

Alicia and the Hurricane: A Story of Puerto Rico/ Alicia y el huracán: Un cuento de Puerto Rico

written by Lesléa Newman

illustrated by Elizabeth Erazo Baez

About the Book

Genre: Realistic Fiction

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ISBN: 9780892394555

Reading Level: Grade 4

Interest Level: Grades K-5

Guided Reading Level: R

Spanish Guided Reading Level: R

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:
N/A

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

Themes: Science and Nature, Weather, Animals, Frogs and Toads, People and Places, Caribbean and Latin America, Social and Emotional Learning, Family Relationships, Bravery, Perseverance

Resources on the web:

leeandlow.com/books/alicia-and-the-hurricane-alicia-y-el-huracan

SYNOPSIS

After snuggling into bed each night, Alicia listens for the big voices of the tiny coquíes that sing her to sleep. *Ko-kee, ko-kee*, the little frogs call. *Ko-kee, ko-kee*.

One day a terrible hurricane comes to Puerto Rico, and Alicia and her family take refuge in a shelter. At bedtime Alicia hears grown-ups snoring and babies crying, wind howling and rain pounding. But even though she listens hard, she cannot hear the song of the coquíes. Are the little tree frogs safe? And what will Alicia and her family find at home when the storm is over?

Alicia and the Hurricane/Alicia y el huracán is a tender look at the resilience of people, and native creatures, whose lives have been disrupted by a natural disaster. With love and support, family and friends come together to share, rebuild, and fill Alicia's heart with hope. *Ko-kee, ko-kee!*

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

BACKGROUND

Author's Note from Lesléa Newman

Puerto Rico holds a special place in my heart because it is the island of my spouse's birth. Each time we have visited Puerto Rico, we have been lulled into a peaceful sleep by the sound of los coquíes singing outside our window.

The coquí is a very small tree frog native to Puerto Rico. Its scientific genus name is *Eleutherodactylus*, which means "free toes," because coquíes do not have webbed feet. Instead, they have special disks on the bottoms of their toes that help them climb and stick to trees and leaves. Coquíes measure anywhere from 1/4 inch (6.4 millimeters) to 1 inch (25.4 millimeters) long. There are about seventeen species of coquíes, but only two species sing *ko-kee*, *Eleutherodactylus coquí* (common coquí) and *Eleutherodactylus portoricensis* (mountain coquí). These singing coquíes may be gray, brown, gray brown, or tan.

Only male coquíes sing. Their song is very loud and can be heard all around Puerto Rico from dusk until dawn. It is a two-note song that resembles a high-pitched whistle: *ko-kee!*

The coquí has been a cultural symbol of Puerto Rico for centuries. It can be seen on stone engravings and pottery made by the native Taíno people of the island. Many stories and poems have been written about the coquí, whose song has serenaded islanders for centuries. When expressing pride in their heritage, many Puerto Ricans say, "Soy de aquí como el coquí," meaning "I am as Puerto Rican as a coquí."

Because of its location in the Caribbean, Puerto Rico often finds itself in the direct path of damaging tropical storms. I wrote this story in the fall of 2017 shortly after Hurricane María struck Puerto Rico with sustained winds of 155 miles (250 kilometers) per hour and 20 inches (51 centimeters) of rain. Power went out across the entire island, and months later, much of the electricity was still not restored. Many people lost their homes and everything they owned. All over the island, neighbors came together to help one another. And people from around the world sent money and supplies and donated their time to help the people of Puerto Rico get back on their feet.

Alicia and the Hurricane was written to give hope to the children of Puerto Rico and to children all over the world whose lives have been disrupted by hurricanes and other natural disasters.

Hurricane Relief Organizations from the Backmatter

Direct Relief: Hurricane Maria Relief: <https://www.directrelief.org/emergency/hurricane-maria/>

Global Giving: Hurricane Maria Assistance: <https://www.globalgiving.org/hurricane-maria/>

Hogar Niñito Jesús: <https://fhnj.org>

Hospital del Niño de Puerto Rico: <https://hdnpuertorico.org/en/home>

Additional Information about Hurricane María

Hurricane María was the worst storm to strike Puerto Rico in more than 84 years. The hurricane caused \$94.4 billion in damages and thousands of deaths and destruction across the island (https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/harvard-study-estimates-thousands-died-in-puerto-rico-due-to-hurricane-maria/2018/05/29/1a82503a-6070-11e8-a4a4-c070ef53f315_story.html?noredirect=on). Hurricane María first made landfall on the Caribbean island nation of Dominica on Monday, September 18, 2017, as a Category 5 storm with winds exceeding 160 miles (258 kilometers) per hour (<https://www.cnn.com/specials/weather/hurricane-maria>). Hurricane María then struck Puerto Rico as a Category 4 storm, causing massive destruction in its wake.

As of 2022, Puerto Rico is still recovering from the impact of Hurricane María. The storm left thousands of families without homes and destroyed communities and neighborhoods. According to the *New England Journal of Medicine*, some households went 84 days without power, 68 days without water, and 41 days without phone reception. A natural disaster such as this takes years to repair the long-lasting damages (<https://www.mercycorps.org/en-gb/blog/quick-facts-hurricane-maria-puerto-rico>). For more scientific information about how Hurricane María originated, consult the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)'s "National Hurricane Center Tropical Cyclone Report" (https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/data/tcr/AL152017_Maria.pdf).

Talking About Natural Disasters with Young People

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry has tips on how to discuss natural disasters with young people. Young people need honesty and an open and supportive environment to discuss their thoughts and feelings after a natural disaster (https://www.aacap.org/App_Themes/AACAP/docs/resource_centers/disaster/disaster_resource_center_talking_to_children_about_natural_disasters.pdf). Be cognizant of the students in your classroom when reading *Alicia and the Hurricane/Alicia y el huracán* and their experiences with natural disasters to prevent triggers and make sure students are comfortable engaging with the text.

National Geographic online also provides strategies about how to combat children's fears and help them take control of their particular situations (<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/family/article/talking-to-kids-about-natural-disasters>). The American Academy of Pediatrics' Healthy Children organization provides information on how to speak with both younger and older children about a natural disaster and ways to provide young people with accurate, yet sensitive, information about the natural disaster (<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Pages/Talking-to-Children-about-Disasters.aspx>).

Coquíes

The website Puerto Rico! has an audio clip of a coquí singing (<https://welcome.topuertorico.org/coqui.shtml>). Coquíes begin to sing when the sun goes down at dusk, and they sing all night until the sun comes up the next morning. The coquí has been a cultural symbol of Puerto Rican history for centuries. It has become a national symbol and an icon for anything Puerto Rican, starting with the native Taíno people. A famous Puerto Rican saying about the coquí is: "Soy de aquí como el coquí." (I'm as Puerto Rican as a coquí.).

The Geography of Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico is located in the Caribbean Sea. It is an archipelago consisting of the main island and several small islands, cays, and islets. The main island is 100 miles (161 kilometers) long and 35 miles (56 kilometers) wide. Over centuries, Puerto Rico has been a critical shipping lane to the Panama Canal and a key port for many settlers and governments. The climate is tropical and the island is vulnerable to seasonal hurricanes. The majority of the island is mountainous (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/elyunque>) (<https://www.discoverpuertorico.com/island>).

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:

- What do you know about frogs? Are there any frog species that you know? What are they? What kinds of sounds do they make? Do you know about the frog species that is native to Puerto Rico, the coquí? What do you know about them?
- What is a hurricane? What causes a hurricane? Where do hurricanes usually occur? What is the typical hurricane season there? What usually happens during a hurricane? Do you know about any past hurricanes? What happened during and after that hurricane? What kinds of effects can hurricanes have on people and communities?
- What are some other kinds of natural disasters? Where do they typically occur? How can you help during a natural disaster? What are some ways you can support your community or a community that's impacted by the natural disaster?
- What do you do when you're sad or scared? What strategies or techniques do you use to make yourself feel better? How did you come up with those ways that help you in times of need?
- What does it mean to be resilient? How do you demonstrate resilience even though something may be challenging? Why is it important to be resilient? Do you think a person can learn to be resilient? How so?
- Ask students to think about their families and what family means to them. How is family important to you? How do you interact with your family members? How do you help them? What about siblings, if any? How do you help your siblings, and vice versa?

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, *Alicia and the Hurricane/Alicia y el huracán*. 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 Lesléa Newman's Biography: Read about Lesléa Newman on the jacket back flap as well as on her website (lesleakids.com). Where do you think Lesléa Newman gets ideas for her books? How do you think she gets inspired to write stories? Have you read any of her other books? Which ones?
- Read Elizabeth Erazo Baez's Biography. Read about Elizabeth Erazo Baez on the jacket back flap as well as on her website (baezfineart.com). Elizabeth Erazo Baez is known for her philanthropic work and dedication to Puerto Rican art. What do you think it was like for her to illustrate *Alicia and the Hurricane/Alicia y el huracán*?
- Encourage students to stop and jot notes in their reading notebooks during the read-aloud when they: learn new information, see a powerful image, have an emotional reaction or idea, have a question, or hear new words.
- Have students quickly write a feeling in their notebooks during reading. After reading, ask students why they wrote down that feeling and have them write a journal entry about it.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

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

Have students read to find out:

- which frog is native to Puerto Rico
- what the coquí's song sounds like and what the song means to Alicia
- how the hurricane impacts Puerto Rico
- how the hurricane impacts Alicia and her family
- how Alicia's family helps her during the natural disaster
- how Alicia copes with the effects of the hurricane and what helps her along the way
- why the coquí is special to Alicia, her family, and Puerto Rico
- what the coquí symbolizes to people from Puerto Rico

Encourage students to consider why the author and illustrator, Lesléa Newman and Elizabeth Erazo Baez, would want to share this story about Alicia, her family, and the impact of a hurricane on Puerto Rico with young people.

Note: Speaking about hurricanes and natural disasters may be triggering to some students. Be aware of your students' experiences and tailor the activities and questions to students' experiences and to be sure the text is being discussed with sensitivity.

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

mi corazón, los coquíes, Puerto Rico, puertorriqueños, salsa, Abuelita, niñas, niños, hurricane, boarding, una guitarra, un cuatro, generator

Academic

grasped, clutched, overturned, toppled, ruins

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 Mami say every night to Alicia?
2. What does Alicia listen for when she gets into bed?
3. What does Alicia think the coquíes are telling her with their song?
4. Who else tells Alicia about the coquíes when she gets into bed?
5. Who tells Alicia about the hurricane? What does that person say?
6. Where do Alicia and her family stay during the hurricane?
7. What does Alicia think during the hurricane about the coquíes?
8. What kind of destruction do Alicia and her family see in their neighborhood after the hurricane?
9. How is Alicia's home impacted by the hurricane? What do Alicia and her family see?

10. What does Alicia's mami tell her when they see their home? What does her papi say?
11. How do people in the community come together to help one another?
12. When does Alicia hear the coquíes again? What does their song mean to her then?

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. What does the title *Alicia and the Hurricane/Alicia y el huracán* mean to you after reading the book? Why do you think the author, Lesléa Newman, chose this particular title?
2. How are the coquíes important to Puerto Rico? How are they special to Alicia? Why do you think Alicia cares about the coquíes? How do they make her feel?
3. What does Alicia think the coquíes' song means when the coquíes sing?
4. How does illustrator, Elizabeth Erazo Baez, depict Alicia's emotions throughout the story? How do the paintings represent what Alicia is feeling? How can you tell? How do the paintings depict the mood and tone throughout the book?
5. What figurative language do you notice throughout *Alicia and the Hurricane/Alicia y el huracán*? Why do you think the author uses figurative language? How do you think the figurative language helps you to envision Alicia's experiences? What would it be like to read the story without figurative language?
6. Right after Alicia and her family left the shelter we read this sentence: "Alicia y su familia salieron hacia la brillante luz del sol y oyeron... el silencio./Alicia and her family stepped out into the bright sunshine and heard... silence."? What do you think this means? Why do you think the author chose to include an ellipsis before the word silence? Why do you think Alicia and her family did not speak on their way home?
7. When Alicia and her family arrive at her neighborhood after the hurricane, the author includes only one sentence: "El vecindario de Alicia estaba destrozado./Alicia's neighborhood was in ruins." Why do you think the author chose to include just one sentence on this spread? How does the artwork demonstrate that Alicia's neighborhood was in ruins? How did reading this sentence make you feel?
8. How do Alicia and her neighbors come together to support one another? What kinds of things do they do to begin rebuilding their community? How does this demonstrate their love and respect for one another and their country?
9. How does Alicia feel at the end of the story? What does the song of the coquíes mean to her after the hurricane?
10. How does the meaning of the song of the coquíes change throughout the book? How is the meaning of the song also consistent during the story?
11. Why do you think Alicia and her family remain hopeful despite the destruction that the hurricane caused? How do they demonstrate resilience in challenging times? Why do you think it's important to be hopeful after such a destructive event?

12. Explore the structure of the text. Does the story describe events chronologically, as comparison, as cause-and-effect, or as problems and solutions? Why do you think the author structured the text the way she did? How does this story compare to other texts you have read?

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 you have after reading this book? Think about Alicia, her love for Puerto Rico and the coquíes, and what she experienced during the hurricane. What is your takeaway from the book? What would you tell a friend about the book?
2. What do you think Lesléa Newman's and Elizabeth Erazo Baez's message is to readers? Think about possible motivations behind the author's intentions for creating this book. What do you think she wanted to tell readers? What do you think the illustrator wanted to convey in her paintings?
3. Have students make a text-to-self connection. What kinds of connections did you make from this book to your own life?
4. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books while you read *Alicia and the Hurricane/Alicia y el huracán*? Why did you make those connections?
5. Have students make a text-to-world connection. What kind of connections did you make between this book and what you have seen in the world, such as online, on television, or in a newspaper? Why did this book make you think of that?
6. What does experiencing a natural disaster mean to students after reading? After reading *Alicia and the Hurricane/Alicia y el huracán*, how did students' perspectives change about what happens before, during, and after a hurricane and how it impacts people and their communities?
7. What does community mean to you after reading this book? How did the Puerto Rican community come together after the hurricane? How did Alicia, her family, and her neighbors work together to start rebuilding their community?

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. The high-quality bilingual text presents ample opportunity to encourage students to engage with both languages. Have one student read the English text and one student read the Spanish text (if applicable in your classroom). Both students who are reading should be biliterate in both English and Spanish. Ask students to compare their experiences. What was it like reading the story in English? What was it like reading the story in Spanish? Have students

discuss how the English text and Spanish text are similar and different.

3. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
4. 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.
5. Have students give a short talk about how people close to you and your community can support you during difficult times.
6. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all 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.

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. When the family arrives home after the hurricane, Alicia's mami tells her: "No corremos peligro y estamos juntos, mi corazón. . . . Eso es lo que importa./We are safe, and we are together, mi corazón. . . . That's what matters most." How do you think this makes Alicia feel? Why do you think Mami chose to say this to Alicia? How do you think this helped Alicia process what happened during the hurricane?
2. How does Alicia's papi support her before and after the hurricane? What kinds of things does he tell her in preparation for the hurricane and after they see their destroyed home? How do you think Alicia feels when she hears Papi's words? How are his words important to Alicia and the way she is able to process the hurricane, both before and after the storm?
3. What techniques does Alicia use to help herself throughout the hurricane? For what does she listen? What techniques does she use to help herself remain hopeful? How do her family and community support her?

4. How do Alicia and her family demonstrate hope during the story? Why do you think it's important for people to be hopeful after a natural disaster? How do you think being hopeful could also be hard after a storm such as a hurricane? How do you think hope helps people cope with a natural disaster?
5. How can hurricanes cause emotional distress to people? How do hurricanes impact people's thoughts and feelings? What evidence from the story makes you think that?
6. Choose an emotion that interests you: happiness, sadness, fear, anxiety, frustration, hope, perseverance, and so on. Illustrate or act out what that emotion looks like in *Alicia and the Hurricane/Alicia y el huracán*.

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)

- **Have students read other Lee & Low titles about natural disasters.** These books include *Selvakumar Knew Better* (leeandlow.com/books/selvakumar-knew-better) *A House By the River* (leeandlow.com/books/a-house-by-the-river), *The Mangrove Tree: Planting Trees to Feed Families* (leeandlow.com/books/the-mangrove-tree), and *Parrots Over Puerto Rico* (leeandlow.com/books/parrots-over-puerto-rico). What do the areas of the world where these stories are set have in common? What natural disaster is showcased in each book? How do people work together to rebuild and preserve their communities? How do the people in each story demonstrate resilience in a time of difficulty? What obstacles do the characters face before, during, and after the natural disaster? Have students write an essay about their findings.
- **Discuss the coquíes as a symbol in *Alicia and the Hurricane/Alicia y el huracán*.** The coquíes are referenced frequently throughout the text. What do you think the coquíes represent to Alicia and her family? Why do you think they refer to the coquíes in good times, and in bad? How do the coquíes and their song make Alicia feel? Why do you think the coquí is a national symbol of Puerto Rico, and what do the tiny frogs mean to Puerto Ricans in general? Students can write an analytical essay discussing what the coquíes symbolize in *Alicia and the Hurricane/Alicia y el huracán*.

- **Have students make a list of each reference to the song of the coquíes in the book and what Alicia thinks the song means.** How does the coquíes' song change throughout *Alicia and the Hurricane/Alicia y el huracán*? Why do you think the coquíes' song is meaningful? How does the song allow Alicia, her family, and the people of their neighborhood to be hopeful? Have students analyze how the coquíes' song varies before, during, and after the hurricane.
- **Read *Parrots Over Puerto Rico* (leeandlow.com/books/parrots-over-puerto-rico) after a rereading of *Alicia and the Hurricane/Alicia y el huracán*.** Compare the two books and have students answer the following questions in an analytical essay: How do the authors of both books present Puerto Rico? How is Puerto Rico described in each? What information do students learn about Puerto Rico from each book? How are the coquí and the parrot similar? What do the coquí and parrot mean to Puerto Ricans? What did students learn about Puerto Rico, natural disasters, and animals from both texts?
- **Analyze the repetition used in *Alicia and the Hurricane/Alicia y el huracán*.** Throughout the book, Alicia's family tells her: "Salta a la cama como una ranita, mi corazón, y el coqui te cantará para dormirte./Hop into bed like a little frog, mi corazón, and los coquíes will sing you to sleep." Why do you think the author, Lesléa Newman, decided to repeat this phrase throughout the book before, during, and after the hurricane? What do you think it means to Alicia? Do you think this is comforting to her? Why or why not? How does it represent Alicia's resilience and courage during and after the hurricane? How does it signify the importance of the coquíes to both Alicia and all of Puerto Rico? Students can write an essay discussing the repetitive phrase used in *Alicia and the Hurricane/Alicia y el huracán*.
- **Conduct a figurative language study with students using *Alicia and the Hurricane/Alicia y el huracán*.** Have students search for figurative language in *Alicia and the Hurricane/Alicia y el huracán*. Refer to Read Write Think's "Figurative Language Resource Page" as a tool for students to use during their search (readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson79/figresource.pdf). Create a chart with different rows for figurative language terms (i.e. simile, metaphor, personification, and so on) and students can complete the chart with specific examples from *Alicia and the Hurricane/Alicia y el huracán*. Afterward, students can experiment using figurative language in their own descriptive writing inspired by the book.
- **How was reading a picture book different from reading a newspaper article about a hurricane?** Since this story was inspired by the aftereffects of Hurricane María on Puerto Rico, have students read the article "Hurricane Maria's devastation of Puerto Rico" (<https://www.climate.gov/news-features/understanding-climate/hurricane-marias-devastation-puerto-rico>). After reading, students can create a Venn Diagram with the headings "Picture Book Fiction: *Alicia and the Hurricane/Alicia y el huracán*" and "Expository Nonfiction: 'Hurricane Maria's devastation of Puerto Rico.'" Students can compare and contrast the different formats of the texts and the information they learned in each. Why do you think reading a fictional story about a hurricane as well as news articles are both important?
- **Come up with questions to interview the author, Lesléa Newman.** What was her process behind creating *Alicia and the Hurricane/Alicia y el huracán*? What was her inspiration for writing the story about Alicia, her family, the coqui, and a hurricane? Read the Afterword

with students and have them discuss what they learned and how it made them think about the book differently. Why did you think the author created this book for young readers? How was the process behind writing this book different from her other books? How is this story special to her? Consider reaching out to Lesléa Newman for a virtual author visit ([lesleakids.com](https://www.lesleakids.com)).

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)

- **Have students research the geography of Puerto Rico.** Where in the world is the island located? What is the climate like? What physical features does the island have? What kinds of plants and animals live there? What makes Puerto Rico unique from nearby islands? What are Puerto Rico's resources and most popular exports? How is Puerto Rico susceptible to hurricanes and why? (<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/geography/states/article/puerto-rico>).
- **Conduct a research study on how Hurricane María impacted the people and communities of Puerto Rico.** If you wish to take investigation of Hurricane María further after students have learned the scientific process behind hurricanes, have students explore the effects Hurricane María had on the economy and people of Puerto Rico. How did the hurricane affect Puerto Rico's young people? Students can consult articles and resources online to inform their research (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/26/hurricane-maria-puerto-rico-youth-mental-health-study-report>). How can hurricanes affect the people living in the surrounding area for many years? How are a lack of resources and attention to the hurricane efforts hurtful to people? (<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/puerto-rico-sees-more-pain-little-progress-three-years-after-n1240513>). Students can share their findings in a visual presentation or in an analytical essay about what they learned about Hurricane María's impact, the lack of hurricane efforts on the island, and how people and their communities were directly affected.
- **Research coquíes and their importance in Puerto Rico.** The Smithsonian Museum has a lesson plan, "El Coquí," that provides more information about the indigenous people of Puerto Rico and what the coquí has meant historically to the island of Puerto Rico (<https://folkways.si.edu/el-coqui/music/tools-for-teaching/smithsonian>). Have students answer the following questions: Why is the coquí important to the people of Puerto Rico? What did the coquí's song mean to the Taínos and how has that meaning developed over time? How do Puerto Ricans today feel about the coquí? (http://www.ournationalparks.us/caribbean/san-juan/revered_coqui_frogs_part_of_puerto_rican_culture/) Students can discuss with a partner, in a small group, or with the whole class what they learned. If some students are already familiar with the coquí and the coquí's song, they may wish to share their experiences with coquíes and what they know about them with the class.
- **Select a disaster relief organization from the Backmatter of *Alicia and the Hurricane/Alicia y el huracán* and have students learn about how they can support**

this organization. Students may select an organization that's dedicated to helping Puerto Rico rebuild from the list in the book or choose another relief organization that is focused on hurricane efforts in the mainland United States. Why did students choose their particular organization? How is the organization helping Puerto Rico (or some other area) to rebuild or providing hurricane relief? Students can write an essay about the efforts of the organization they chose.

- **Have students research what it means to be a commonwealth in contrast to a state.** Puerto Rico is a commonwealth of the United States. What rights and privileges do the people of Puerto Rico have? How are these rights and privileges the same as or different from those afforded people who live in a state? How is the government of Puerto Rico organized? Prepare a chart comparing the government of Puerto Rico to the government of students' home state.

Science/STEM

(K-ESS3-2 Earth and Human Activity: Ask questions to obtain information about the purpose of weather forecasting to prepare for, and respond to, severe weather).

- **Talk about natural disasters that may be common in students' communities.** What natural disasters are the most common in their areas? What kinds of destruction do the natural disasters cause? How do the disasters originate? How does the geography of their areas lend itself to natural disasters? How can people prepare before a natural disaster, and what are the steps that students, their families, and the school can take to ensure safety during future weather events? Be aware of students' experiences and sensitive to potential triggers.
- **Ask students to research the evolution of hurricanes and how they develop.** **National Geographic Kids has a webpage dedicated to hurricanes that provides information on how and why they form and other important vocabulary** (<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/hurricane>). Students can answer the following questions: How and why do hurricanes form? Where do hurricanes typically begin? What countries and regions of the world do they usually impact? What kinds of weather is observed during a hurricane? What kinds of destruction can a hurricane cause? Students can create informational posters with their research findings, making sure to include references and citations of their sources.
- **Study the evolution of Hurricane María.** Since the author was inspired to write this story in the aftermath of Hurricane María (September 2017), you may wish to explore this hurricane specifically. Have students examine how Hurricane María developed and became a hurricane. After students learn about hurricanes, students can research more about the origins of Hurricane María and how it became a powerful and deadly storm. For additional facts about Hurricane María, see World Vision's Hurricane María facts page (<https://www.worldvision.org/disaster-relief-news-stories/2017-hurricane-maria-facts#how>). The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) also has a report that provides specific details about Hurricane María (https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/data/tcr/AL152017_Maria.pdf). Students can share their findings in a visual presentation that outlines their research, provides photographs, and includes resources and references where they found information for their work.

- **Research other hurricanes that have devastated parts of the United States, and how the storms were caused.** The Insurance Information Institute has a list of the hurricanes in the United States and the kinds of damage they caused (<https://www.iii.org/fact-statistic/facts-statistics-hurricanes>). Have students look over the list and find patterns: where did these hurricanes occur? What kinds of weather were involved with the hurricanes? How did the hurricanes affect the people and communities in the neighboring regions? How are hurricanes classified? How has our country learned, or not learned, to prepare for hurricanes? What kinds of support can people provide in the aftermath of the storms? Divide students into groups according to time periods and let them share on posters the information they learned about hurricanes in the United States.

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)

- **Conduct an illustrator study of Elizabeth Erazo Baez.** Puerto Rican artist Elizabeth Erazo Baez created the illustrations for *Alicia and the Hurricane/Alicia y el huracán*. Elizabeth Erazo Baez is proud of her Puerto Rican heritage. Students can look at her fine art paintings on her website and compare them to the illustrations in the book. How is her style in the book similar to her fine art? How is it different? Have students think about what it was like for Elizabeth Erazo Baez to create illustrations for a children's book for the first time. Consider reaching out to Elizabeth Erazo Baez for a virtual illustrator visit to learn more about her work, the process behind her paintings, and what this story means to her (<https://www.baezfineart.com/>).
- **Examine photographs of Hurricane María. To further a study of Hurricane María, have students analyze what they see in photographs and images of the hurricane and its aftermath** (<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/photography/article/hurricane-maria-caribbean>). Afterward, have students describe how viewing actual photographs of the hurricane made them feel and what they learned. How did this relate to what they read in *Alicia and the Hurricane/Alicia y el huracán*? Why is it important to provide hurricane relief quickly and on a community level after a natural disaster such as a hurricane? Students can write an essay detailing their thoughts.
- **Have students watch the NBC news clip, "Teachers in Puerto Rico Reflect on Hurricane Maria"** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dtDeV9JRqY>). How do these teachers describe Hurricane María? What did students learn from watching teachers explain what happened and how they can support their students? How do hurricanes and natural disasters impact students and schools, both physically and emotionally?
- **Consult the *New York Times* article, "Creativity From the Chaos of Hurricane Maria"** (<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/20/arts/creativity-from-the-chaos-of-hurricane-maria.html>). Have students study the artists featured in the article and discuss how art can be therapeutic. How can art be helpful in challenging times? Have students ever used art when they were sad or were going through a difficult time? Have students discuss what they learned from the article, and how the Puerto Rican artists used their work to showcase their emotions

and process what happened during and after Hurricane María.

- **Encourage students to select an illustration from *Alicia and the Hurricane/Alicia y el huracán* that resonated with them the most.** Have students write a reflection about the illustration. What stood out to them? How did the image make them feel? What did it make them think about?

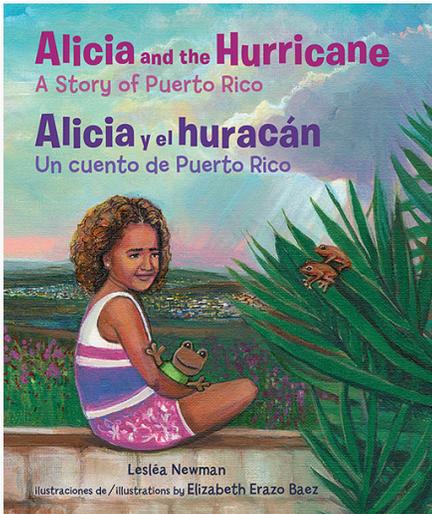
School-Home Connection

(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 and their families to research natural disaster relief for Puerto Rico and what they can do to help.** Point students and their families to the Backmatter of the book or have them conduct additional research about how they can continue to help communities in need.
- **Have students and their families investigate what they can do to help their community and neighborhood in the event of a natural disaster.** What organizations can students and their families partner with in the future if a natural disaster occurs? What can they do in their communities to help support one another during challenging times?
- **If possible, have students look at and/or listen to coquíes at home.** Students and families can look up videos or listen to audio clips of coquíes singing. If students and families are familiar with the coquí, how do they feel listening to the little frogs? If students and families are just learning about the coquí, what did they think of the frogs' song? What did they learn about the coquí?



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lesléa Newman is the author of more than seventy-five acclaimed books for readers of all ages. She has received numerous awards for her work, including two Stonewall Book Award Honors and a creative writing fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. Newman is also a popular presenter at conferences, libraries, and schools. She lives in Holyoke, Massachusetts, with her spouse, Mary Grace Vazquez. Learn about Newman's books for children at lesleakids.com.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Elizabeth Erazo Baez is a Puerto Rican visual artist who is inspired by the greenery of Puerto Rico and the beauty of its landscapes. As a result, her paintings focus on tropical scenes and portraits of the Caribbean. She also works as an elementary school art teacher. Baez lives with her family in Miami, Florida. You can find her online at baezfineart.com.

REVIEWS

"While reading this book I was taken back to the fear and uncertainty of the days before and after Hurricane María devastated Puerto Rico on September 20, 2017. Like young Alicia, I also noticed the silence that invaded the nights. Like Alicia, I missed the sound of the coquí, a little frog-like animal whose voice resonates every night as a reminder that we are in Puerto Rico, and how proud we are to be Boricuas. Like Alicia, I also felt that the silence of the coquí meant that hope had been lost. But young Alicia teaches us that when the people of Puerto Rico began to help one another, the coquí began to sing again. And that song is a symbol of the strength and love that we show when we stand up for each other. Alicia and her family remind us that if we are together, HOPE, like the song of the coquí, will be ever present in our lives."

—*Carmen Yulín Cruz Soto, Mayor of San Juan, Puerto Rico, 2013–2020;*
Weissman Fellow, Mount Holyoke College, 2021

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