



Echoes of Grace

written by Guadalupe García McCall

About the Book

Genre: Young Adult Fiction

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

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Reading Level: Grades 8-12

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: Dreams & Aspirations, Empathy/Compassion, Families, Fantasy, Fiction, Forgiveness, Friendship, Identity/Self Esteem/Confidence, Latino/Hispanic/Mexican Interest, Overcoming Obstacles, Responsibility, Siblings, Teen Interest, Texas, YA interest

Resources on the web:

leeandlow.com/books/echoes-of-grace

SYNOPSIS

In Eagle Pass, Texas, Grace struggles to understand the “echoes” she inherited from her mother--visions which often distort her reality. One morning, as her sister, Mercy, rushes off to work, a disturbing echo takes hold of Grace, and within moments, tragedy strikes.

Attending community college for the first time, talking to the boy next door, and working toward her goals all help Grace recover, but her estrangement from Mercy takes a deep toll. And as Grace’s echoes bring ghosts and premonitions, they also bring memories of when Grace fled to Mexico to the house of her maternal grandmother--a woman who Grace had been told died long ago. Will piecing together the truth heal Grace and her sister, or will the echoes destroy everything that she holds dear?

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 Guadalupe García McCall

Please note that this Author's Note contains spoilers pertaining to the ending.

I started writing *Echoes of Grace* in 2016, after hearing of a tragedy involving the accidental death of a two-year-old in our neighborhood. I wrote mostly at night, como lechuza, because Graciela's story came in long, wild spurts, building itself out from visions and fragments of poetry. There was so much of it that touched on important topics in our community, how poverty, abuse, and social stratification can cause familial and generational trauma, and how we are currently failing to address these important topics in our society.

As the story evolved, however, I started noticing other aspects creeping into the narrative. Family secrets, dark imagery, distorted memories, ghosts, and other otherworldly characters manifested themselves on the page, forcing me go beyond the personal, the known, down into the bowels of this world I was creating and look closely at what was really at its core. *What is this dark thing?* I kept asking myself as the second story in the dual timeline started to grow. Until finally, when I was done with the first draft, I realized that this was about gender-based violence and the most foul of crimes against women—femicide. Gender-based violence is a systemic violation of our most basic human rights that transcends borders, class, and ethnic backgrounds. It's a global issue affecting every community in every corner of the world.

For centuries, women along the border of the Rio Grande have been telling the story of the beautiful young woman who disobeyed her mother and went to the baile only to find herself dancing with the devil and dying for it. I think that old cautionary tale was to warn young women of the evils that are out there, waiting for them, if they were not careful.

But it's time to update that story. It's time to show that the problem is not with the young women who go to school or to work, like the hundreds of young women who are still losing their lives in Ciudad Juarez, or the hundreds of thousands of women who are the victims of gender-based crimes all over the United States every year. No, the problem is with the devil himself—the men who for centuries have abused, violated, and killed women all over the world simply because they can.

Although set in modern times, *Echoes of Grace* uses common elements present in gothic novels such as *Jane Eyre* and *Rebecca*, novels that I read as a young woman. However, because it's set in deep South Texas, the book draws its gothic undertones from the paranormal elements so prevalent in our border stories. Like many gothic novel heroines, Grace lives in an old, run-down house. This gloomy home implies that there was once life and joy inside its walls, but that joy has been tragically lost. However, that is not the only ruined, decaying structure in Grace's life. As in *Rebecca's* Manderley, Abuela Estela's house in Piedras Negras, the place Grace runs to when she wants to escape the disappointments of her youth, is a much darker, more atmospheric place than her father's forlorn house, especially at the end, when Grace returns to it with her sister and sees it for what it really is—a ruin. So much about these abandoned, decaying spaces speak to the neglect and abuse that plagues our underprivileged and marginalized communities, especially because social organizations, community outreach initiatives, and government programs which could provide

support to people like Grace and her family are so often underfunded and understaffed.

Ghosts or the semblance of them are an important element in gothic novels. However, the apparitions that haunt Grace are more than specters, they are representative of the old-world belief systems that have oppressed women for centuries—concepts and ideals that reinforce the old, misguided axiom that women have much to lose as mothers and daughters when they attempt to empower themselves through education and progressive thinking. As a fallen victim of the circumstances stacked against his caregivers, Alexander, Grace's deceased nephew, represents the loss of innocence. He is trapped, lost in the house after his demise, much like Grace herself is trapped after the tragedy. And just as Alexander represents lost innocence, Grace is a mirror of the multitude of mujeres in our world whose lives have been derailed, suspended, even terminated because of the cycles of abuse, neglect, and gender-based crimes that plague our society.

By taking the terrifying, even grim elements of classic gothic works and using them within the context of a contemporary piece meant for young adults, I am hoping to inform the text in a way that sheds light on the dark, grotesque conflicts and struggles women continue to face, conflicts and struggles that, though important, we are often hesitant to talk about with our young people. But our young adults are the ones we need to enlighten. They are our next leaders, our future teachers and healers.

I hope this book moves us all into action. When we consider the prevalence of gender-based crimes, how so many of them could have been prevented, and especially how often they go unchecked, it's important for all of us to advocate for true gender-equality. We need to revisit, renew, and continue to improve laws to provide protection for all women, including immigrant and Native American women. It is only by shedding light on the dark, oppressive, sometimes horrifying corners of our world, where neglect, abuse, and femicide take root, that we can begin to talk about how to better educate and train authorities and first responders on the nuances of domestic and intimate partner abuse. I hope this book elicits conversations that bring about real change—powerful change—because we need to make this world a fair and safe place for all women, regardless of who they are or where they come from.

Additional Back Matter about Sexual Assault

At its core, *Echoes of Grace* is a story of love, hope, loss, and self-actualization. Sexual assault and death are topics that may affect students deeply. Teachers are encouraged to plan for how they will address these topics in class. Seek out resources, both in-district and off-site, that may address coping with these issues. Your school's social worker or interventionist may have specific protocols regarding themes of harm and death. Be sure to seek their advice prior to introducing the novel. The themes in this story must be addressed and handled with deep sensitivity and open mindedness. Below are resources for those who may need support. These resources can be found at the end of the book as well.

RAINN and the National Sexual Assault Hotline

800-656-4673

rainn.org

Resources by state on violence against women, Office of Women's Health (OWH)

1-800-994-9662,

womenshealth.gov/relationships-and-safety/get-help/state-resources

The National Domestic Hotline

1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

thehotline.org

Family Violence Prevention and Services Program

(FVPSA), 1-800-537-2238

benefits.gov/benefit/626

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV)

1-303-839-1852

ncadv.org/resources

Casa de Esperanza

1-800-799-7233

esperanzaunited.org

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:

- Have you ever lost someone? Was it temporary or permanent? How did that loss make you feel?
- 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? Why are some family relationships complicated? How do you help and support your family? How do they help and support you?
- Why do you think learning about family stories is important? Have you ever asked your grandparents, aunts or uncles, or parents, or any adults in your life about what it was like for them when they were a kid? What did you learn?

- Define generational trauma. What are some examples? Who does it impact? What are some ways to combat generational trauma?

You may want to have students journal their responses to these questions or pose the final question as a KWL discussion and chart so that you can refer back to it throughout and after the reading of the book to further their thinking on the topic(s).

- **Bilingual Word Search:** This activity can be done prior to reading the novel and also during whole class or guided reading groups. *Echoes of Grace* contains many Spanish words, as well as English words with Spanish cognates. Present the students with a vocabulary list of content-specific words. Which ones do they know? Which ones do they not know? Invite them to look up the meanings of the words using a translation website such as www.spanishdict.com. Students may keep records of the translations. Once they've been introduced to the vocabulary, introduce the Easter Egg Hunt. The teacher may stuff the eggs with both Spanish and English vocabulary. During the reading, student(s) who identify the word or translation will pause the lesson and go on an Easter Egg Hunt. The first student to locate the proper egg wins a prize.

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)

- Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, title page, and dedications.
- What is the significance of the title, cover illustration, and dedication? What do you think you will be reading about?
- Read the book jacket—what will you be reading about? How does it match with the book cover?
- Read Guadalupe García McCall's biography on her website: <https://ggmccall.com/>. Encourage students to think about what could have been her inspiration for writing *Echoes of Grace*.
- Point out that this book contains Spanish words and phrases. Ask students why a book might be written this way. Why does it matter what language an author uses? How does a language change how a story is told or who hears it? What should you do when coming across an unfamiliar word? Show students the glossary in the back of the book and have them peruse it. Suggest that they can turn to this whenever they come across an unfamiliar word in Spanish. Also note that not all words will be found in the glossary. Students can keep a running log in their reading journals of new words found and their meanings.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

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

Have students read to find out:

- how death impacts families
- how young people show resilience through difficult times

- the complexities of gender-based violence and generational trauma

Encourage students to consider why the author, Guadalupe García McCall, 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

thorax, mulberry, Scribonia, caracoles, velorio, oleander, desiccate, eddy, mochila, disheveled, sedative, peculiar, elote, apparition, corroded, huisaches, mesquites, chancaquillas, invocations, remnant, sternum, ligaments, innards, inconsolably, premonitions, momentum, inconspicuous, matronly, lithely, solicitous, penchant, figment, manifestation, trepidation, repugnance, diminutive, languishing, astute, emanate, coherence, complacency, unwean, harlot, precarious, inconceivable, bemoaning, convulsant, sedately, incisors, repented, pinacates, billows, virile, cosmic, spigot, urraca, steeple, waywardness, sobriño, obsidian, distended, orderly, chrysalis, apex, swarthy, vises, deluge, psychedelic, effervescent, piochita, foliage, harlot, ligament, phosphorescent, cloying

Academic

nocturnal, perforated, agility, grimaces, palpitate, premonition, innards, decipher, vagrant, precipice, coaxing, contentious, inconspicuously, relent, detour, locomotive, traipsing, emaciated, ricochets, disintegrate, malnourished, volatile, putrid, punctuate, validating, dissipate, vicious, errant, pondered, devout, vehement, repentant, inconspicuous, confounded, conjure, cryptic, interloper, speculating, indisposed, unmoored, derailed, blasphemous, sterile, relent, waned, fumigates, paramount, ensconced, demurely, remnant, indeterminate, derailed, bulbous, contraception, contraceptives, estranged, revelations, convoluted, repressed, sedative, feverishly, altercation, dissipating, penetrating, terse, agile, fatalistic, interceding, inquiries, recesses, semblance, billows, taunt, naive, effervescent, swindlers, vicious, imply, confounding, supplications, appease, elusive, debilitating, rescind, dejected, iridescent, festering, ravenous, bludgeoned, decapitated, decimates, equilibrium, concussion, sordid, distress, amplified, perplexed, intrude, emanates, entities, convoluted, speculating, delusions, languid, lament, rosary, stagnant, incomprehensible, confounding, subside, vehemently, chortle, desolate, desiccates, dilapidated, destitution, blight, celestial, petrified, undulating

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)

Chapters 1-10

1. Who is the narrator of the novel? What can you infer about her thus far? Cite evidence from the text to support your answer.
2. When and where does the story begin?
3. What have you learned about Grace and Mercy in the first couple of chapters? What can you infer about their relationship thus far? Cite evidence from the text to support your answer.
4. How has the family changed since the death of Grace's mom and the birth of Alexander? What roles have shifted? How so?
5. Who is Alexander? Describe the relationship between Grace and Alexander.
6. Who is Guelita Rosa?
7. Why does appearance matter to Mercy?
8. How does Grace like to express herself artistically? How does it help her?
9. What are echoes in this story? Who does Grace inherit this gift from?
10. Why does Mercy worry about Grace looking after Alexander?
11. Who is Alexander's father and how did he treat Mercy?
12. What tragedy ends the first chapter?
13. Describe the relationship between Grace and her father.
14. How does Mercy react to her loss?
15. Why does the author show us three years earlier in the story? Where does Grace go?
16. How does Grace feel about prayer?
17. When are we first introduced to Abuela Estela? What do we learn about her?
18. Who are the people Grace starts to see after Alexander dies?
19. Who is Lucia and what role does she play in the story?

20. How old was Grace when she had her first echo?
21. How does Grace feel about men and dating?
22. What is Grace's first impression of Manuel?
23. Why does Grace not think Guelita Rosa is very maternal?

Chapters 11-20

24. Describe Abuela Estela's memory of her husband. Why was the relationship unhealthy?
25. Who is Daniel? What role does he play in the story?
26. Why do Manuel's actions make Grace feel uneasy?
27. What is the relationship between Mercy, dating, money, and affection?
28. Why is going to college so important to Grace? What does it symbolize for her?
29. How does Mercy react knowing that Grace registered Mercy for community college?

Chapters 21-37

30. Who is Don Baldomar? What role does he play in the story?
31. Where do Grace and Daniel have their first date? What happens on their date?
32. What traumatic event does Grace experience in Mexico? How do the police and Abuela Estela deal with Grace's attack?
33. When does Lucia return?
34. Why does Grace's dad suggest Grace go to a psychologist? How could this benefit Grace?
35. Why does Grace visit Abuela Estela's house with Mercy?
36. When Grace revisits Abuela Estela's house with Mercy, what does Grace learn about the attack she experienced in Mexico?
37. How were Grace's mom, Abuela Estela, and Lucia all killed? Who killed them? What actions did Grace's mom take to try and prevent these deaths?
38. What happens to Manuel?
39. What gift does Mercy discover at the end of the book? Who is she able to see?
40. What unites Alexander, Grace's mom, Abuela Estela, and Lucia?
41. What new adventure awaits Grace and Mercy at the end of the book?

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. Return to the book cover. What do the title and illustration mean to you after reading the book?
2. Analyze the structure in which the author, Guadalupe García McCall, writes the book. What

- literary devices are used? How does she use the concept of time? How do these choices impact the reading experience?
3. How does Grace change throughout the book? How does her growth relate to the echoes she experiences?
 4. Create a venn diagram that shows the differences and similarities between Guelita Rosa and Abuela Estela, and then the differences between Grace and Mercy. How do these characters impact the story?
 5. How does Grace and Mercy's relationship change throughout the book? What accounts for these changes?
 6. How do Grace and Mercy handle their grief? What are the different ways grief shows up in the text?
 7. Why does Grace say that men are "like lice. They serve no purpose, no purpose at all" (p. 130)? What informs Grace's stance on men? How does she navigate relationships with men over the course of the book?
 8. When Grace experiences being interviewed by the police officer, why do you think the officer is suspicious of her? Why is this an instance of victim blaming? Why is victim blaming harmful?
 9. How is sexual and romantic desire treated in the book? Cite evidence from the text.
 10. What guidance do the echoes provide Grace and her family throughout the course of the story?
 11. What does the caterpillar symbolize throughout the story?
 12. Why do Grace and Mercy choose to major in psychology? How do their experiences shape this choice?
 13. What role do boundaries play in Grace's relationship with Daniel? Why are boundaries important to have in all kinds of relationships?
 14. What do Grace's echoes help her learn about trauma and the impact it has on families?
 15. How is gender-based violence explored in this text? Connect this to real-world current events and community issues, nationally or locally.
 16. How did you feel about the way *Echoes of Grace* ended? Were you satisfied with the ending? Why or why not?
 17. What do you learn about love from this book? What different kinds of loves are represented?

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 do you think the author's message to the reader is? Think about Guadalupe García McCall's Author's Note. What do you think she wanted to tell young readers?
2. Have students make a text-to-self connection. How do you react to change? What is your role in your own family? What are ways you express yourself after an emotional event?
3. Have students make a text-to-text connection. If students have read her other novels, what is the relationship between *Echoes of Grace* and Guadalupe García McCall's other books? Did you think of any other books while you read *Echoes of Grace*? Why did you make those connections?
4. 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 *Echoes of Grace* make you think of that?
5. What is one big thought that you have after reading this book? Think about different character changes, the setting, and the relationships. What did you learn from reading *Echoes of Grace*?
6. How would you react if you experienced the memories of a beloved family member? Summarize your reaction and emotions by writing a free-verse poem.
7. Gender-based violence refers to harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender. It is rooted in gender inequality, the abuse of power, and harmful norms. What can we do to confront this kind of violence?
8. Grace learns from the past through her mother's experiences. What does generational trauma mean to you? What does family history mean to you? Think of the people in your life who you look to for guidance and support. How have these people helped you overcome obstacles and challenges?
9. If you could interview the author, Guadalupe García McCall, what questions would you ask her? Why? What do you want to know about her writing process and how she came up the ideas to write *Echoes of Grace*?

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. 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.
4. Have students illustrate or discuss a loss and/or major challenge they have experienced and had to deal with.

5. 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.
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 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.

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 Grace deal with her experiences of gender-based violence? What did you learn about girls, women, and femmes' exposure to harassment and harm by reading *Echoes of Grace*?
2. Loss is a theme in this story. Have you ever dealt with a loss of someone you love? Why do some people become reserved and emotionally closed off during times of sadness or trauma? What causes this retreat? What are some other grieving processes people usually go through when dealing with the loss of someone they love?
3. How does your family history inform your sense of self and the choices you make? What patterns do you notice in your family? Are there similar experiences you share?
4. It is often difficult for Grace to feel trusting of men. What does it take to trust someone and feel secure with them? Cite evidence from the text as well as personal experience.
5. What are some things you feel responsible for in your household? How do these responsibilities make you feel? Write a journal entry explaining these feelings.
6. Coping mechanisms are the strategies people often use in the face of stress and/or trauma to help manage painful or difficult emotions. Coping mechanisms can help people adjust to stressful events while helping them maintain their emotional well-being. What coping mechanism does Mercy use to manage her difficult feelings and circumstances? What are your coping mechanisms?

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)

- **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 novel and your chosen event to justify the similarities. What was it like to read about the characters' experiences in the story?
- **Examine the different literary elements that author Guadalupe García McCall uses throughout *Echoes of Grace*.** Have students come up with a list and select portions of the text that showcase a specific literary device (i.e. foreshadowing, flashback, metaphor, etc). Afterward, students can select one literary device and write about how that was impactful when reading *Echoes of Grace*. 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-figurative-language/>).
- **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.
- **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.
- **Creative Writing Activity: Write a conversation that resembles a short social media reel/video.** Group students in pairs to summarize a scene from the novel as a short chat/reel among two characters. Be sure to use hashtags to reflect the characters' mood during the scene.
- **Guelita Rosa tells Grace, "We don't have to repeat the bad patterns of those who birthed us" (p. 193).** In a persuasive essay, analyze this quote. Show how the characters in the novel struggle not to repeat patterns and whether they are able to break the cycles of the past.
- **Assign students different characters from *Echoes of Grace* 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 shown resilience in the face of adversity and ultimately what they learned from that character. Have students share 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?

- **Pretend you are creating a movie based on *Echoes of Grace*.** Who would you cast as each main character and what would you want the sets to look like? Make notes about these items and then describe the scenes you would be most excited to film.
- **Have students read about the rates of sexual assault today.** Students can pull from sources such as RAINN ([https://www.rainn.org/statistics/scope-problem#:~:text=Everyone%20is%20Affected%20by%20Sexual%20Violence&text=1%20out%20of%20every%206,completed%2C%202.8%25%20attempted\).&text=About%203%25%20of%20American%20men,completed%20rape%20in%20their%20lifetime](https://www.rainn.org/statistics/scope-problem#:~:text=Everyone%20is%20Affected%20by%20Sexual%20Violence&text=1%20out%20of%20every%206,completed%2C%202.8%25%20attempted).&text=About%203%25%20of%20American%20men,completed%20rape%20in%20their%20lifetime)). What is the message the student feels is most important to convey about sexual assault and gender-based violence today?

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)

- **There are many descriptions of Abuela Estela's home.** Draw your own interpretation of the house based on what you read. Share with the class. How does Abuela Estela's home play a role in the story?
- **Different plants are named throughout the story (e.g. crepe myrtles, bougainvillea, roses, vinca, and pansies).** Illustrate your interpretation of these plants. Students can also research the plants and present information on them along with their illustrations.
- **Use a movie or video platform to create a book trailer for the novel.** Have students refer to other book trailers for inspiration. What makes an effective book trailer? For ideas, check out this Creating Reading Excitement with Book Trailers lesson plan (<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroomresources/lesson-plans/bookreport-alternativecreating-c-30914.html>) by ReadWriteThink.org.
- **Envision a sequel to *Echoes of Grace* 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?

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)

- **If you could speak with a loved one who passed, who would they be and why?**
Journal your answer and create interview questions to ask this person.
- **Interview a friend or family member who has lost a loved one in the past.** Question their strategies for how they coped both before and after the loss. What lessons were learned? What memories will always be cherished?
- **Ask students to research colleges and universities.** Think about location, classes, finances, extracurriculars, etc. If not interested in colleges and universities, ask students to list goals they want to work toward and what is needed to accomplish those goals.
- **Connecting with family history.** Students can be encouraged to speak with family members about tough times when the family had to come together to overcome obstacles and/or emotionally difficult times.



Ordering Information

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Guadalupe García McCall is the best-selling author of *Summer of the Mariposas* and won the Pura Belpré Award for her first novel, *Under the Mesquite*. She was born in Mexico and moved to Texas as a young girl, keeping close ties with family on both sides of the border. She is a full-time author and abuelita and lives with her husband in South Texas. Find her online at ggmccall.com.

REVIEWS

"A nouveau gothic tale with roots as deep as mesquite and a heart as wide as the Texas sky." –*Kirkus Reviews*, **starred review**

"In this elaborately plotted gothic mystery set in modern-day South Texas, García McCall (*All the Stars Denied*) expertly weaves together the personal and family history of an 18-year-old with an inherited ability known as echoes—"a kind of woman's intuition with sights and sounds and smells"—as she pieces together heartbreaking past events in the aftermath of a present-day family tragedy. – *Publishers Weekly*, **starred review**

"In this riveting contemporary novel with a splash of magical realism, García McCall explores the nature of sisterhood between Graciela ("Grace") and Mercedes ("Mercy") Torres, as well as shared intergenerational trauma, familial dynamics, and love when all seems lost." –*Booklist*

"McCall weaves Mexican American and border town culture and lore into a realistic, raw, poignant portrayal of family tragedy, trauma, grief, and the healing power of facing the truth with a loved one at your side." –*The Horn Book*

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