

When a Woman Rises

written by Christine Eber

About the Book

Genre: Adult

Format: Hardcover
208 pages, 6 x 9

ISBN: 9781941026847

Reading Level: Grades 12+

Interest Level: Grades 12+

Guided Reading Level: Adult

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:
Adult

Lexile™ Measure: Adult

*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

Themes: Animals, Breaking Gender Barriers, Courage, Families, Latino/Hispanic/Mexican Interest, LGBTQ, Mexico, Persistence/Grit, Poverty

Resources on the web:

[leeandlow.com/books/when-a-woman-rises](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/when-a-woman-rises)

[leeandlow.com/books/cuando-una-mujer-se-levanta/](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/cuando-una-mujer-se-levanta/)

SYNOPSIS

Magdalena summons the soul of her friend, Lucia, who migrated north to find work and disappeared. She tells daughter Verónica how they yearned to be teachers. How poverty and gender roles stole away their dreams. Yet, each woman remained true to herself, Lucia as a Zapatista leader and curandera, Magdalena as a weaver and community organizer. But poverty is cruel.

When a Woman Rises is also available in Spanish, *Cuando una mujer se levanta* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/cuando-una-mujer-se-levanta/>).

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 *Cuando una mujer se levanta*, the Spanish edition of *When a Woman Rises*

This novel has its roots in my efforts over the past forty years to understand what is important to Maya women in Highland Chiapas, Mexico, and how as a non-Maya woman from the United States I might join with them to create a world where everyone has the right to live with dignity.

I first came to Chiapas in 1984 to volunteer for a few weeks in the Hospital San Carlos in Altamirano, a town in the lowlands of Chiapas. Before doing research for my Ph.D. in anthropology, I felt I should learn not only about traditions and culture, but about how Mayas live day to day and the problems that they confront. This experience and others I had during my time in Chiapas, led me to change the theme of my research from collectives of women weavers to women's experiences with and perspectives on their own and others' ritual and problem drinking.

I finally returned in 1987 to begin my research in Chenalhó in the highlands of Chiapas, where this novel takes place. I had the good fortune to live for a year with Antonio and Margarita, a Tsotsil-Maya couple who took me in, even though it was unusual for a woman from the United States to live in their community. The couple didn't drink which was a help to me; life in their home was peaceful, not chaotic as it can be in a house where people drink a lot.

In Margarita's and Antonio's home I learned about the importance of women's work in the home and men's in the fields and the value placed on each. I learned to respect food in a way I never had before. Once I spilled a pot of beans in the fire. Horrified, I went to scoop them up and throw them out the door, when Margarita came running and helped me pick up each bean, wash it, and return it to the pot.

I remember how her father, Pablo, ate fresh corn; he took each kernel of corn off the cob and put it in his mouth. My tradition had been to bring the cob to my mouth and eat several kernels at once.

I brought several books with me when I came to live with Margarita and Antonio. They were like intruders in their house which contained only the basic objects for survival, like cooking pots and tools for weaving and farming. One day Margarita and I were talking about books and she said: "Books don't matter to us. What matters is that our children don't have enough to eat, get sick, and die without our being able to save them."

I asked myself every day what I had to offer to the people of Chenalhó. Before I returned to the United States in 1989 to write up my research, I asked Margarita what I could do to give something back to her and others in her community for all they had given me. She didn't miss a beat before replying, "Please help sell our weavings in the United States. We can't get much money for them here and we don't have other ways to earn cash." With those words, Margarita gave me a cargo – a role of community service – that I have been able to continue with the help of friends in the U.S. through the all-volunteer organization, Weaving for Justice.

When a Woman Rises

Teacher's Guide leeandlow.com/books/when-a-woman-rises

Before returning to the U.S., I talked with a fellow anthropologist from Mexico, Graciela Freyermuth Enciso who told me: "It would be good if you don't become like those U.S. anthropologists who come here to Mexico, do their studies, and then go back home and never return their writings to us in Spanish." I never forgot Graciela's words.

In 1995 my research in Chiapas was published in the book, *Women and Alcohol in a Highland Maya Town: Water of Hope, Water of Sorrow*. Although my work was out in English, I didn't stop trying to get the book translated and published in Spanish. With a lot of knocking on doors and asking for funding, the publication was eventually realized, but it took thirteen years.

Agua de esperanza, agua de pesar: Mujeres y alcohol en un pueblo maya de los altos de Chiapas, is probably my most important academic contribution to anthropology. But I also wanted to write something that would be accessible to the people I had written about. I knew that most of my Maya women friends didn't know how to read. Even those who did, didn't have the time or money to spend on books. Still, I hoped that their children and grandchildren who attended school might be interested in reading a novel about their people. Perhaps they might even read it out loud to their elders.

After retiring from teaching in 2011, I had time to write a novel for my friends in Chenalhó that I hoped would be true to their lives, as I saw them. *When a Woman Rises*, the English edition of *Cuando una mujer se levanta*, came out in 2018. To write it I went through my fieldwork journals since the 1980s, where I had recorded conversations with many women friends. Margarita stands out among them for having imparted to me much of her wisdom, albeit always reminding me that her ideas were just hers; she didn't speak for anyone else.

My comadre was in my mind and heart when I wrote the character Magdalena. Some incidents in Magdalena's life are inspired by things that occurred in Margarita's family and community and by rumors and gossip which filled my ears around the cooking fires in several other homes. I couldn't have written this novel without Margarita's courage to welcome me into her home and be willing to teach someone who came into her life like a child, unable to speak her language, and not knowing the rules of comportment in her society.

I modeled other characters in the novel in part on real people I have met over the past four decades of involvement with women's weaving collectives, Zapatista support bases, and Maya youth, whose dreams of an education were aided by support from Weaving for Justice. But most of the characters in the novel I created from the variety of personalities and life choices I had observed in my research and friendships in Chenalhó over the years.

After *When a Woman Rises* came off the press I was eager to start the process of preparing a Spanish edition, not wanting to wait thirteen years as I had with my book on alcohol. I wanted to return the novel to the original people of Chiapas in Spanish so they could be reminded of the value of their lives, cultures, and talents. I wanted to invite them to ignite the spark of creativity that they carry inside and perhaps from that record their own stories in novels, art, movies or some other creative means. For several decades Maya writers in Chiapas and throughout Mesoamerica have been

writing poetry, stories, and novels in their own languages and in Spanish. I hoped my novel might foster dialogue between Tsotsil and Tzeltal-Maya writers and those like myself, writing from outside the culture.

A big challenge to having my novel available in Spanish was that even if a Maya person who knew how to read Spanish wanted to read it, they couldn't afford to buy it. I would need to give it away. Being on a limited income myself, I faced the challenge of finding funds to translate and print it. I decided to do a "Go-fund-me" campaign in order to be able to give copies of the book away to interested Mayas and organizations working with them. My campaign – "Into Mayas' Hands" – stated that my main motive was to challenge the legacy of colonialism that had kept the original people of Chiapas from having access to education and to books written about them. I also stated that I hoped that the novel would open conversations about the values and beliefs in the culture of Chenalhó, as well as the tension between the different visions of the world, within and outside the municipality.

The many generous people who donated to the campaign made it possible to print 2,000 copies of the novel at The Editorial Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, the main city in the highlands. The book came off the press in 2020 just as COVID-19 spread through the city and rural areas. It took several years for the copies to move into the hands of individuals and organizations, but by 2024, all 2,000 copies had found homes in Chiapas and some in Guatemala.

Now, in 2025, thanks to the efforts of a wonderful team at Lee and Low Books, *Cuando una mujer se levanta* is available to readers of Spanish in the United States.

My goal in both editions of this novel has been to write about the people of Chenalhó with depth and compassion. I hope that they find themselves in these pages. I also hope that you, reader -- whoever and wherever you are -- find characters in this novel, much like yourself, unique, and worthy of understanding, respect, and empathy.

About the Tsotsil Maya

The Tsotsil Maya are an Indigenous group from Mexico. The Tsotsil live predominantly in central Chiapas of southern Mexico. After the Spanish conquest, the Tsotsil people were stripped of their lands and rights and exploited for centuries as laborers. With the collapse of coffee prices in the 1980s, along with unfair labor conditions, sustainable employment has been very hard to find. Many Tsotsil people have had to leave their traditional culture and villages behind in search for a better life in the big cities in Mexico and in the United States. Like with many other indigenous ethnic groups around the world, this has put the Tsotsil people in a precarious predicament as they hold onto their culture and ways of living. For more on the legacy and lives Tsotsil people, refer to <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Maya-people>.

To keep informed about current conditions in Chiapas, especially the courageous efforts of individuals and communities to defend themselves and their territories against increasing threats from criminal organizations readers can visit these websites:

- Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas Human Rights Center: <https://www.frayba.org.mx>

When a Woman Rises

Teacher's Guide leeandlow.com/books/when-a-woman-rises

- the website of Schools for Chiapas: <https://schoolsforchiapas.org>
- Las Abejas: <https://www.acteal.org>
- EZLN: <https://www.ezln.org.mx> and <https://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/>

Additional Background & Resources

Below are resources for those who may be affected or who wish to support someone through addiction and mental health issues.

- Suicide Prevention: suicidepreventionlifeline.org (1-800-273-8255)
The Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals in the United States.
- The Trevor Project: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org> (1-866-488-7386)
The Trevor Projects focuses on suicide prevention efforts among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth.
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): [samhsa.gov/](https://www.samhsa.gov/)
SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities.
- Mental Health Awareness Month: <https://www.nami.org/Get-Involved/Awareness-Events/Mental-Health-Awareness-Month>
The month of May is Mental Health Awareness Month. This initiative aims to fight stigma, provide support, educate the public and advocate for policies that support people with mental illness and their families.

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 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 (suicide, substance abuse, etc). 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 grief. 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:

- 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?
- Think about the different Indigenous communities in the state that you live in. What do you know about their histories?
- If applicable: What tribal nation do you belong to? What does belonging to your tribal nation mean to you?
- Why do you think learning family stories is important? Have you ever asked your grandparents, aunts or uncles, parents, or other adults in your life about what it was like for them when they were kids? What did you learn?
- How can storytelling influence a person's life? What kind of stories do you wish to see more of in the world?
- Describe a time you had a significant change in your life. What caused the change? How did the change make you feel? Over time did you adjust to the change? Why or why not?
- Ask students why it's important to acknowledge traditions and cultures that are different from their own. Why is it essential to learn about different cultures in the United States and around the world even if you do not identify with that particular culture or tradition?
- As a hook for readers, consider showing students a video of Christine Eber discussing Tsotsil Maya women, posted on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/tY712qXSg2g>

Note: This book is meant for grades 12 and up.

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)

- Talk about the title of the book, the book cover image, and the map of Lokan. 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?

Setting a Purpose for Reading

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

Have students read to find out:

- how young people show resilience through difficult times
- about the cultural dynamics of Tsotsil Maya communities
- what friendship means to Magdalena and how it changes over the course of the story
- the importance of the gift of healing in communities
- how faith and spirituality can influence a person's life
- the impact of Zapatistas in Mexico

Encourage students to consider why the authors Christine Eber, 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 words can be found in the glossary at the end of the book, 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

Agave, antsetike, antsil vinik, atole, chayote, comadre, compadre, comal, compañeros, costal, Doña, elote, j'ilol, joyol, kaxlan, kexol, lum, masa, matz, mestizo, nagual, petate, pinole, pox, tamales, tsotsil, Zapatistas, zocalo, copal, castellano, apostle, genuflected, ceiba, hymns, Zapatista, rectory, promotora, paramilitary, sentries

Academic

embroider, bartered, cholera, bough, veer, gourd, chasm, defied, callouses, commissioned, loom, relented, boasting, diocese, ladled, prophecy, fathom, linguist, chasm, despair, scripture, tethered, parched, anguished, quarreling, convoy, crevice, migrate, condolences

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. How long has Lucia been missing?
2. What is feast of the souls?
3. Why does Magdalena recount Lucia's story?
4. What does being a Believer mean?
5. Who did Magdalena live with as a child?
6. Who did Lucia live with as a child?
7. What happened to Lucia's father?
8. What was Lucia's grandfather known for?
9. What are cargo dreams?
10. Describe Lucia's first cargo dream in your own words. How did this dream impact Lucia?
11. What happened to cousin Rosa?
12. How many girls and boys graduated on graduation day?
13. Why did many children drop out of school before 6th grade?
14. Why did Magdalena and Lucia want to go to San Cristóbal after graduation day?
15. Who is Doña Dolores and what does she offer Lucia?
16. How did Hilario feel about Lucia continuing her education in San Cristóbal? Why?
17. Who is Rodrigo? Describe his relationship with Verónica.
18. What helped Verónica heal after her marriage to Rodrigo?
19. How are hugs treated in Magdalena and Verónica's community?
20. How do Magdalena and Lucia meet Madre Ester?
21. What does Verónica want to buy with her first paycheck?

22. What languages do Magdalena and Lucia speak?
23. What is the significance of the high voice?
24. How did Victorio get a scar on his face?
25. Who in Magdalena's family wanted to marry Lucia? What happened during the joyol?
26. Why does Magdalena see Lucia as a different kind of woman?
27. What is the relationship between the Jaguar woman and Lucia?
28. Why does Lucia start drinking pox more heavily?
29. How did Lucia feel about Madre Ester?
30. What was the saddest day in Lucia's life? What circumstances led to this?
31. Why did Madre Ester leave Lokan?
32. What is the significance of the Zapatista co-op? Why did Lucia have to pray for the store?
33. Why did Magdalena consider getting an abortion when she was pregnant with Verónica?
34. Why did Magdalena and Lucia join the Zapistas?
35. Who is Ángel de Jesús and why is he significant to Lucia?
36. What does Magdalena hope Verónica learns from Lucia's story?
37. Where did Lucia go when she left in October 1997?
38. Describe Magdalena's nightmare the last day of her fast.
39. How long does it take to complete the telling of Lucia's story?
40. How did Verónica choose to celebrate after she finishes writing Lucia's story?
41. When and how did Lucia die?
42. How did Verónica feel writing the last part of Lucia's story?
43. How do people in Lokan say goodbye to Lucia?
44. What job opportunities did Verónica get and which she did she choose? Why did she choose it?
45. What role does Doña Dolores play at the end of the story?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

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

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

1. Return to the book cover. What do the title and illustration mean to you after reading the book?
2. A frame story is a literary technique that serves as a companion piece to a story within a story. It is where an introductory or main narrative sets the stage for a second narrative or set of shorter stories. What is the frame story in the book? How does it allow for other stories to be

- told? Why do you think Christine Eber chose this literary device? How do these choices impact the reading experience?
3. Describe the dynamic between Magdalena and Lucia. Support your descriptions with evidence from the text.
 4. How does the Magdalena teach her daughter about the importance of different kinds of knowledge and ways of living?
 5. What does *When a Woman Rises* teach readers about the importance of community? How does tradition connect to the power of community and honoring past ways of living in the present?
 6. Have you had a parent, a grandparent, a teacher, a peer, or an elder that has been impactful in your life? What did they teach you? How did you show them respect? What kind of stories did they tell you? How are they meaningful to you?
 7. How do difference religious and spiritual beliefs play a role in *When a Woman Rises*? What do you learn from these beliefs?
 8. What is Verónica's significance throughout the story? Who and what does she represent?
 9. What different feelings come up for Magdalena as she tells Lucia's story? Support your descriptions with evidence from the text.
 10. Analyze the evolution of the character Lucia. Is there any evidence over the course of the novel that reveals a different layer to her character? How so? How not? Provide examples from the story.
 11. Interpret and analyze the meaning of the song lyrics from "I'm a drunk woman, I'm a drunk girl" (p122-123).
 12. Magdalena believes "we need the old ways as well as the new ways to make sense of all the bad and suffering in the world" (p134). Do you agree with Magdalena? Why or why not? Give examples.
 13. Interpret and analyze Lucia's prayer against envy (p143-150). Refer to Christine Eber's the note on the copyright page.
 14. How are mestizos positioned in this story?
 15. How does being a Zapatista impact men and women differently?
 16. The story is told from Magdalena's perspective. How would the story have been different if it were told from Lucia's perspective? Verónica's perspective? How does the perspective of the narration affect how you experience the story?
 17. How did you feel about the way *When a Woman Rises* ended? Were you satisfied with the ending? Why or why not?
 18. Christine Eber is a trained anthropologist. Discuss how an anthropological background impacts how the story is written. Refer to Diane Rus' introduction.

19. What does Magdalena learn about herself through telling Lucia's story?

20. What does Verónica learn about herself through writing Lucia's story?

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 authors' message to the reader is? Think about possible motivations to write the book. What do you think they wanted to tell her readers?
2. Have students make a text-to-self connection. How do you react to change? What is your role in your own community? What do Magdalena and Lucia's experiences, thoughts, and feelings mean to you?
3. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books while you read *When a Woman Rises*? 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 There's *When a Woman Rises* 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 *When a Woman Rises*?
6. Loss can result in deep sorrow and harmful behavior. Have you or someone you know experienced loss? What behaviors did you notice? Why is loss a powerful emotion? What are some ways get support as someone processes their loss?
7. If you could interview the author, Christine Eber, what questions would you ask her? Why? What do you want to know about her writing process and how they came up the ideas to write *When a Woman Rises*?

Multilingual Learners 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 each chapter as they read the book. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Have students give a short talk about what community and heritage means to them, and how they have overcome obstacles in their life with support of people who are important to them.

4. 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 *When a Woman Rises* show positive community relationships? What are the qualities of a positive community relationship? What are the different ways that they show respect and care to one another? Students can brainstorm ideas on chart paper that can be presented and accessible for the whole class. Alternatively, students can create a word cloud and see what qualities come up the most and are the largest (<https://www.wordclouds.com/>).
2. What one part of your heritage, culture, or identity are you most proud? Do you think your school or classroom has been a safe place to share that part of yourself? Why or why not?
3. Magdalena says Lucia learned to accept loss as a part of life (p133). Why is it important to accept loss? What can loss teach us?
4. How does the Mayan concept of love inform your own understanding of what love is?
5. Storytelling is used throughout *When a Woman Rises*. How does listening to a story make you feel? What do you like about listening to stories? What's it like to listen to a story versus telling a story? What kinds of skills do you need to do those things? Have students work with a partner and tell each other a story of their choosing. Afterwards, students can reflect on what it felt like to listen to their partner's story and then tell their own story.

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)

- **Assign students in groups for an in-depth character study analyzing Magdalena and Lucia.** Have the groups and/or partnerships brainstorm about a guiding question: What and how can this character teach us? Encourage students to think about how these characters have made mistakes and also have done good things in the book, and ultimately what they learned from these characters. 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? Students can present their findings to the class.
- **Students can complete a critical essay.** Have students identify 3 major themes of the story and use details from the novel to support each theme. Why did students select those 3 themes? How did they come to understand that they were the most important events?
- **Have students summarize the Mayan way of understanding love, as it is presented in the novel.** In your opinion, what does this conceptualization reveal about Magdalena and Lucia's culture? Compare and contrast this definition to your own cultural definitions and understanding of love.
- **The title of the book comes from the saying, "When a woman rises, no man is left behind." (p. 173).** In a persuasive essay, analyze this quote. Show whether the characters in the text demonstrate the message of this quote.
- **Lucia and Magdalena have an significant impact on one another.** How has a family member or friend close to you impacted your life? Have you had a friend, family member, or other person who really changed your life? What were some things that person did that were significant to you? Students can write a poem, essay, or display their work in any other visual format that works best for their learning needs.
- **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 with *When a Woman Rises*?

Social Studies

(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)

- **Day of the Dead is an important tradition in Mexico and in Maya communities discussed in the novel which readers can explore further through reading or films.** Have students watch the documentary, “May Faces in a Smoking Mirror” (<https://www.mayafaces.com/>). The documentary “Maya Faces in a Smoking Mirror” features a scene at a cemetery in Chenalhó during Day of the Dead. Analyze how Day of the Dead celebrations have grown in importance in Latin American communities in the U.S, and what this celebration means in the novel.
- **Design a lesson or unit on Tsotsil Maya communities.** Learning goals should highlight key aspects including, but not limited to, historical origins as well as contemporary living conditions, religious demographics, gender roles, sources of labor, educational opportunities, and understandings of sexuality.
- **Many Tsotsil people, but not all, live in Chamula, San Cristóbal de las Casas and Zinacantán in the Mexican state of Chiapas.** In addition to Tsotsiles in Chenalhó, they live in other municipalities, too. Create a map of these three different municipalities. Note the similarities and differences between the three places.
- **The Zapatista Army of National Liberation is a revolutionary movement for Indigenous autonomy.** The Zapatista movement has influenced grassroots activism and social movements since its inception in 1994. Their main goal is to combat centuries of poverty and inequality, racism, and exploitation that have directly impacted Indigenous communities in Chiapas. As a hook for readers, watch: https://youtu.be/pTzC_QqSqw. Design a lesson or unit on Zapatista Army of National Liberation. Pay particular attention to the founding of the movement, the political goals of the movement, and its relationship to other social movements.
- **Take a virtual tour of “At Home: A Day in a Tsotsil Life”** (<https://artsandculture.google.com/story/at-home-a-day-in-a-Tsotsil-life-museo-del-chocolate/jQUx91rGpzBLGQ?hl=en>). After students and their families have experienced the photo series, select a medium of your choice to share what was learned. This share-out can be done in numerous forms: iMovie, YouTube Video, Twitter story, Instagram story, Facebook photo montage, Facebook Live (during your trip), diary entry, PowerPoint, brochure, etc. . . Students and families can get creative!
- **Tsotsil writer, Ruperta Bautista, won the 2024 Prize for Indigenous Literature of the Americas for her first novel, in both Spanish and Tsotsil, *Ixbalam-ek* / *Estella jaguar*.** Ruperta is originally from the municipality of Huixtán. Research this award, and past honorees, in addition to finding the book online or at a local library. What do you think is the significance of this book? How is this book important to the Tsotsil community?

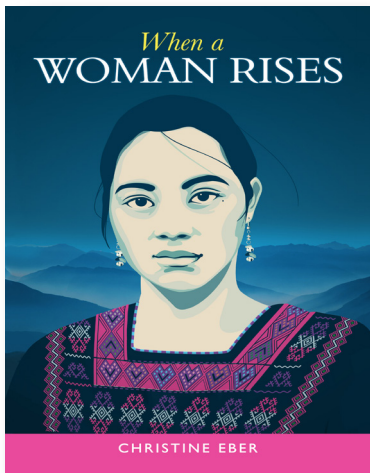
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(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(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 a scrapbook honoring the life and legacy of Lucia.** Think about all the kinds of mementos you would put in a scrapbook for her. Use pictures from magazines, online resources, and items from home to create a scrapbook. Be sure to have students explain the significance of what they've included.
- **Encourage students to draw another cover for the current book, *When a Woman Rises*.** What would students want to see on the cover? What was the most important or exciting thing that resonated with them in the book that they would want to show potential readers? Students can create alternate covers based on their reactions after reading the story.
- **Conduct a film study related to *When a Woman Rises*. Consider watching the following films:**
 - “Tote-Abuelo,” a documentary film by María Sojob, of Chenalhó, Chiapas about her grandfather and the concept of love in Tsotsil-culture. Available at <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt12576364/>
 - “Maya Faces in a Smoking Mirror”/“Caras mayas en un espejo humeante,” directed by Bill Jungels and produced with Christine Eber. The film is a 76 minute documentary in both an English and Spanish version about how young Mayas in Chiapas are responding to rapid cultural change and globalization. Two of the people featured in the film are women from Chenalhó. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzB2YxSsTe4>
 - “Broken Branches, Fallen Fruit / Ramas rotas, frutas caídas.” Subtitles in English (also in Spanish for 3 of the documentaries) This film explores what immigration looks like from the perspectives of a Tsotsil family in Chenalhó Chiapas, where Cuando una mujer se levanta takes place.
 - “Prayer for the Weavers: Toward the Mountain,” a film by Judith Gleason. Filmmakers Library, 1999. Prayer is an important theme in Cuando una mujer se levanta that is explored in this film. A prayer weaves through the film which was made in San Cristóbal de Las Casas where a group of weavers from Chenalhó come to talk about their lives and a recent massacre in their municipality.
 - “A Maya Celebration” by Janet Darrow is a 20 minute film focused on the inauguration of a meeting house for a weaving group in Chenalhó, where the novel takes place. To view navigate to: <https://vimeo.com/176198628> and type in password: ChiapasApril2016.
- **Watch the slideshow by Christine Eber, “Maya Weavers: Envy in Times of Struggle and Hope. Challenges of Working Collectively in Chiapas, Mexico,” a talk by Christine Eber sponsored by *Aztlander Magazine of the Ancient Americas* on youtube at: <https://youtu.be/EyYtpA6aivA>.** Have students write a reaction essay about the talk and connect it to *When a Woman Rises*.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christine Eber lived for a year, in 1987, with a family in San Pedro Chenalhó, doing fieldwork for her PhD in Anthropology. She shared daily life with women and their families, witnessing the difficulties they faced. It changed her life. Now, as a respected anthropologist, she continues to work with the indigenous women of Chiapas, visiting communities on a regular basis and supporting the woman-organized weaving collectives. She lives in Las Cruces, New Mexico, with her husband, Mike, and dog Sami.

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