLA3-5.8, 3-5.13; SS3-5.14, 3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.3; W3-6.1, 3-6.8, 3-6.9; RH6.1)
3. Petra's papa told her that life's challenges are what makes people stronger. Do her actions demonstrate that she believes this? Cite examples. Do you believe this is true? Do your actions demonstrate your belief? Cite examples. (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.14, 3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.1, 3-6.3; W3-6.1, 3-6.8, 3-6.9)
4. Describe the relationship between Petra and Amelia or between Petra and Abuelita. Have you had any similar relationships? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS W3-6.2, 3-6.8, 3-6.9)
5. Petra and Amelia are especially close as sisters. What factors do you think made them so close? Think of your relationships with your siblings? What factors have formed your relationships and how could you change those relationships if you wanted? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.1; W3-6.2, 3-6.8, 3-6.9; RH6.1)
6. Why do you think Abuelita does not share the dream of a better life and seems resigned to a life where she barely scrapes by? How do you think you would react in her situation? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.14, 3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.3; W3-6.1, 3-6.3, 3-6.8, 3-6.9)
7. Do you think that Petra understands Abuelita's view of the world? Does Abuelita understand Petra's view? Can you relate to the differences when you think about your parents and teachers? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.6; W3-6.8, 3-6.9)
8. When Petra and Amelia deliver wood to Don Raul, the woman who answers the door is rude to them and throws their money in the street. Petra stops Amelia from picking up the money, which their family desperately needs. In your own words explain Petra's feelings when she does this? What would you have done? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.14, 3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.3, 3-6.4; W3-6.1, 3-6.3, 3-6.8, 3-6.9)
9. Petra's father is forced to fight for the Federales, but Marietta is fighting for the Revolucionarios. How do you think that it makes Petra feel to have two people she cares about fighting on opposite sides? Have you ever experienced a similar situation? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS W3-6.3, 3-6.8, 3-6.9)





10. While riding on the train, Abuelita tells Petra a story about her Papa when he was a boy on the hacienda. How did her flashback change the way you viewed Abuelita? Did it make you better understand why she was afraid of Petra's growing independence from her? Do you think your parents may have some of the same fears about you as Abuelita had about Petra? (TEKS RLA-5.13; SS3-5.15, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.7, 6.13 / CCS RL3-6.3, 3-6.6; W3-6.2, 3-6.9)
11. Have you ever had somethings as special to you as Petra's "black rock" is to her? What was it, why was it special to you and how did it make you feel? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS W3-6.2, 3-6.8)
12. Why is Petra's promise to her father to keep her family safe so important for her to keep? Have you ever made an important promise to someone? Was it easy to keep? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.1, 3-6.2, 3-6.3, 3-6.4, 3-6.5, 3-6.6; W3-6.1, 3-6.2, 3-6.8, 3-6.9)
13. Why is Petra nervous about telling Abuelita about her plan to go to the United States? Have you ever had to convince someone to do something they didn't want to do? How did you do it? (TEKS RLA 3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS W3-6.2, 3-6.8, 3-6.9)
14. Near the end of the book, Petra is trying to cross the bridge to the U.S with her family. It is a hectic and chaotic scene and Petra loses contact with Abuelita. Have you ever been in a chaotic situation like that, or have you ever lost contact with your parents? How did that make you feel? How did you resolve of the situation? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS W3-6.2, 3-6.8)
15. What emotions do you imagine Petra feels standing under the flag with her family? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.14, 3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.1, 3-6.4; W3-6.3, 3-6.9)
16. How does Petra grow during the story? How do the characters around her help her grow? How does Abuela change during the story? How might your role in your family change as you grow older and gain more experience? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.14, 3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.1, 3-6.3; W3-6.1, 3-6.2, 3-6.9; RH6.1)
17. Petra believes that her struggles, challenges, failures, and victories will chisel her character and make her shine like a diamond. Do you agree or disagree with this idea? Why? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.14, 3-5.15 / CCS W3-6.2, 3-6.8)
18. What is the biggest challenge you have ever faced? Did you overcome that challenge? If so, how? If not, what did you learn from the failure? Did anyone help you in your struggle? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS W3-6.8)
19. Did you learn anything from reading the story that you can apply to your own life? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.14, 3-5.15 / CCS W3-6.2, 3-6.8)





Connections

1. This book is classified as “Historical Fiction”. What does that mean? Are there any parts of this story that you don’t believe could have happened as described? Why? (TEKS RLA3-5.8, 3-5.13; SS3-5.14, 3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.1, 3-6.2, 3-6.3, 3-6.4, 3-6.5, 3-6.6; W3-6.2, 3-6.9)
2. Where did Petra start her journey and where did it end? Use a map to determine the distance between the two locations. Describe the terrain and climate of the area and how that influences Petra’s decisions. What are some of the geographical features that Petra encounters on her journey? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.3, 3-5.4, 3-5.15 / CCS W3-6.2, 3-6.7, 3-6.8, 3-6.9; RH6.1)
3. At the beginning of the book, Petra and her family observes a “smoking star” or a comet, which really did occur in 1910. What was this comet called? How often can we see it from earth? Will you be able to see it in your lifetime or do you know anyone who has? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.15 / CCS 3-6.7, 3-6.8)
4. How did Petra’s mother die? Childbirth in the early 20th Century was dangerous for both the mother and the child. Compare the fatality rate in the early 20th Century and 21st Century, determine the factors that made it so dangerous and identify how these were overcome. (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.1, 3-5.2, 3-5.15 / CCS W3-6.7, 3-6.8)
5. This book highlights several issues which were relevant during Petra’s time and still resonate today: immigration, inequality, war, revolution, prejudice, and poverty. Pick one of these issues or another of your choice and explain the similarities and differences between then and now. (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.1, 3-5.2, 3-5.14, 3-5.15, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.7, 6.9, 6.13, 6.15, 6.17 / CCS W3-6.7, 3-6.8, 3-6.9; RH6.1)
6. Inequities are presented throughout this story. Identify some of the inequities and explain how Petra deals with each of them. (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.1, 3-5.2, 3-5.14, 3-5.15, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.7, 6.9, 6.13, 6.15, 6.17 / CCS W3-6.1, 3-6.7, 3-6.8, 3-6.9; RH6.1)
7. How has immigration affected the United States since its founding? How has it contributed to make this country stronger? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.1, 3-5.2, 3-5.14, 3-5.15, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.7, 6.9, 6.13, 6.15, 6.17 / CCS W3-6.1, 3-6.7, 3-6.8)
8. Why are stories of immigration, such as this one important for all Americans? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.1, 3-5.2, 3-5.14, 3-5.15, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.7, 6.9, 6.13, 6.15, 6.17 / CCS W3-6.1, 3-6.7, 3-6.8)
9. Why do you think people from all over the world immigrate to the United States? Where did your family immigrate from? Do you think there are parallels between your family’s journey and Petra’s? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.1, 3-5.2, 3-5.14, 3-5.15, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.7, 6.9, 6.13, 6.15, 6.17 / CCS W3-6.1, 3-6.7, 3-6.8)
10. Do you know any first-generation immigrants? If so, interview them and ask questions such as the following:
 - Why they came to the U.S.?
 - What was their journey like?
 - How were they received?





- What opportunities have they found here that were not available in their home country?
 - What do they miss most about their home country? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.1, 3-5.2, 3-5.4, 3-5.14, 3-5.15, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.7, 6.9, 6.13, 6.15, 6.17 / CCS W3-6.1, 3-6.7, 3-6.8)
11. The idea of family is important to Petra, so much so that she delays her personal dreams to keep the family together. How does this compare to the view of the “family” today? Is the “family” as valued today in the same way as it was in the early 20th Century? Why or why not? (TEKS 3-5.13; SS3-5.1, 3-5.2, 3-5.15, 6.13, 6.17 / CCS W3-6.7, 3-6.8)
 12. This story highlights some of the strongest elements of Mexican culture. After reading the story, what important elements about Mexican culture can you identify? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.1, 3-5.2, 3-5.3, 3-5.10, 3-5.15, 6.1, 6.2, 6.5, 6.13, 6.15, 6.17 / CCS W3-6.2, 3-6.7, 3-6.8)
 13. The author described the Aztec gods Tláloc and Huitzilopochtli. Research these gods and other aspects of the Aztec culture and determine how they influenced the Mexican culture. (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.1, 3-5.2, 3-5.10, 3-5.15, 6.1, 6.2, 6.5, 6.13, 6.15, 6.17 / CCS W3-6.2, 3-6.7, 3-6.8)
 14. Mexico has many indigenous cultures and ancient civilizations. Divide the class into small groups and have each a research and report on one of the following: modern and ancient Mayans, ancient Aztecs, modern and ancient Nahuas, modern and ancient Mixtecs, ancient Olmecs, and modern and ancient Zapotecs. (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.1, 3-5.2, 3-5.10, 3-5.15, 6.1, 6.2, 6.5, 6.13, 6.15, 6.17 / CCS W3-6.2, 3-6.7, 3-6.8)
 15. Research the Mexican Revolution and list some of the causes and important turning points in the war. How did it end? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.1, 3-5.2, 3-5.3, 3-5.4, 3-5.15, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.7, 6.9, 6.13, 6.15, 6.17 / W, 3-6.7, 3-6.8)
 16. Do you or anyone you know speak any other languages? Do you think it is beneficial to speak more than one language? Why or why not? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.1, 3-5.2, 3-5.15 / CCS W3-6.1, 3-6.8, 3-6.9)

Discussion

1. One of the themes in the book is that everyone is important and can contribute. How does each character solve a problem or contribute in a way that is unique to them? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.14, 3-5.15 / CCS W3-6.1, 3-6.2, 3-6.9)
2. Why were the Revolucionarios fighting against the Federales? Were there “good guys” and “bad guys” or was the conflict more complicated. Explain your answer. (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.1, 3-5.2, 3-5.6, 3-5.14, 3-5.15, 6.1, 6.2, 6.7, 6.9 / CCS RL3-6.6; W3-6.1, 3-6.2, 3-6.7, 3-6.8, 3-6.9)
3. How does Petra’s father’s description of how a diamond is formed relate to Petra’s journey? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.14, 3-5.15 / CCS RL3-6.1, 3-6.2; W3-6.2, 3-6.9)





4. What were your thoughts when you read about the people cooking and sleeping and riding on top of the train? Why do you think people traveled this way? Have you heard of people traveling in this manner? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.2, 3-5.3, 3-5.4, 3-5.6, 3-5.14, 3-5.15 / CCS W3-6.2, 3-6.7, 3-6.8, 3-6.9)
5. As Petra is walking through the chaos after the train wreck, she finds Luz, holding her baby, Chenchu, who has died. Doña Amparo tells Petra that it is the family's sacrifice for the war. This causes Petra to ask herself the following, "A sacrifice?...A sacrifice meant surrendering something valued, something cherished for the sake of a greater good. But who decided how much we sacrificed? Who decided when to stop? Who decided it'd been enough?". What does this passage mean to you? How would you advise Petra to think about this idea of a sacrifice for the greater good? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.1, 3-5.2, 3-5.14, 3-5.15 / CCS W3-6.1, 3-6.8, 3-6.9)
7. Petra decides to lead her family to the United States. Is this a good decision? What other decisions could she have made? What decisions would you have made? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.1, 3-5.2, 3-5.3, 3-5.4, 3-5.6, 3-5.14, 3-5.15 / CCS W3-6.1, 3-6.3, 3-6.9; RH6.1)
8. When Petra and her family get to the bridge to cross into the United States, she finds out that the price to cross the bridge has increased one hundred times what it usually costs. Why do you think the authorities increased the price during this chaotic time? How would the story be different if the price had not been increased? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.1, 3-5.2, 3-5.6, 3-5.14, 3-5.15 / CCS W3-6.1, 3-6.3, 3-6.9)
9. Petra seems to have an eternal flame of hope within her, which keeps her moving forward despite all odds. Do you think this hope and optimism are important? Why or why not? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.14, 3-5.15, / CCS W3-6.1, 3-6.8, 3-6.9)
10. It is said that character is built through adversity. What do you think this means and how do you think Petra's character is built through the adversity she faces? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.14, 3-5.15 / CCS W3-6.1, 3-6.8, 3-6.9)
11. How is Petra's life different from yours? How is it similar? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.14, 3-5.15 / CCS W3-6.2, 3-6.8, 3-6.9)
12. In your own words, summarize the most important lesson you learned from reading this book? (TEKS RLA3-5.13; SS3-5.14, 3-5.15 / CCS W3-6.2)





Fun Activities

Barefoot Dreams Book Party – After reading the book it may be fun to have a Barefoot Dreams Book Day. Below are some fun ideas of things to do that can help your students better understand Petra's journey.

1. Make tortillas using a package of Mazeca corn flour from the grocery store (very easy with teacher's help).
2. Listen to (and maybe even dance to!) the following songs from that period: "Alejandra" La Cucaracha", "Las Coronelas", "Jesusita En Chihuahua", "La Marcha de Zacatecas", "Las Bicicletas", "Las Tres Pelonas", "La Adelita".
3. Visit my website at www.aldapdobbs.com to watch a video on the Mexican Revolution and see pictures of that period.
4. Play a game of marbles, or have students bring a tin cap to perform several trials of "corcho o lata", a "heads or tails" game played in Mexico. In the past, tin caps contained cork on the bottom side. Before flipping the tin cap, have the students call out either "corcho" (cork) or "lata" (tin).
5. Have students decorate the interior of a small box (shoe size) similar to the hollows Petra finds dug into the walls of the dry creek bed. Inside the box, place pictures of loved ones who have passed, small items or trinkets that belonged to them or remind you of them, and/or food they enjoyed. Decorate the inside or outside of the box with artificial flowers or ones made out of colorful tissue paper. Add flameless tealight candles to enhance its look.
6. Have kids dress in serapes, shawls and other articles of clothing typical to the time period.
7. Research Aztec gods such as Tláloc, Huitzilopochtli, or Quetzalcóatl and discuss how they related to the people who worshiped them.
8. Explore and research facts about the Mexican Revolution.
9. Organize a play where children act out the part of the characters in a chosen scene either using the actual dialog, or their own adlib dialog.
10. Construct a diorama of one of the main events.
11. Write a letter to the author and explain what you liked or disliked about the book.
12. Make storyboards of important scenes in the book.
13. Make posters for the Revolucionarios and Federales and debate each side.
14. Create interviews where students act as the interviewer or one of the characters.





Book Questions and Answers

1. What inspired you to write *Petra Luna*?

Growing up I loved listening to stories about my great-grandmother's experience during the Mexican Revolution. They all told of extraordinary events and unbelievable trials she endured as a child. One story in particular intrigued me. It was of my great-grandmother and her family anxiously waiting for the US border to open along with thousands of other people so that they could reach safety. I decided to do some research to find out if it was true. Without having an exact date, I searched through old newspapers and after a few months, I found an article that described the event exactly as my great-grandmother had recounted it. I knew then I had to share her story with everyone, and *Petra Luna* was born!

2. How much of *Petra Luna* is real?

Petra Luna's character and some of her experiences were inspired by my grandmother's and great-grandmother's childhoods. Though the story's characters are all fictional, their circumstances and experiences are based on actual stories I was told by elders or read in newspapers and books.

3. Where do you get your ideas?

Ideas are everywhere, all around you, and as a storyteller it's your job to poke at them to see if they're "alive". Sometimes ideas twitch or glimmer and require more poking or turning over to see what they're made of. There are some that remain dull and motionless no matter how much you prod, and all you can do is move on to the next one. The best ideas leap right at you, anxious to be carried away. I find ideas in newspapers, family stories, sunsets – pretty much in anything and everything.

4. Do you have any advice for young aspiring writers?

Read everything you can get your hands on. Read for pleasure but also find books that you enjoy and analyze them. Like a biologist who dissects a specimen to learn more about it, do the same with your favorite books. Dissect each scene, each paragraph, each sentence and read it aloud to learn how it flows. Don't forget to write everyday (you're a writer, after all!). Read your own writing aloud and listen to its rhythm and flow. See if you stumble anywhere. Don't be afraid to share your writing with people you trust. It takes courage but improvement will always follow. Seek a mentor to guide you through. Don't be discouraged. Don't give up. And learn to listen to your own voice. Always remember that writing is HARD, HARD work!





Barefoot Dreams of Petra Luna - Timeline

1910

May 1910 - Halley's Comet looms over the skies. Many in Mexico view it as a bad omen.

June 1910 - Mexico holds elections and President Porfirio Díaz declares himself president for a seventh term. He has his opponent, Francisco Madero, arrested.

August 1910 - Tensions rise as mining strikes occur and small uprisings are crushed.

September 1910 - Mexico celebrates its 100th Anniversary of Independence, as well as President Porfirio Díaz's 80th birthday with elegant balls and parades.

October 1910 - Madero flees to San Antonio, Texas where he drafts his "Plan of San Luis Potosí", declaring President Díaz's re-election fraudulent and urging Mexicans to take up arms against him.

November 20, 1910 - According to the "Plan of San Luis Potosí", this day at 1800 hours is the official start of the Mexican Revolution.

December 1910 - Miners, ranchers, peasants, schoolteachers, lawyers, merchants and women join the revolution.

1911

April 1911 - The revolution becomes more organized as battles are won against federal forces and more regions are being controlled by the *revolucionarios*, the rebels.

May 1911 - The leader of the northern rebel forces, General Francisco "Pancho" Villa, wins a major battle at Ciudad Juárez, and after thirty-one years of dictatorship, President Díaz steps down. He is quickly exiled to France.

November 1911 - Francisco Madero is elected president, taking 90% of the votes, and the leader of the revolutionary forces in southern Mexico, Emiliano Zapata, writes the "Plan of Ayala", demanding land reform.





1912

March 1912 – Two powerful families in Mexico fear President Madero will implement land reform. They supply money and weapons to Pascual Orozco, a onetime ally of Pancho Villa, and promise him political power in return for fighting against Madero.

April 1912 – To put down Orozco’s rebellion, President Madero turns to a former general of the Díaz regime, General Victoriano Huerta.

October 1912 – General Huerta defeats Orozco’s rebellion, but a new rebellion, led by Porfirio Díaz’s nephew, Félix Díaz, emerges.

1913

February 1913 – General Huerta and Félix Díaz secretly negotiate a coup against President Madero, and with the “blessing” of U.S. Ambassador Henry Lane Wilson, Madero is arrested. Three days later, Madero, his brother, and his vice president are executed.

March 1913 – After General Huerta takes office, he ships Félix Díaz to Japan, silences the press, jails 110 members of congress, and has over one hundred of Madero’s supporters shot. In the U.S., President Woodrow Wilson takes the oath of office.

April 1913 – General Huerta and his federales fight Pancho Villa and Venustiano Carranza in northern Mexico and Emiliano Zapata in the south.

September 27, 1913 – Over 3,000 refugees head north towards the border town of Piedras Negras, Coahuila following raids, forced conscriptions and destruction of the region’s towns and villages.

September 28, 1913 – A regiment of 1,600 federales heads to Piedras Negras to control the northern border.

September 30, 1913 – U.S. Cavalry and Field Artillery soldiers and a hospital unit from Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio are ordered to the border town of Eagle Pass, Texas.

October 2, 1913* – A storm system develops in the area, bringing floods to central Texas and heavy down pours at the border. After cases of smallpox are detected, 200 refugees who had crossed into the U.S. are returned to Mexico.





October 3, 1913* - A head tax of \$5 is imposed for Mexicans wanting to cross into the U.S. As rebels begin to leave Piedras Negras, they destroy bridges and mines.

October 4, 1913* - A band of women soldiers, belonging to the advanced guard of the federales, rides through the outskirts of Piedras Negras. They announce the approach of the Federal regiment and threaten people with death if they join the rebels or attempt to cross into the U.S.

October 5, 1913* - Colonel Francisco Sánchez Herrera of the revolutionary forces assembles the refugees in the town square of Piedras Negras and pleads with them to remain loyal to the rebel cause and promises that Federal rule will be short lived.

October 6, 1913* (in the twilight hours) - The last of the remaining rebels leave the military barracks at Piedras Negras.

October 6, 1913* - The federales arrive at the hilltops of Piedras Negras and over 6,000 refugees flock to the international bridge. As Federal cavalry troops rush towards the border, U.S. Army soldiers open the bridge.

* May have occurred the day before or after. Different newspaper sources and books report the events happening on different days. The discrepancies may be due to the remote location of the border and the ongoing conflict in Mexico.





Barefoot Dreams of Petra Luna – Historical Note

Much controversy exists about the duration of the Mexican Revolution. Some argue it lasted ten years (1910–1920), others say that it was much longer (1910–1924, or even 1910–1942), and some claim it's never really ended. What most agree on, however, is on its beginnings. Years of oppression under a dictator resulted in widespread poverty, hunger and a desperation that exploded in a struggle for justice. But to understand these beginnings, we must look back at the four centuries prior.

In the early 1500's, a comet hung over Mexico and the Aztecs believed it foretold doom. A few years later, the Spanish arrived, and, under the command of Hernán Cortez, claimed victory against the Aztec empire. The Spanish controlled Mexico for three hundred years, and when the Spaniards intermarried with the indigenous people, a new race – the mestizos – was born. With the mestizos came a new caste system. The whites of pure Spanish blood, who owned most of the land and wealth, enslaved both the mestizos, who had very limited privileges, and the indigenous people, who had absolutely no voice or power.

In 1810, Mexico fought for independence and won, but even though the Spanish left Mexico, the caste system remained. Those with the most Spanish blood in them remained in power, and the ones with the least, lived a wretched life filled with servitude for the rich. Despite Mexico having won its independence, unrest continued through the next six decades as new conflicts arose with Spain, Texas, the United States, Britain, France and even with itself as political instability continued. It was not until the 1870's that Mexico began to experience a sense of peace but by then the economy was in shambles and what remained were great land estates known as *haciendas*.

A new leader ascended during this time; a military hero named Porfirio Díaz. After becoming president, Díaz constructed an economy based on mining and agricultural exports, foreign investments, and improved transportation. To appease the powerful people who opposed him, he increased their riches. He allowed haciendas to grow bigger by forcing poor, illiterate peasants off their lands. Díaz's actions helped Mexico's economy but also drove more and more people deeper into poverty. The destitute were no longer slaves to the Spanish but instead, were forced to labor on haciendas, on the same lands that had been stolen from them. The chains of slavery that were broken with Mexico's independence were replaced by immense debts owed to the rich landowners, the *hacendados*. Hacendados forced peasants to work for meager wages and to purchase goods from their store at gauged prices. The peasants and their family members were not allowed to leave the hacienda unless the debt was paid in full. The system was rigged so that the debt could never be paid off and instead would be passed down from father to son. If anyone tried to flee, the mounted police, *los rurales*, were sent out to





capture the escapee and bring him back to be whipped. Other offenses, like stealing food from the hacienda store, were punishable by two hundred lashes.

President Díaz knew of the harsh treatment of the poor, but his focus was on modernizing the country. He admired the elite classes of Europe and allowed a small group of Mexican businessmen who called themselves *los científicos*, the scientists, to influence his decisions. The científicos, most of European ancestry, believed that by allowing Americans and Europeans to own land, mines, and resources, Mexico would be on the best path to modernization. In their eyes, indigenous people and mestizos were only suitable for manual labor, and therefore, it should be foreigners who supply the skilled work. Díaz's mother was a full-blooded indigenous woman, however, in an effort to be viewed as being from European descent, he agreed with the científicos. When foreigners arrived and settled in Mexico, they brought their dollars and European money with them, causing the price of food to skyrocket.

By 1910, Díaz had achieved much progress in modernizing Mexico but class inequities were vast. Only 2 percent of Mexicans owned land and 9 out of 10 people worked in haciendas. Then in May of that year, another comet brightened Mexico's night sky, spreading a sense of doom once again. Soon after, people's desperation reached its peak, and the country was thrown into unrest as protests and rebellions erupted throughout Mexico.

Very few elites opposed Díaz's ideologies. One of them was Francisco Madero, a wealthy hacienda owner from northern Mexico. Madero studied abroad and learned philosophies that influenced his progressive, yet religious background. Unusual for his time, he didn't smoke or drink and was a strict vegetarian. He was also a philanthropist and took great care of the people on his hacienda. He paid fair wages, provided clean, well-ventilated living quarters for families, and had his personal physician do regular check-ups and provide care for the sick. Out of his own funds, he opened community kitchens and schools, which children were required to attend rather than work in the fields. He implemented agricultural techniques he had learned while at school in Berkley to prove that the wealth of a hacienda could grow without compromising the welfare of the peasants. Neighboring hacienda owners, however, ignored his successes and became upset when he demanded fair and democratic elections for regional appointed officials. Madero saw the government corruption from the local level all the way up to the national level and understood how it affected the impoverished masses. He led an anti-re-election movement, and when Díaz declared himself president for the seventh time, he had Madero arrested. While imprisoned, Madero wrote a political document called "El Plan de San Luis Potosí". In it he called Díaz's election null and void and urged Mexicans to take up arms against the government and begin a revolution on Sunday, November 20, 1910 at 1800 hours.





Over the next decade, more than one million people would perish in the Mexican Revolution and almost 2 million more would migrate to the United States. This period proved to be the largest migration of Mexicans into the United States and greatly influenced the future of both countries. Many Americans to this day can trace their ancestry to those who survived this monumental civil war.





Barefoot Dreams of Petra Luna - Fact or Fiction?

Las Esperanzas, Coahuila is both fact and fiction. In *Barefoot Dreams of Petra Luna*, Las Esperanzas represents the many coal mining settlements in northern Mexico that were ravaged by the Mexican Revolution. In real life, Las Esperanzas was the birthplace of my grandmother. She always spoke fondly of it and with a name that translates to “the hopes”, I was convinced to make it Petra’s home.

The “**smoking star**” that crossed the heavens in 1910 was a phenomenon my great-grandmother witnessed as a child. She told of how much it’d frightened people and swept them with pessimism. When I realized it was Halley’s Comet she’d seen, the same comet that had mesmerized me at age ten, I decided to start the story with its appearance.

Petra Luna’s character was inspired by both my grandmother and great-grandmother. The harsh poverty and prejudice they both faced were the same before, during, and even after the Mexican Revolution.

Like Petra, my grandmother, Josefa Díaz, was a strong, bold girl who climbed trees and chopped wood to help feed her family. She too dreamed of one day learning to read and write, and once, her younger brother became so ill she had to beg for alms to help pay for his medicine, just like Petra does in the story. She found the experience so humiliating she swore that as long as she lived, her own children would never have to beg for alms.

My great-grandmother, Juanita Martínez, inspired the novel at its core. Like Petra, she and her family escaped their burning village in 1913 during the Mexican Revolution. But unlike Petra, she was only nine years old when this happened, and it was she, her father, two siblings and two cousins who crossed the scorching desert by foot before reaching the border town of Piedras Negras, Coahuila.

The frantic crossing at the U.S.-Mexico bridge between Piedras Negras, Coahuila and Eagle Pass, Texas was a true event! As a child, this was one of my favorite stories because everyone told it with much enthusiasm. My mother’s eyes always brightened when she described the opening of the gate at the bridge. The day I found the newspaper article that depicted my great-grandmother’s story, I called my mother to let her know it was all true.

The big hole in the dirt floor of Petra Luna’s home was common during the Mexican Revolution. Some families hid men, boys, and even young women in them. My great-grandmother’s family had dug a hole to hide either her cousins or her father when the federales came looking for men. This inspired the scene of Petra believing her cousin Pablo had hid inside the hole.





The story's "coal" theme. Coal is mentioned several times in the book. Petra's father is a coal miner, Adeline's father is an engineer at a coal mine, the real border town of Piedras Negras, which means "Black Rocks", is named after the region's coal, and the amulet Petra squeezes throughout the story is a piece of coal. I spent my summers and almost every school break in the region of northern Mexico called "La Región Carbonífera" or "The Coal Region". There's a special culture, a pride per se, of the people who have lived there for generations. My grandfather, Santos Villanueva, was a coal miner in Nueva Rosita, the town where I was born. I vividly remember him boasting about living in a place rich with this black treasure. He'd pridefully point out the giant dark chimney that towered over the town and would happily talk about the mine's history and contribution. Unfortunately, I also saw the terrible impact this type of work had on his health.

The foods are real. Pan pobre was a type of corn bread my grandmother ate on very special occasions as a child. Champurrado, a chocolate-based atole (a corn flour, hot beverage) was also a favorite. She grew up eating verdolagas (purslane weed) and quelites (pigweed amaranth), which was gathered in the wild and consumed raw, sautéed with eggs, or in soups and stews. Nopales or nopalitos are cactus pads that are stripped of their thorns, diced and eaten sautéed, with eggs or in soups or casseroles. Mesquite bean pods are sweet and can be chewed raw or the bean can be ground to make a type of flour.

The songs mentioned throughout the book are all real. The oldest one, "**La Cucaracha**", is a folk song that can trace its roots back to Spain, but during the Mexican Revolution, the song's verses evolved and new ones were added to describe the political climate of Mexico. "**Adiós, Mamá Carlota**" was composed in 1866 by Vicente Riva Palacio after the French Intervention in Mexico ended. The song "**Las Coronelas**", a polka melody by Bonifacio Collazo Rodriguez, was composed after the Mexican Revolution but was inspired by the brave women who fought in it. The waltz "**Alejandra**", which appears near the end of the novel, was composed by Enrique Mora Andrade who sold *all* the rights to the song for 25 pesos (\$50 U.S. dollars) in 1907, which is the equivalent of \$1,400 today. The waltz was composed as a request by Rafael Oropeza who was madly in love with a young maiden named Alejandra Ramírez Urrea. There are many other songs and corridos inspired by the Mexican Revolution, some which you may recognize: "Jesusita En Chihuahua", "La Marcha de Zacatecas", "Las Bicicletas", "Las Tres Pelonas", and the most famous, "La Adelita".

Soldaderas and Las Soldados were brave women who served on both the federal and rebel armies. **Soldaderas**, like the characters of Doña Amparo and Luz, were women who followed husbands, sons, brothers, and fathers into war, many of them towing





along young children. They took charge of caring for their loved ones by scavenging for food, cooking, washing their clothes, treating wounds, sometimes engaging in combat, but always aiming to provide a sense of family and normalcy in the soldier's life. Some soldaderas had no relatives fighting in the war but saw an opportunity to earn money by attending to soldier's needs while at the same time not remaining vulnerable in a village empty of men. **Mujeres soldados**, or **soldadas**, were women warriors like Marietta, who trained and fought along male counterparts. They rode horses, trained to use various weapons, carried out spy missions, and learned military tactics. Many of them had to initially disguise themselves as men by masculinizing their movements and voices. They wore men's clothes and cut or pinned up their hair. Some women proved to be good, fearless fighters and, even after revealing themselves to be women, rose to the ranks of colonel and general and commanded brigades of men and women. Examples of real-life women soldiers are Margarita Neri, María Quinteras, Juana Ramona, Petra Herrera, and Valentina Ramírez.

Military trains played a major role in the Mexican Revolution. The train cars were loaded with food, supplies, equipment, horses, troops, and families. Once the cars were full, the rest of the soldiers, soldaderas and children, which could number in the hundreds, rode on the rooftops of trains and some under the boxcars on planks tied with knots. Many women and children fell to their deaths when a train turned a sharp curve or when it blew up or derailed.

Characters like Abuelita, Marietta, and Adeline are fictional but were inspired by stories of people I heard about from my mother and grandmother, from interviews and letters I came across in my research, and from personal observations.

Real people. There are four names mentioned in the book who are real people.

Porfirio Díaz: dictator of Mexico for over 30 years.

Francisco Madero: a rich hacendado from northern Mexico who sympathized with the poor

General Francisco "Pancho" Villa: an ally to Madero, led rebel forces in the north

General Victoriano Huerta: a general during Porfirio Díaz's reign who later betrayed Madero

Crossing a train bridge in the middle of a storm. The town in Mexico I visited often as a child, Sabinas, Coahuila, has a huge train bridge that crosses its wide river. There are many family stories my aunts shared with me of crossing that bridge at night or during storms because of wanting to visit friends that lived across the river. There were a few close calls, but lucky for them, nothing ever happened, nor did my grandmother ever find out!





Barefoot Dreams of Petra Luna - Inspiration

I am blessed to have grown up listening to stories of my ancestors, especially stories of my grandmother, Güela Pépa, and my great-grandmother, Güelita Juanita. Both women grew up surrounded by harsh poverty and prejudice, but always faced adversity with bold spirits and resilience.

My great-grandmother, Juanita Martínez, inspired the core of Barefoot Dreams of Petra Luna. She, along with her family, escaped her burning village in 1913 during the Mexican Revolution. Unlike Petra, my great-grandmother was nine years old when she, her father, two younger siblings and two cousins, crossed the scorching desert by foot and reached the border town of Piedras Negras, Coahuila. At the border, their entry into the United States was denied along with hundreds of other refugees.

As a child, I sat mesmerized, listening to my great-grandmother recount the moment she and her family learned that the Federales were on their way to attack the town. "Los federales were evil," she'd say, "We knew they'd slaughter us." According to her, hundreds of people flocked to the international bridge and pleaded to the American soldiers to open the gates. The situation worsened when the rush of mounted Federales approached the town's small hills. My great-grandmother, despite the many decades having passed since that event, always recalled the fright in her father's eyes. "Then suddenly," my great-grandmother would say with nostalgic surprise, "the gates swung open." As she spoke, the joy and relief she'd experienced that day always came to life, making me feel as if I too had run across that bridge. At the end, she'd always remind us of her immense gratitude to the United States for having given her refuge.

I had always wondered about the validity of my great-grandmother's story. I wondered if some of the details had been stretched to give her story an edge. Had that many people, really all at once, rushed to the bridge? Had my great-grandmother and her family been that close to death? While contemplating writing a children's article about it, I embarked on a research journey to find out the facts. Not having an exact date, I searched through books on the Mexican Revolution and US-Mexican migration but found nothing. I began sorting through four major Texas newspapers beginning with the year 1910. After months of research, I found an article that described my great-grandmother's story. The event occurred in the early afternoon of October 6, 1913, and it wasn't hundreds of people who'd tried to flee across like she'd stated, it was thousands. Over six thousand, to be exact. Everything else, the desperation, the pleading, and the rage of the Federales, was exactly as she'd recounted it.





Working on this book has fulfilled me in many ways, and despite my grandmother and great-grandmother no longer living, I feel closer to them than ever. Thanks to them and my mother, I learned stories that I would have never learned from books or school.

Unfortunately, many stories like my great-grandmother's or like Petra's remain in the shadows. How do we fix this? I believe we fix it with curiosity. We need to be curious. We need to look to our ancestors and ask questions. We need to listen to their stories, write them down, on paper or on our hearts, and pass them on. By doing this, we bring stories of bravery, of humanity, and of great compassion to the light and, in turn, we learn more about ourselves and keep the bold spirits of our ancestors alive.

Alda P. Dobbs
Conroe, Texas
October 27, 2020





Barefoot Dreams of Petra Luna - Glossary

Mexican Spanish - English

abuela (ah-BWEH-lah): grandmother

abuelita (ah-bweh-LEE-tah): term of endearment for grandmother

aguamiel (AHG-wah-mee-ehl): sweetened water

alacrán (ah-lah-KRAHN): scorpion

apapacho (ah-pah-PAH-choh): an affectionate hug, cuddle, or caress

camote (kah-MOH-teh): sweet potato

campo militar (KAHM-poh mee-lee-TAHR): military camp

candelilla (kahn-deh-LEE-yah): catkin

cascabel (kahs-kah-BEHL): rattle

centavo (sehn-TAH-voh): cent

chicharra (chee-CHAH-rrah*): cicada

ciempiés (see-ehm-pee-EHS): centipede

comal (koh-MAHL): griddle used to cook or warm up tortillas

corcho-o-lata (KOHR-choh-oh-LAH-tah): a “heads-or-tails” game, literally means “cork or tin” since old bottle caps had cork on one side and tin on the other

corrido (koh-RREE-doh*): a traditional Mexican ballad that narrates a historical person or event

curandera (kuh-rahn-DEH-rah): healer

desierto (deh-see-EHR-toh): desert

encuentro (ehn-KWEHN-troh): encounter, meeting, or confrontation

equilibrar (eh-kee-lee-BRAHR): to balance

espera (ehs-PEH-rah): wait

esperanza (ehs-peh-RAHN-sah): hope

espina (ehs-PEE-nah): thorn





federales (feh-deh-RAH-lehs): the Mexican Federal Army

fortuna (fohr-TOO-nah): fortune

hablan (AH-blahn): speak

hacendado (ah-sehn-DAH-doh): owner of a hacienda

hacienda (ah-see-EHN-dah): great land estate, plantation

hambre (AHM-breh): hunger

huizache (wee-SAH-cheh): a sweet acacia tree

indio (EEN-dee-oh): Indian, often used as an insult

llorona (yoh-ROH-nah): weeping woman

lechuguilla (leh-choo-GHEE-yah): shin dagger desert plant

limpia (LEEM-pee-ah): spiritual cleansing ceremony

loma (LOH-mah): hill

m'ija (MEE-hah): term of endearment for "my daughter" (contraction of "mi hija")

m'ijo (MEE-hoh): term of endearment for "my son" (contraction of "mi hijo")

madre (MAH-dreh): mother; woman in the Mexican Revolution who earned a living cooking and cleaning for soldiers

Mesquite (mehs-KEE-teh): a tree common to the dessert in northern Mexico

mestizo (mehs-TEE-soh): a person of mixed race

metate (meh-TAH-teh): stone on which grains or beans are ground

monte (MOHN-teh): countryside, bush

muchacha (moo-CHAH-chah): young girl

nopales (noh-PAH-lehs): cactus pads

nueva (NWEH-vah): new

ojos (OH-hohs): eyes

pan (pahn): bread

pesadilla (peh-sah-DEE-yah): nightmare

peso (PEH-soh): currency in Mexico as well as in other Latin American countries





piedra (pee-EH-drah): rock, stone

pilón (pee-LOHN): bonus, extra

pinole (pee-NOH-leh): roasted ground corn sweetened with unrefined whole cane sugar

pobre (POH-breh): poor

puente (PWEHN-teh): bridge

pulque (POOL-keh): fermented agave cactus juice

quelite (keh-LEE-teh): pigweed amaranth

revolucionarios (rreh-voh-loo-see-oh-NAH-ree-ohs*): rebels fighting against the Federales

rurales (rruh-RAH-lehs*): mounted police force established by the Mexican government and incorporated into the Mexican Federal Army during the Mexican Revolution

sarape (sah-RAH-peh): serape, thick shawl or blanket worn as a cloak

sargento (sahr-HEHN-toh): sergeant

soldaderas (sohl-dah-DEH-rahhs): camp followers, women who traveled with male family members in the war

soldado (sohl-DAH-doh): soldier

sotol (soh-TOHL): a northern Mexican plant called desert spoon

tata (TAH-tah): father or grandfather

tempestad (tehm-pehs-TAHD): storm

tierra (tee-EH-rrah*): land, earth, dirt

tranca (TRAHNG-kah): bar to keep door or gate closed

tren (trehn): train

vaquero (vah-KEH-roh): cowboy

verdolagas (vehr-doh-LAH-gahs): purslane weed

víbora (VEE-boh-rah): snake





Virgen de Guadalupe (veer-hen-deh-gwah-dah-loo-peh): Virgin of Guadalupe, a Catholic title of the Blessed Virgin Mary

zopilote (soh-pee-LOH-teh): buzzard

* " rr " represents a rolled r

Náhuatl - English

ahuehuete (ah-weh-WEH-teh): "old water tree"; Mexican cypress tree or Sabino tree

citlalin popoca (see-TLAH-leen poh-POH-kah): "smoking star"; comet

Huitzilopochtli (weet-see-loh-POCHT-lee): "humming bird of the south" or "hummingbird of the left"; Aztec patron god of youth, war, and conquest

papalotl (pah-pah-LOH-tl): butterfly

Tláloc (TLAH-lohk): "he who makes things sprout"; Aztec god of rain

