



## Boys of the Beast

written by Monica Zepeda

### About the Book

**Genre:** Young Adult Fiction

**Format:** Hardcover  
208 pages, 5-1/2 x 8-1/4

**ISBN:** 9781643790954

**Reading Level:** Grade 8

**Interest Level:** Grades 8–College

**Guided Reading Level:** Z+

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

**Lexile™ Measure:** N/A

\*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

**Themes:** Coping with Death, Dreams & Aspirations, Empathy/Compassion, Families, Fiction, Forgiveness, Identity/Self Esteem/Confidence, Jewish Interest, Latino/Hispanic/Mexican Interest, LGBTQ, Overcoming Obstacles, YA interest, Realistic Fiction, Religious Diversity, Teen Interest

**Resources on the web:**

[leeandlow.com/books/boys-of-the-beast](http://leeandlow.com/books/boys-of-the-beast)

### SYNOPSIS

**THE ROUTE.** Seventeen hundred miles from Portland, Oregon, to Albuquerque, New Mexico.

**THE BEAST.** Grandma Lupe's 1988 Ford Thunderbird Turbo Coupe.

**THE BOYS.** Three strangers who also happen to be cousins:

**Matt.** Evangelical Christian. Earnest. Film nerd. Carrying a dream to make movies--despite the future his father has planned for him.

**Ethan.** Jewish. Gay. Sci-fi nerd. Carrying a phone that contains his entire relationship with Levi--unless they finally get to meet IRL on this trip.

**Oscar.** Stoner. Smartass. Too cool to be a nerd. Carrying a letter that haunts him--no matter how hard he tries to escape it.

**THE END** ... just might be a new beginning.

This powerful voyage in three voices marks the brilliant debut of Monica Zepeda.

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

### From the Author's Note

"Ethan likes Eighties music because I like Eighties music. Matt writes screenplays because I write screenplays. Oscar has trauma because I have trauma. While I deliberately made Oscar's trauma dramatic, there is no big trauma or small trauma. There is only your trauma.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration says more than two-thirds of children experience at least one traumatic event by the time they are sixteen years old. And this was before Covid-19.

If you have trauma, if you feel lost, if you feel alone, there are things you can do that may help you to feel better. You don't have to have suicidal thoughts before you ask for help. Journal. Pray. Create. And please don't ever feel as though you can't ask for help. So many people in the world want to see you thrive, and if it feels as though no one does, then maybe you haven't met them yet.

Here are a few places where you can connect with people who care: Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741 or visit [www.crisistextline.org](https://www.crisistextline.org)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: Call 988 or visit [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](https://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

The Trevor Project:

Text START to 678-678 for Trevor Text or call TrevorLifeline at 1-866-488-7386 or visit [www.thetrevorproject.org](https://www.thetrevorproject.org)

If you'd like to help those who may be experiencing a mental health challenge, consider becoming trained in Mental Health First Aid.

Mental Health First Aid: Visit [www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org](https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org)

I've done my best to express the truth of my characters, and any errors in the portrayals of mental health challenges are entirely my own."

### A Note About Teaching with *Boys of the Beast*

The themes in this story must be addressed and handled with deep sensitivity and open mindedness.

Teachers must be aware and prepared that by teaching this novel (and the corresponding topics addressed in it) they may be addressing a legacy of harm, suicidal ideation, and violence, specifically within largely minority and underrepresented socioeconomic groups.

Set the example of what culturally responsive teaching looks like:

- Collaborate with students to establish guidelines early on. This will serve as a reminder for

discussion etiquette as thought-provoking topics are developed.

- Anticipate how your students will respond to controversial topics presented in the novel (depression, suicide, gun violence). While teachers should encourage students to share their views without fear of judgment, teachers should consider how to respond to emotion, and use this to guide instruction and for future instructional planning.
- Don't be afraid to share your own learning journey as it pertains to cultural identity and mental health. This will create a positive classroom climate and an overall feeling of sameness.
- Aim to include and discuss outside materials that align with the text and essentially address underrepresented groups' experiences in ways that do not trivialize or marginalize their experiences.

## 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:

Teachers must be aware and prepared that by teaching this novel (and the corresponding topics addressed in it) they may be addressing a legacy of harm and violence, specifically within largely minority and underrepresented socioeconomic groups.

- What strategies do you use when you're sad and/or upset? What can you do to take care of yourself when something is troubling you?
- Ask students to think about their family and what family means to them. How is family important to you? How do you interact with your family members? Does your family live close or far apart? What brings your family together? How do you help them? What do you know about your family history or your ancestors? How did you learn about them?
- What are your goals and aspirations? How would you feel if people disapproved of these goals? Would you still go after them? Why or why not?
- If you could go on a road trip anywhere, where would you go and why? Who would go with you? What would you be scared of? What would you be excited for?
- What is your relationship to religion/spirituality? How does that impact your values and how you conduct yourself in the world? What challenges arise? How do you deal with these challenges?
- As a hook for readers, consider showing students *Boys of the Beast* book trailer, posted on Lee and Low's website: <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/boys-of-the-beast>
- As a hook for readers, consider having students listen to Ethan's Road Trip Mixtape, posted on Lee and Low's website: <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/boys-of-the-beast>

You may want to have students journal their responses to these questions so that they can refer back to it throughout and after the reading of the book to further their thinking on the topic(s).

### Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1; Craft & Structure, Strand 5; and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)  
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

- **Book title exploration:** Talk about the title of the book, *Boys of the Beast*. 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 Monica Zepeda's biography:** Read about Monica Zepeda on the back cover of the book. Encourage students to think about what could have been her inspiration for writing *Boys of the Beast*. Monica shares additional background information about herself in her Author's Note.
- Encourage students to stop and jot in their reading notebooks during the read-aloud when they: learn new information, see a powerful image, have an emotional reaction or an idea, have a question, or hear new words.
- Have students 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:

- what happened to Oscar's father and how that impacted Oscar and his relationship with his family
- the differences and similarities between Oscar, Ethan, and Matt
- how Oscar, Ethan, and Matt change over the course of the book, and what events cause those changes
- how trauma manifests and what support is needed in times of crisis and grief

Encourage students to consider why the author, Monica Zepeda, would want to share this story with young people.

## VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word. (Many of the Spanish words can be found in the book glossary, but there are also some that are not included. Students could be encouraged to create a log of these words—they will not be listed here.)

### Content Specific

Bar Mitzvah, poinsettias, pallbearer, odometer, ulcer, opioid, impounds, savior, secular, granite, patina, commandeered, femme fatale, jonesing, promiscuous, Torah, aneurysm, pigsty, creosote, monsoon, sinusitis, derelict, congregation, oust, vocation, hypothermia, afghan blanket

### Academic

mourners, secluded, envious, inevitable, pretentious, stalling, disconcerting, deceitful, grieving, vacantly, motif, pedantic, defiantly, saunters, assimilated, humanizes, traumatizing, tribulations, validates, morality, dignified, ornate, inciting, plaque, omission, blasphemy, appropriation, negligent, atone, benediction, pagoda, façade, immortalized, archiving, prolonged, stylus, predicated, coherent, abject, deferment, stigma, dysfunction, resentment, reconcile, regeneration, paraphernalia, indoctrinating, tangible, dismay, detestable, montage, oblige, motley, reckoning

## 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. Why does Oscar have reoccurring nightmares? What is the significance of reoccurring nightmares?
2. How well do Oscar, Ethan and Matt know each other in the beginning of the story?
3. What bird does Matt keep seeing throughout the story?

4. Describe the relationship between Oscar and his mother.
5. Who is Levi to Ethan? How did they meet?
6. Why does Matt want to be a filmmaker?
7. Who receives Grandma Lupe's car? What kind of car is it?
8. Who suggests going on a road trip? What is the route Oscar, Ethan, and Matt take?
9. Who is Jiwon?
10. Why does Matt's father not want him to go to California?
11. Why is Grandma Lupe's car named Beast?
12. Why doesn't Oscar like going on book tours with his mother?
13. How did Grandma Lupe die?
14. What happens when Ethan and Levi first meet each other?
15. How did Oscar's father die?
16. Where does Matt take Oscar in San Francisco? How does Oscar react? Why?
17. How and why has Oscar's relationship to baseball changed?
18. What kind of party do Oscar, Ethan, and Matt go to on New Year's Eve?
19. How does Matt feel about his first kiss?
20. What does the University of Southern California represent to Matt?
21. Why doesn't Oscar want to stop in Phoenix on New Year's Day?
22. What letter has Oscar been carrying around for most of the story? Who wrote it and why? How does Oscar feel after receiving the letter?
23. How does Matt feel about the Reckoning at different points throughout the story?
24. Who is Kayla? Why does Oscar apologize to her? How is it received?
25. What ground rules become important for Ethan and Levi's relationship?
26. How does Matt view his father by the end of the story?
27. What does each cousin receive from their Grandma Lupe?

### 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. Oscar, Ethan, and Matt are related and in the same generation but have different religious views, values, and experiences of the world. What are some of the differences you see in your own family? How do these differences bring you closer or further apart from your family?
2. Oscar put on a façade as if he cares about nothing. What are some instances where Oscar

shows his emotions and how much he truly does care about those around him?

3. What is the significance of the falcon throughout the story?
4. Throughout the book Matt uses his Ideas Notebook to process the events that he sees and experiences. What role can artistic expression play in helping process troubling and/or traumatic events and situations?
5. How is Matt conflicted by his family's values and beliefs as well as his own? Although he loves his parents, why does he make choices that differ from the ones his parents want for him?
6. What is the difference between tolerance and acceptance? Does Matt tolerate or accept Ethan's sexuality? How does their relationship change over the course of the book?
7. How do difference religious beliefs play a role in the cousins' relationships to one another and their family? What do they learn from each other's experiences of religion?
8. Explore the structure of this text. Does the story describe events chronologically, as comparison, cause and effect, or 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?
9. Physical distance is difficult for Ethan and Levi's relationship. In what ways can physical distance create emotional distance? What are different strategies to counter the difficult feelings that long distance can bring up?
10. Oscar, Ethan, and Matt have a strained relationship at the beginning of the text. How are the cousins able to trust and find comfort in one another?
11. Why are there different stories about Grandma Lupe's death? In what ways does the family try to preserve Grandma Lupe's dignity?
12. Oscar's father died because of a school shooting. Connect this to current events and conversations around school shootings. How do school shootings impact a family, a community, a country, and more?
13. When Oscar, Ethan, and Matt are stopped by a police officer at both the McDonald's and by the CHP officer on I-10, why do you think the police officers are suspicious of them? What role does race play in the encounter? What informs the different perspectives each cousin shares after they are pulled over? How do these two interactions compare?
14. What do you think Oscar wrote on the back of Tanner Aaron Gibbs's letter? Why do you think that? Use textual evidence to support.
15. What is Grandma Lupe's significance throughout the story? How is her presence felt even though she is no longer alive?
16. How does Ethan know how to help Oscar? What did he learn from his previous experiences with Jiwon?
17. Ethan tells Oscar, "No one's ever ready to deal with trauma" (255). Do you agree with this statement? What does it mean to you?
18. What lessons about forgiveness does Oscar learn? What do you learn about forgiveness from

this story?

19. Ethan states, "Dysfunction can be generational, but it doesn't have to be" (266). Do you agree with this statement? How does generational harm show up in the lives of Oscar, Ethan, and Matt? What kind of generational dysfunction do you see in your own life? What social and cultural circumstances contribute to generational harm? What are some ways to break these cycles?

### Reader's Response

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

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. **Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion.** You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. What is one big thought you have after reading this book? Think about how Oscar, Ethan, and Matt navigate and experience their family history as well as trauma throughout *Boys of the Beast*. How do they individually and collectively process change and trauma throughout the story? How are they able to move forward?
2. What do you think the author's message to the reader is? Think about Monica Zepeda's author's note. What do you think she wanted to tell young readers?
3. Have students make a text-to-self connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to your own life? What is your role in your own family? What are ways you express yourself after an emotional event?
4. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books while you read *Boys of the Beast*? Why did you make those connections?
5. Have students make a text-to-world connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to what you have seen in the world or on the news? Why did *Boys of the Beast* make you think of that?
6. Grief can result in deep sorrow and harmful behavior. Have you or someone you know experienced grief? What behaviors did you notice? Why is grief a powerful emotion? What are some ways get support as someone processes their grief?
7. Oscar learns that to ask for help and let people in emotionally, to receive the help he needs. Why is it difficult to be vulnerable? What does vulnerability mean to you? Think of the people in your life who you look to for guidance and support. How do these people support and help you? How have these people helped you overcome traumas and challenges?
8. Have students write a book review after reading *Boys of the Beast*. Consult ReadWriteThink's lesson plan on how to teach students how to write book reviews (<https://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/what-think-writing-review>). Students can also refer to other book reviews for references. What did they enjoy about *Boys of the Beast*? What would they tell a friend or another person who wants to read the book? Students can share their book reviews with small groups or the whole class.

## 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 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. Review the five parts of the stories. Have students summarize what is happening in each part, first orally, then in writing. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
  - Review several chapters and have students summarize what happened, first orally, and then in writing.
  - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about one of the characters in the book. Have them discuss what characteristics they admire about the person they chose.
5. Have students illustrate or discuss a way to cope with loss and trauma.
6. What real-life people or events are you reminded of by characters or events in the story? Prepare a short essay, citing examples from the book and your chosen character/event to justify the similarities.

## 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. What kinds of emotions does Oscar grapple with after he finds out his father's shooter sent him a letter? Does he feel vengeful? Fearful? Sad? Using evidence from the book, discuss how Oscar experiences complex feelings after this critical moment.
2. What are the coping strategies and techniques that Oscar uses to heal from his grief? How do the coping strategies change over time?
3. How does the death of Grandma Lupe impact Oscar, Ethan, and Matt differently? How do they each cope with the aftermath of her death?

4. Why are ground rules important to Ethan and Levi's relationship? What ground rules do you need established when entering a relationship with someone (can be romantic or platonic)? Why do these ground rules matter to you?
5. Why is Jiwon hesitant to share her journey with Oscar? What boundaries does she articulate to Ethan? What can be learned from Jiwon's mental health journey?
6. Encourage students to identify passages where characters manage and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways. In a chart with five columns, write: What was the cause of the conflict? What was the consequence of the conflict? How does the character(s) resolve the problem? What are additional ways the character(s) could have solved the problem? What advice would you give?

## 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)

- **The first lines of the book are "Grandma Lupe shakes my shoulder until I wake up. 'Mijo, you have to go now.'" What do these lines tell us about how things might unfold in the story? What do they tell us about Oscar's character? How does Grandma Lupe serve as a guiding light? Why is there a sense of urgency? Write about these guiding questions and the importance of Grandma Lupe in a critical essay.**
- **Prepare a defensive essay that explains your views on which character changed the most throughout the course of the novel.** Defend your views by citing specific examples.
- **Examine the different literary elements that author Monica Zepeda uses throughout *Boys of the Beast*.** Have students come up with a list and select portions of the text that showcase a specific literary device (i.e. foreshadowing, flashback, motif, etc). Afterward, students can select one literary device and write about how that was impactful when reading *Boys of the Beast*. How do literary devices make the story engaging, and how do they contribute to the story overall? See PBS's Literary Elements and Techniques video for more information about how to teach about literary devices (<https://ny.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/litel18-fig/literary-elements-and-techniques-figurativelanguage/>).
- **Select a scene in which you disagreed how a character handled a situation, person, or event.** In the voice of that character, rewrite the scene as you think it should have

happened.

- **Boys of the Beast is written from different perspectives.** Challenge students to explore the characters more deeply with writing tasks that require perspective-taking: Ask students to write a letter from Grandma Lupe to each of the cousins. What do students think she would say to each of them and why? Have students discuss in small groups about how their dialogues are different and reflect on how the grandparent-child dynamics differ.
- **What real-life people or events are you reminded of by characters or events in the story?** Prepare a critical essay, citing examples from the book and your chosen character/ event to justify the similarities.
- **Encourage students to imagine they have the opportunity to interview the author, Monica Zepeda.** Students should design interview questions they would ask the creator of *Boys of the Beast* if they were on a talk show, news show, podcast, or radio show. What do students want to learn more about in terms of the writing process?
- **Assign students different characters from *Boys of the Beast* and have them brainstorm about a guiding question: What and how can this character teach us?** Students can think about different characters to examine as a whole class and then break into smaller, specific character groups. Encourage students to think about how characters have made mistakes and also have done good things in the book, and ultimately what they learned from that character. Have students share out their findings: How is this character important to the book, and what lessons did they teach us over the course of the story? How did their actions develop the narrative, and why are they crucial to understanding the meaning of the book?
- **Create your own guide for teaching this book.** What grade would you teach this book to? What themes would you highlight? What activities would you create for students? What other books would you pair *Boys of the Beast* with? Have students present their Teacher's Guide to a partner, small group, or the whole class.

### Arts/Performing 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, and Range of Writing, Strand 10)

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

- **Create your own road trip mixtape.** Have students share playlists with each other. Additionally, play some of the songs in class. Students can share out why they selected the songs on the mix tape and what they mean to them. Have students reflect on the power of music and how it can bring about specific emotions when you listen to certain songs.
- **Envision a sequel to *Boys of the Beast* and have students title the second book.** What do they think it would be called? Write a synopsis and create a cover for the book. What kind of materials do they want to use for the cover? Encourage students to consider what they think will happen in the second book, and how that reflects the artwork for the cover. How can they use the current cover to inspire their work?

- **Design your dream car.** What would the exterior and interior look like? What is the make and model? What would you name your car?
- **Map the places Oscar, Ethan, and Matt took on their road trip.** Create and write your own postcards from one or all of those places. What images would you use to represent these places? You can also use the Postcard Creator from ReadWriteThink.org. (<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/student-interactives/postcard-creator-30061.html>)
- **Matt has a deep love of films and writes screenplays.** Write your own screenplay based on events in your life. (Resource: <https://writersstore.com/blogs/news/how-to-write-a-screenplay-a-guide-to-scriptwriting>)

### 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)

- **In the book, Matt is also homeschooled.** What similarities and differences do you note about Matt's homeschool experiences and your own? Research other titles that feature a character who is homeschooled.
- **Ask students to create portraits of their close family members through drawing, collage, or photograph.** In writing, students should describe what actions and qualities they admire about their friend/s. Students can write in any genre.
- **Interview a friend or family member who has lost a loved one in the past.** Question their strategies for how they coped after the loss. What lessons were learned? What memories will always be cherished?
- **List some ways to help a loved one who is hurting.** What are some ways to ask for help for yourself or a loved one?
- **Using a map, ask students to map their own road trip.** How long would it take? What places would they stop? What would they do at each stop? How much money would they need? Who would go with them?



## Ordering Information

### General Order Information:

[leeandlow.com/contact/ordering](https://leeandlow.com/contact/ordering)

### Secure Online Ordering:

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**By Phone:** 212-779-4400 ext. 25

**By Fax:** 212-683-1894

### By Mail:

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

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Monica Zepeda** is a Southern California native who spent her teen years in the desert wilds of Joshua Tree. She moved to Los Angeles, London, and Arizona before settling down permanently in L.A. Along the way, she's worked as a bookseller, produced reality television shows, and written plays, feature films, and video games. Monica now serves as a teen librarian and lives near the beach with her husband and their unbelievably cute cats. You can find her on the web at [moniczepeda.com](https://moniczepeda.com), on Twitter at @MZWrites, and on Instagram at @MZWrites2.

## REVIEWS

"As the cousins go from mutual wariness to becoming a close-knit trio of co-conspirators and confidantes, their discussions... are thoughtful explorations of identity; mental health issues, including self-harm; romance; and acceptance."  
—*Publishers Weekly*

"These 18-year-olds gradually discover—and reveal—their true selves as they help one another envision a future of love, honesty, and acceptance." —*Booklist*

"Like a missive from the soul." —*Kirkus*

"The young adult novel *Boys of the Beast* zips easily along, just like the 1988 Ford Thunderbird Turbo Coupe that carries its three cousins to their satisfying destination." —*Foreword Reviews*

## 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).