

## All Around Us

written by Xelena González

illustrated by Adriana M. Garcia

### About the Book

**Genre:** Realistic Fiction

**Format:** 32 pages, 8-1/2" x 8-1/2"

**ISBN:** 9781941026762

**Reading Level:** Grade 3

**Interest Level:** Grades PreK-5

**Guided Reading Level:** M

**Spanish Guided Reading Level:** M

**Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:**  
N/A

**Lexile™ Measure:** N/A

\*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

**Themes:** Biracial/Multiracial Interest, Childhood Experiences and Memories, Empathy/Compassion, Environment/Nature, Families, Grandparents, Gratitude, Latino/Hispanic/Mexican Interest, Native American Interest, Nature/Science

**Resources on the web:**

[leeandlow.com/books/all-around-us](http://leeandlow.com/books/all-around-us)

[leeandlow.com/books/por-todo-nuestro-alrededor](http://leeandlow.com/books/por-todo-nuestro-alrededor)

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

Grandpa says circles are all around us. He points to the rainbow that rises high in the sky after a thundercloud has come. "Can you see? That's only half of the circle. That rest of it is down below, in the earth." He and his granddaughter meditate on gardens and seeds, on circles seen and unseen, inside and outside us, on where our bodies come from and where they return to. They share and create family traditions in this stunning exploration of the cycles of life and nature.

This was the debut picture book of Xelena González and Adriana M. Garcia and is also available in Spanish, *Por todo nuestro alrededor*.

**Awards and honors include:**

- American Indian Youth Literature Award: Picture Book Honor
- Skipping Stones Honor Award
- International Latino Book Award: Best First Book, Children and Youth
- Pura Belpré Illustrator Honor Book
- Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children's Book Award
- Best Picture Book, Texas Institute of Letters Literary Award
- ALSC Notable Children's Book

For additional information, activities and educational applications, consult the Cinco Puntos Press' *All Around Us* Teaching Activities Guide: [https://www.leeandlow.com/uploads/loaded\\_document/993/AllAroundUs\\_Teaching-Guide.pdf](https://www.leeandlow.com/uploads/loaded_document/993/AllAroundUs_Teaching-Guide.pdf)

## BACKGROUND

### Author's Note from Xelena González

"When I was six, I was given a class assignment to draw a timeline of my life. Birth was the beginning. First steps and first fallen tooth were milestones. I wondered aloud how my timeline would continue, and more importantly, how it would end.

My father shook his head when he heard me. "People will tell you it's a line, but we believe it's a circle," he said, gathering two imaginary points of a timeline and joining them midair to form a circle. By "we" he meant our family of four, as well as our larger family of people, whom we call mestizos. This name refers to our biracial mix of Native American and Spanish ancestry.

We were taught to revere our elders, even those who had passed on. We were also taught not to fear death, as it is an essential part of life. In my family, we have cremated our relatives who have passed on, but we do not bury the ashes, as the family does in the story. This is from my imagination—a nice way of returning to the times of ancestral burial grounds and family plots. It is the way I wish to return to the earth.

Like the family in the story, we do plant our children's placentas after birth. This is a custom practiced by many cultures around the world, most notably the Navajos of America and the Maori of New Zealand. We find this practice, along with the art of gardening, to be a vital way of re-connecting with the earth, especially our little piece of land where my family has lived for five generations.

These days it seems more people are finding ways of honoring the earth and their ancestors. More people are creating birth and death rituals that are right for their families. And more people are seeing themselves as part of a greater circle. Thank you for opening this book and opening your mind to the ideas inside."—Xelena González

### Planting Children's Placentas After Birth

The young girl and her grandfather discuss placenta burials after birth in All Around Us. For more information about this custom, consult *The Chicago Tribune's* article about these practices (<https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1999-07-07-9907070031-story.html>). Students can also investigate the Navajos of America and Maori of New Zealand and what placenta burials mean to them. The Museum of New Zealand has information about Maori placenta burials, when they happen, and where the placentas are buried (<https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/topic/1437>). Further information about placentas, their importance, and their burials can also be found in *Anthropology Magazine: Sapiens* (<https://www.sapiens.org/biology/placenta/>).

### Teaching about Life and Death

There are several resources online dedicated to teaching young readers about the cycle of life. NAEYC's "How Early Childhood Educators Can Explain Death to Children" introduces four concepts to cover when teaching children about death. Although it's important that young readers learn about death through life cycles and nature, educators, librarians, and caregivers need to be prepared when discussing the death of a loved one (<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/tyc/spring2021/explaining-death>).

The organization Zero to Three also provides more information and research about the importance of teaching young children about life, death, and the complicated emotions that arise when we learn and experience these topics (<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/3719-discussing-death-with-young-children>). NPR also offers tips and strategies for being open and honest during conversations about death (<https://www.npr.org/2019/04/24/716702066/death-talking-with-kids-about-the-end>).

### Culture in the classroom from Learning for Justice

Culture is more than holidays, recipes, religious traditions, and language; it is “a lived experience unique to each individual.” Educators need to value and acknowledge students’ cultures, especially since they are most often going to be different from their own. Teaching Tolerance’s “Culture in the Classroom” is professional development geared toward aiding educators in bridging the cultural gap between students and teachers. It also shows how diverse texts, culturally responsive curriculum, and honoring students’ backgrounds are critical to their academic and social/emotional development (<https://www.tolerance.org/professional-development/culture-in-the-classroom>).

## 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:

- Why do you think learning family stories is important? Have you ever asked your grandparents, aunts or uncles, parents, or other adults in your life about what it was like for them when they were kids? What did you learn?
- Ask students to share a childhood memory. What is an important memory you have from your childhood? What does it mean to you?
- Ask students to think about their family and what family means to them. How is family important to you? What are some favorite childhood memories of your family and/or family members? Why are these special or important to you?
- How do you show your family members that you care about them? What are some things you do to help your family? Why?
- Have students think about why it’s important to take care of the Earth and the world around us. How do they make sure that they’re caring for their community?
- Ask students what they think of when they think about circles. Where do they see circles in their lives? Where have they seen circles in nature?
- Ask students why it’s important to acknowledge traditions and cultures that are different from their own. Why is it essential to learn about different cultures in the United States and around the world even if you do not identify with that particular culture or tradition?

## 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, *All Around Us*. Then 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?
- **Read Xelena González and Adriana M. Garcia's Biographies:** Read about long-time friends and collaborators, Xelena González and Adriana M. Garcia. What made them come up with the idea for the book? What do you think are the benefits of working with a partner on a book?
- Encourage students to stop and jot down notes 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 quickly write their feelings in their notebooks during reading. After reading, ask students why they wrote down those feelings and have them write journal entries about them.
- Ask students to make a prediction: Do you think this book will be fiction or nonfiction? What makes you think so? What clues does given that help you know whether this book will be fiction or nonfiction?
- **Note:** Story is available in Spanish as well, *Por todo nuestro alrededor* [leeandlow.com/books/por-todo-nuestro-alrededor](https://leeandlow.com/books/por-todo-nuestro-alrededor)

## Setting a Purpose for Reading

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

Have students read to find out:

- what family means to the young girl and her grandpa
- how family and childhood influence your life
- how grandparents and elders can provide guidance and teach young people about life
- why traditions are important
- why it's critical to take care of the Earth and the world around us
- why it's important to acknowledge and learn about cultures different from your own
- how and why culture is essential to your identity
- how circles can be a symbol for the cycle of life
- how death and life are interconnected, and why it's important to appreciate both life and death
- the role of ancestors and their impact on families today and generations to come

Encourage students to consider why the creators, Xelena González and Adriana M. Garcia, would want to share with young people this story about a girl and her grandfather, and what he teaches her about the cycle of life.

## 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

rainbow, thundercloud, pecan tree

### Academic

arc, bury, ashes, ancestors

## 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. What does the grandpa point to in the sky? What does he tell his granddaughter about it?
2. What are the different things the grandpa and granddaughter do in the story?
3. What are the circles that the grandpa identifies? What does the young girl think about them?
4. Where do the grandpa and granddaughter go to look for circles? What do they see?
5. What does the grandpa want to show the granddaughter before the moon comes out?
6. Why does the grandpa seem sad? What does he tell the young girl?
7. What part of the circle does the grandpa say that the young girl cannot see?

8. What does the young girl realize at the end about circles?
9. Who narrates the story?

### Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

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

1. How does the young girl's grandfather teach her about life lessons? What are different ways that he explains the cycle of life to her?
2. Why do you think the grandpa pointed out the rainbow to the girl? What does he tell her about that kind of circle?
3. Why are circles an important part of the story? How do circles connect to the cycle of life? How do they relate to death? What does the grandpa show his granddaughter about circles throughout *All Around Us*?
4. What role do the illustrations play in the story? How does the artwork demonstrate the story's message and themes? How does the illustrator show emotion and feeling through her artwork?
5. How does the young girl show her grandfather respect? Why is listening to elders and grandparents important? What can they teach us about life?
6. What does *All Around Us* teach readers about the importance of family? What does family mean to the young girl and her grandpa? What does her grandpa teach her about family and recognizing your ancestors?
7. How does nature play a role in *All Around Us*? What are the different things that the grandpa teaches his granddaughter about giving back to the Earth? How do they love and care for their environment?
8. Have you had a grandparent, a teacher, or an elder that has been impactful in your life? What did they teach you? How did you show them respect? What kind of stories did they tell you? How are they meaningful to you?
9. Read Xelena González's "Dear Reader" section in the back of the book. What does she tell young readers who engage with *All Around Us*? What did you learn from the story from her note? Why do you think it's important to read Author's Notes after the book? What can you learn from the book that you don't get from reading the actual story?
10. How can you take what you learned about the cycle of life and appreciating family and the world around you in your own life? What are some of the things in *All Around Us* that you can apply to how you go about your day?

## Reader's Response

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

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. What is one big thought that you have after reading this book? Think about your own family and what they mean to you. What is your takeaway from this book? What would you tell a friend about this book?
2. What do you think author Xelena González and illustrator Adrian M. Garcia's message is to the reader? Think about possible motivations behind the creators' intentions to write this story. What do you think they wanted to share with readers?
3. Have students make a text-to-self connection. What kind of connections did you make between the story and/or art in the book and your own life? What part of the text or art did you relate to and how did it make you think of your own childhood or growing up experiences?
4. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books or poems while reading *All Around Us*? Why did you make those connections?
5. Have students make a text-to-world connection. What kind of connections did you make between the story and/or art in the book and what you have seen happening in the world, such as on television, in a newspaper, or online? What in this book made you think of that?
6. What do circles mean to students after reading? After reading *All Around Us*, what did they realize or find out about how circles can be representative of life?

## 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 tell what they learned about one of the poems. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about what they identified with most from *All Around Us* and why. Students may also share their own childhood experiences or memories of something from their own cultures or heritages.
5. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose

English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

6. *All Around Us* is also available in a Spanish edition, *Por todo nuestro alrededor* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/por-todo-nuestro-alrededor>) if this is applicable to your classroom or relevant setting. Have students who can read the books in both languages think about the following questions: How do the English and Spanish editions differ? What was it like to read the book in English and separately in Spanish? Did you think about the story any differently in either version? Why or why not? Why do you think the author and illustrator wanted the story available in both English and Spanish?

### Social and Emotional Learning

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4-6)

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

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4-6)

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

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of this book.

1. How does *All Around Us* show positive family relationships? What are the qualities of a positive family relationship? How does the young girl interact with her grandpa? What are the different ways that they show respect to one another? Students can brainstorm ideas on chart paper that can be presented and accessible for the whole class. Alternatively, students can create a word cloud and see what qualities come up the most and are the largest (<https://www.wordclouds.com/>).
2. What one part of your heritage, culture, or identity are you most proud of? Do you think your school or classroom has been a safe place to share that part of yourself? Why or why not?
3. The young girl notices that her grandpa seems sad when he refers to his ancestors. What are ancestors? Why do you think he was sad? When he was feeling sad, what did he do to feel better? If applicable and students are ready to engage with conversations about death, consider the following questions: have you had a family member or friend pass away, like her grandpa's ancestors? How did you feel? What were some of the things you did to feel better? How did you honor that person's memory?
4. If applicable and you use circle time or have students sit in a circle in your respective setting: what does sitting in a circle represent? Why do you think we sit in a circle when we read or having our morning meeting? What does our classroom circle mean to you?
5. The young girl's grandpa teaches her about the importance of giving back to the Earth. What is



a life lesson that you learned from a teacher, a friend, or a family member? What was it? How did it impact you? How can you pass on your knowledge to another friend?

6. Which illustration in *All Around Us* do you think best shows an emotion? Explain which emotion you think it is. How does the artist portray that emotion?
7. Choose an emotion such as happiness, fear, hope, sadness, and so on. Illustrate or act out what that emotion looks like in *All Around Us*.

## 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)

- **Encourage students to write a piece about a childhood memory or something that is meaningful to them about their identities or cultures.** Using inspiration from *All Around Us*, have students think about what they want to communicate about themselves, their families, and/or their favorite childhood experiences. What do they want to share and why did they pick that particular thing to write about? Students can share their work with a partner, a small group, or the whole class. Consider creating a class book with illustrations and have the book available to students in the classroom library.
- **Discuss the symbol of a circle from *All Around Us*.** In a graphic organizer, have students brainstorm the ways that circles play a role in *All Around Us*. Students can go back through the text, and in a chart, list all the circular objects that the grandpa and the young girl identified in *All Around Us*. Pose the following questions to aid their thinking: what did the grandpa teach the young girl about circles? Where did they identify circles during the story? How did those circles connect back to the book's message? What do you think circles represent? How are they important to life and death? What do you think the young girl learned at the end of the book? Students can write an essay after their brainstorming session about how and why circles were a symbol in *All Around Us*.
- **Unpack the grandfather's statement about the rainbow, "Can you see? That's only half the circle. The rest of it is down below, in the Earth, where water and light feed new life. That's the part we cannot see."** What do students think this means? What do they think the rainbow represents? How do students think this applies to the cycle of life? Have students connect this to the granddaughter's realization at the end of the story, "I am

part of the circle too, the part we can see... just like a rainbow!" Students can write their reactions in an essay and think about what they learned from the grandpa's wisdom in *All Around Us* about the concepts from the story.

- **Read *Where Wonder Grows*** (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/where-wonder-grows>), **Xelena González and Adriana M. García's follow-up title to *All Around Us***. Conduct a study using both of these books and comparing and contrasting the themes and messages presented in both of the titles. Ask students the following questions: how is *Where Wonder Grows* a follow-up title to *All Around Us*? What are the similarities between the two titles? Are there similar themes? What are they? What message do Xelena and Adriana pose to young readers? How are grandparents present in both of the books? Why do you think Xelena and Adriana decided to have grandparents and grandchildren as their characters in both of these books? Students can write an essay about what they learned from *All Around Us* and *Where Wonder Grows* and what the books' messages mean to them.
- **Have students come up with a list of questions to ask author and illustrator Xelena González and Adriana M. García.** What do students want to know about the process behind writing a children's book? How did they come up with their idea to write *All Around Us*? What was it like to write and illustrate their first picture book together? What's it like to work with your friend on an important book? Consider contacting Xelena and Adriana to learn more about school and library visits ([xelenag@gmail.com](mailto:xelenag@gmail.com); [wordpress@adrianamjgarcia.com](mailto:wordpress@adrianamjgarcia.com)).
- **For additional information on the creation of *All Around Us*, have students watch the National Education Association's Read Across America "More to the Story" author interview with Xelena González** ([nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/read-across-america/find-your-book/all-around-us](https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/read-across-america/find-your-book/all-around-us)). Ask students to reflect in an essay on the following questions: what did they learn about the creation of the story? How does it make them think about *All Around Us* differently after listening to Xelena? How and why is this story important to her? Students can reflect with a partner about what it was like to watch an interview featuring Xelena and her process behind *All Around Us*.
- **In an essay, poem, or other form, have students share something that's important to their identity.** How is this critical to who they are? Why is this important to students, and how does it make them feel to show people their true selves? Why is it essential to be who you are, and not try to be someone else or to be ashamed of your identity? Students can share with a partner, small group, or the whole class.
- **Have students read other stories about the cycle of life, the importance of nature and giving back to the Earth, including *Giving Thanks***, (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/giving-thanks>), ***If I Were a Tree*** (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/if-i-were-a-tree>), ***I Know the River Loves Me/Yo sé qué el río me ama*** (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/i-know-the-river-loves-me-yo-se-que-el-río-me-ama>), and ***When the Shadbush Blooms*** (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/when-the-shadbush-blooms>). Compare and contrast the books using the following guiding questions: how does this story demonstrate the importance of nature? How do the people in the story give back to the Earth? What are the ways that they show respect and admiration of their environment? How do the themes in the book relate to the grandpa's message that he conveys in *All Around Us*? Have students write a culmi-

nating essay about what they learned about giving back to the Earth from all of the books and how they relate to *All Around Us*.

- **Consider reading books that discuss death and how we can honor loved ones that have died, including *Grandma's Purple Flowers* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/grandma-s-purple-flowers>), *DeShawn Days* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/deshawn-days>), and *The Blue Roses* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-blue-roses>).** Discuss the different books with the following guiding questions: how do these books approach death? How do the main characters grapple with the loss of a loved one? How do the illustrations represent the emotions of the characters? How do the messages from the book connect back to *All Around Us*? Did you relate to any of the characters and their experiences? How did that make you feel? Students can write a reflective essay afterwards discussing what they learned. Refer to the Background section of this guide for more information and resources on how to discuss death with young students.
- **How has a family member or friend close to you impacted your life?** The young girl's grandpa mentor has a positive impact on her life, even in the short period that we get to see them for in the story. Have you had a family member or other person who really changed your life? What were some things that person did that were significant to you? Students can write a poem, essay, or display their work in any other visual format that works best for their learning needs.

### 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)

- **Encourage students to learn more and take action about how you can give back to your environment.** The grandpa in *All Around Us* states, "What we take from the Earth, we return." How does this statement apply to what you can do within your school and community? Encourage students to think about this statement and how they can help their school and immediate neighborhood. *The New York Times* has a compilation of resources and lesson plans titled, "Making a Difference: Ideas for Giving, Service Learning and Social Action," (<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/17/learning/lesson-plans/ideas-for-giving-service-learning-and-social-action.html>). Begin with brainstorming different ideas about how students can give back, and translate those ideas into action. Students can work in small groups or with the whole class on one singular project. Afterwards, connect the experience back to the grandpa's statement. What did they learn from this process, and how did it make them feel? How did they return what they took from the Earth?
- **Consider establishing a background on what culture means in your classroom prior to engaging with activities about students' heritage and identity to create a foundation for students' understanding.** As discussed in the Background section of this Teacher's Guide, Learning for Justice's "Culture in the Classroom" is professional development geared toward aiding educators in bridging the cultural gap between students and teachers. It also shows how diverse texts, culturally responsive curriculum, and honoring students'

backgrounds are critical to their academic and social/emotional development (<https://www.tolerance.org/professional-development/culture-in-the-classroom>).

- **If possible, have students create a garden in their classroom or school.** The grandfather and granddaughter are proud of what they grow in their garden. If the weather and time of year allow, students can plant an outdoor garden box. Find lots of information about gardening with children here: (<https://letsmove.obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/gardening-guide>). Alternatively, you can start seedlings in eggshells in your classroom and give them to students to plant at home. Directions are available here: <http://www.rainbowstewbook.com/be-anegghead/>. If planting outside isn't feasible, try this simple indoor planting activity: <http://www.rainbowstewbook.com/make-magic/>.

### STEM/Mathematics

MATH.CONTENT.1.G.A.2: Compose two-dimensional shapes (rectangles, squares, trapezoids, triangles, half-circles, and quarter-circles) or three-dimensional shapes (cubes, right rectangular prisms, right circular cones, and right circular cylinders) to create a composite shape, and compose new shapes from the composite shape.

- **Explore circles.** Teach students about circumference, radius, and diameter. What makes a circle unique from all other shapes? Math Planet has additional information about circles to inform lesson planning (<https://www.mathplanet.com/education/geometry/circles/basic-information-about-circles>). For additional ideas on teaching about circles, check out Texas Child Care Quarterly (2015): [https://www.childcarequarterly.com/pdf/spring15\\_circle.pdf](https://www.childcarequarterly.com/pdf/spring15_circle.pdf)
- **Conduct a research project on the usefulness of circles.** What famous inventions use circles? Where can circles be found in our daily lives? Consult *The Smithsonian Magazine's* feature on where circles are in the world to inform students' thinking (<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/world-full-circles-180954529/>). Students can create a visual presentation with the research, images, and other information that they find during the project.
- **Conduct a research study on rainbows.** National Geographic's lesson plan, "Rainbow" explains what rainbows are and how they can be viewed and produced (<https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/rainbow/print/>). The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) also has more information about rainbows for additional investigation (<https://scijinks.gov/rainbow/>). Have students investigate more about rainbows. Students can research the colors that are visible in a rainbow, what shapes rainbows can be, as well as the different types of rainbows. Students can connect their research back to All Around Us. How do rainbows play a critical role in the text? How do the young girl and her grandfather view rainbows? What do you think rainbows a symbol of? What are they symbols of in different cultures? Students can share their findings in a visual format of their choosing.
- **Have students research more about the pecan tree featured in All Around Us.** Consult the Arbor Day Foundation's pecan tree page (<https://www.arborday.org/trees/treeguide/treedetail.cfm?itemID=897>). Students can answer the following questions: where are pecan trees found? What do they look like? What are pecans? What conditions do pecan trees need to grow and thrive? Students can create informational posters showcasing their findings.

## Art & Media

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, and Range of Writing, Strand 10)

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

- **Encourage each student create an illustration that represents her or his culture or identity.** Afterward, students may share their artwork with a partner, a small group, or the whole class. What did students learn about themselves during this process? Why did they choose a particular artistic style and items to include in their artwork? What do their images mean to them?
- **Ask students to investigate the artistic style featured in *All Around Us*.** Students can also consult the note about the art in the back of the book. What materials do you think the illustrator used to create her artwork? How do students know? What is the impact of the artwork after *All Around Us*? How did it affect students' interpretation of the meaning of the book and its message?
- **Have students go on a scavenger hunt for circles in their immediate classroom or, if possible, outdoors.** Students can keep a list of circles that they find in their environment. Afterwards, they can create an illustration of that circle, and connect it back to the themes in *All Around Us*. How does this circle represent life? What can we learn about circles from our environment? How is this circle unique and special? Students can use materials from their classroom to create a drawing, painting, collage, or any other visual interpretation and share with a small group or whole class.
- **Conduct a mini unit on murals.** The book's illustrator is a muralist. Have you seen any murals in your neighborhood? Where does this tradition come from? Discuss the themes you notice in different murals. Learning for Justice has a lesson plan on creating murals for activism (<https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/lessons/activate-activism-creating-our-mural-part-one>).
- **For additional art activities, please see the Cinco Puntos Press Teacher Guide available here:** [https://www.leeandlow.com/uploads/loaded\\_document/993/AllAroundUs\\_Teaching-Guide.pdf](https://www.leeandlow.com/uploads/loaded_document/993/AllAroundUs_Teaching-Guide.pdf)
- **Have students illustrate a family member, friend, or caregiver who is important in their life from the English/Language Arts portion of this guide.** Students can create an artistic representation of that person, using materials in their classroom or whatever is readily available. Encourage students to think about what they want to convey artistically about this person. What kinds of materials do they want to use? Why did they choose that way to show how this person looks? How did this exercise make them feel and appreciate about this person? Students can share their artwork with the whole class.

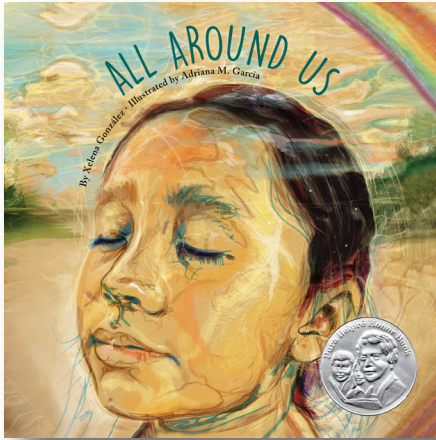
### School-Home Connection

(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)

- **Encourage students to interview family members about a favorite or impactful childhood memory. How did that event influence the family member?** How did it affect the person's life moving forward? Consider having children, if comfortable, share their findings with a partner, a small group, or whole class.
- **Similarly, ask students to speak with family members about their cultures and how their cultures are special to them.** What is unique about each person's culture? How did it influence the person throughout life?
- **Have students reflect on a family member or friend who has made a difference in their life.** The young girl's grandpa is a positive influence on her and teaches her a lot about life lessons. Students and families can discuss how this family member or friend made an important impact on their life and why.
- **Encourage students to go on a scavenger hunt for circles with their families in their neighborhoods.** Students can keep a list of examples of circles that they find in their environment. Students can sketch where they see circles or take a picture and make a collage to bring to class.



## Ordering Information


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

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Xelena González** is a storyteller, a screenwriter, a poet, and an author of picture books. Her storytelling skills were honed as a children's librarian in San Antonio, Texas, and in an international school in Guangzhou, China. As a visiting author, she has introduced her method of "tai chi storytelling" to more than sixty schools and libraries around the United States. She is a member of the Tap Pilam Coahuiltecan Nation and still lives in San Antonio, where she grew up. You can find out more about González and her first book, *All Around Us*, at [xelenagonzalez.com](https://xelenagonzalez.com).

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**Adriana M. Garcia** is a visual artist, a muralist, and an illustrator. She is the recipient of a Pura Belpré Illustrator Award Honor for her debut picture book, *All Around Us* by Xelena González. Garcia has exhibited her artwork nationally and has presented at conferences, schools, and museums around the United States. She especially loves painting portraits of strong women to honor those who have come before and those who continue to lead by example. Garcia lives in San Antonio, Texas, and you can find her online at [adrianamjgarcia.com](https://adrianamjgarcia.com).

## REVIEWS

"*All Around Us* begs to be shared over and over. The use of lines and strokes conveys energy, spirit, magic. And I love the way it connects us all to the idea that we come from inside, from the earth, from something gentle and primal, and that is where go back to—and we better take care of it." —Yuyi Morales, *Pura Belpré Award award winner and author of Dreamers*

"A girl and her grandfather contemplate circles, both physical and metaphorical, in this thought-provoking tale of family, community, and interconnection." —*Publishers Weekly*

"This warm, gentle story that celebrates family, culture, community and the connectedness of all things ... *All Around Us* is a quiet, beautiful story, and is highly recommended." —*Beverly Slapin, De Colores: The Raza Experience in Books for Children*

"The author's direct approach and light touch soften the otherwise weighty subject matter. ... Life-affirming in its quiet splendor." —*Kirkus Reviews*

"It's gorgeous, quite frankly." —*Elizabeth Bird, School Library Journal*

## ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

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