

## Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People

written and illustrated by Aixa Pérez-Prado

### About the Book

**Genre:** Biography

**Format:** Hardcover, 40 pages  
8-1/2 x 11

**ISBN:** 9780892394708

**Reading Level:** Grade 5

**Interest Level:** Grades 1–8

**Guided Reading Level:** V  
**Spanish Guided Reading Level:** W

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

**Lexile™ Measure:** N/A

\*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

**Themes:** Bilingual, Biography / Memoir, Courage, Cultural Diversity, Diversity, Dreams & Aspirations, Dual Language, History & Civics, Identity / Self Esteem / Confidence, Latinx / Latino / Hispanic, Music, Nonfiction, Optimism / Enthusiasm, Overcoming Obstacles, Persistence / Grit, Spanish, Women's History

**Resources on the web:**

[leeandlow.com/books/mercedes-sosa-voice-of-the-people](http://leeandlow.com/books/mercedes-sosa-voice-of-the-people)

[leeandlow.com/books/mercedes-sosa-la-voz-del-pueblo](http://leeandlow.com/books/mercedes-sosa-la-voz-del-pueblo)

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

### SYNOPSIS

*Have you ever heard a song that made your heart soar?  
A canción that captured your corazón?  
A voice so powerful that it made you feel ready to change the world?  
This is the story of a singer whose voice sailed through the air like the wings of a condor, inspiring people everywhere.*

Written and illustrated by Aixa Pérez-Prado, this is the powerful biography of Argentinean folksinger and human rights advocate Mercedes Sosa. Affectionately known as La Negra, Mercedes used her musical talents and powerful voice to speak out against poverty and inequality in her home country. In the face of a cruel dictatorship, Mercedes refused to be silenced. She bravely stepped on stage to lend a “voice to the voiceless” with uplifting songs of empathy and empowerment. Her unforgettable music and messages of hope continue to resonate with people across the world to this day.

## BACKGROUND

### Afterword from Aixa Pérez-Prado

#### **Born to Be Free**

"Mercedes Sosa was born on Argentine Independence Day—July 9, 1935—in the province of Tucumán. It is the smallest province in Argentina, located in the northwest of the country. She grew up in a modest and happy home with siblings and a loving family of French, Spanish, and Indigenous ancestry. Her parents, Ema and Ernesto, worked as a washerwoman and a laborer. She credited them with keeping their family rich with love despite living in poverty. Mercedes often remembered that on Saturdays when her father got paid, her mother would make them noodles with butter. Sometimes it was the only hot meal they had all week. When there was nothing to eat, her mother would take the children to play in a nearby park at mealtimes so they wouldn't smell other people's food. As a child and teen, Mercedes loved to sing and dance. She later learned to play the bombo, an indigenous drum, as well as the guitar, piano, and charango. Although she never wrote her own music, many musicians asked her to sing their songs, some writing with her voice in mind. Her version of songs such as "Solo le pido a Dios" by León Greco and "Alfonsina y el mar" by Félix Luna and Ariel Ramirez made them iconic.

#### **A Woman of Many Names**

Born Haydée Mercedes Sosa, she was called Marta by her family and friends. She began her career after winning a singing contest under the name "Gladys Osorio" in an attempt to keep her participation hidden from her disapproving parents. She was eventually called Mercedes professionally, then given the nickname La Negra—"The Black One"—by her fans. In Argentina, many people of mixed and Indigenous ancestry, or people with dark hair, are referred to as "Negro/a." Mercedes adopted and embraced this nickname, which emphasized her Indigenous roots. Later, she was called the Voice of Latin America and the Mother of Latin America by many who credited her with being a powerful voice who used music and song to fight for freedom and justice.

#### **A New Voice**

Mercedes and her husband, Manuel Oscar Matus, became important players in the Nuevo Cancionero movement in Argentina, which stated as its goal that songs should come from the common people and that music should exist to speak the truth without fear. The music was inspired by the many Indigenous and rural people who began to flood the big cities in the 1960s and 1970s as the poverty in rural areas was so great that they could not survive. The struggles and repression they faced were fundamental to the social movement that became associated with the music. As part of the Nuevo Cancionero movement, Mercedes began to be censored by authorities who did not like her message of social justice. Other important musicians who were part of this movement included Armando Tejada Gómez and Tito Francia.

#### **Loneliness and Depression**

Although Mercedes had a successful career as an artist and was a loving mother to son Fabián Matus, she sometimes suffered from anxiety and depression. After Oscar left her, she felt abandoned and struggled financially. She started borrowing money from friends and drinking heavily. However, once she realized how alcohol was affecting her, she stopped drinking. Mercedes credited her

partner Pocho Mazzitelli with helping her career blossom again. When he passed away, she felt a profound loss that accompanied her throughout her life. In later life, she suffered further bouts of depression and spent several months in bed at one point. With the help of prayers and well wishes from her fans, friends, and family; medication; and treatment by doctors, Mercedes got back on her feet.

### **Fear and Courage**

During the 1970s, Argentina was plagued with political instability, a high rate of inflation, unemployment, and debt. Many people were struggling to make a living, and there was a feeling of unrest in the country. The military wanted to restore order, and, in 1976, a junta led by General Jorge Videla came to power. During what is now commonly known as the Dirty War—a term considered problematic, as the events described involve state-sponsored terrorism rather than a traditional war—the government targeted people who were seen as a threat to its power. It's estimated that around thirty thousand people “disappeared” during this time. These disappearances involved torture, imprisonment, and even killings.

Mercedes Sosa received anonymous letters telling her to leave the country for her own good. Her music was banned from many radio stations, and places she performed were threatened with closure. Finally, at a concert in La Plata in 1979, she was arrested on stage by military police after singing a prohibited song that talked of injustice by the military. The song was “La carta” by Violeta Parra. Mercedes's son, Fabián, and the entire audience were also detained. International pressure by fans led to Mercedes's quick release. Still, she did not want to leave Argentina and continued trying to perform. However, after several more occasions where her shows were canceled and she felt threatened, Mercedes finally decided to go into exile. She moved to Paris and later Madrid, where she could continue to sing without fear. She was well received in other European countries, and her international fame grew during this time. But, Mercedes longed to return to Argentina.

### **The Return of Hope**

Mercedes returned to Argentina in 1982, shortly before the military dictatorship collapsed. The Argentine public welcomed her with great enthusiasm and excitement. Her return inspired hope and courage in other musicians and artists. Mercedes continued to sing her songs of protest and social justice as well as to expand her repertoire. She began to perform with many other musicians, who sang different styles of music, including rock, jazz, pop, and hip-hop. Her son, Fabián Matus, introduced her to new and upcoming singers with varied musical styles. Mercedes performed with Joan Baez, Andrea Bocelli, Charly García, León Gieco, René Pérez, Carlos Santana, Shakira, and Sting, among others. She was always looking for new kinds of music and ways to express herself through song and was always supportive of young and upcoming artists.

### **Honors and Awards**

Throughout her life, Mercedes performed in many countries and in many prestigious locations, including Carnegie Hall and the Vatican. She won several Latin Grammy awards, as well as the Konex Platinum Award for Best Female Folklore Singer and the Konex Brilliant Award for Best Popular Artist of the Decade. She also received various awards for her music and activism from countries including Peru, Brazil, and Ecuador. In 1996 she received the Conseil International de la Musique-

## Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People

Teacher's Guide [leeandlow.com/books/mercedes-sosa-voice-of-the-people](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/mercedes-sosa-voice-of-the-people)

UNESCO award. This award is given to musicians whose work contributes to peace and international cooperation through music. The jury noted that they were giving Mercedes this honor not only for her brilliant career but also in recognition of her continuous defense of human rights in Argentina, even during the darkest times of its dictatorship. Mercedes became the UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Latin America and the Caribbean. She said that this was the most important of the awards and honors she received in her lifetime because it allowed her to be a spokeswoman for children in need."

### Bibliography

For the complete bibliography, see the backmatter of *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People*.

### The Dirty War/La Guerra Sucia

La Guerra Sucia, also known as the Dirty War, began in March 1976, when Argentina's democracy fell to a military coup, the junta, that led the country into a brutal dictatorship. Thousands of people disappeared or murdered. Argentinian people lost freedom of speech and civil rights. For more information on Argentina's Dirty War, see the Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs (<https://www.carnegiecouncil.org/media/article/the-dirty-war-and-the-history-of-democracy-in-argentina>).

### Peace Linguistics

*Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People* is written through the lens of Peace Linguistics or with Peace Linguistics and Peace Education in mind. Peace Linguistics positions language as a catalyst for global peace. Peace education instills a sense of identity rooted in peace and inclusion across learners of all ages.

Drawing from the insights of researcher Rebecca Oxford (2014), the language of peace not only equips learners with the vocabulary for discussing peace but also imparts transformative qualities crucial for global competency. Language can convey stories of resilience and solidarity. These qualities encompass an open mind, the ability to perceive from multiple perspectives, and the skills to effectively manage conflict while promoting social justice (<https://www.peacejusticestudies.org/chronicle/peace-linguistics-and-communication-for-a-better-world/>).

### Additional Teaching Resources for *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People* from author and illustrator Aixa Pérez-Prado

Author and illustrator Aixa Pérez-Prado created additional materials for *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People* on her website (<https://www.aixaperezprado.com/teaching-resources>). These activities use picture books in a way that promotes peace, values diversity, and creates a climate of empathy and understanding based on a foundation of peace linguistics. All the activities that will be included on this page work for both language learners and native speakers and aim to encourage creativity, imagination, global competency, and sustainability.

## 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:

- Who are your favorite musicians or singers? What are your favorite songs by those singers? What do they like about their music? Do you know of any musicians from different countries? What about South America?
- How can music be powerful? In what ways can music help create change? How does music make other people feel? Give some examples of powerful music, or music that has made you feel certain emotions.
- What does it mean to be persistent? How do you demonstrate persistence even though something may be challenging? Why is it important to be persistent? Do you think persistence can be learned? How so?
- Have you ever spoken up about something that you felt was unfair? Have you ever spoken up about something when you were afraid? What did that feel like? What happened? Why did you stand up against this?
- How does someone make a difference? What do you think making a difference means?
- Was there a time when you took a chance on something? What did you do? What was the end result? Was it worth taking a chance? How are taking chances important in your life?
- What does it mean to stand up for what's right? What are some instances in history where people had to stand up for what they believed in even though they encountered opposition?

### 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, *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People*. 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 Aixa Pérez-Prado's Biography:** Read about Aixa Pérez-Prado on the jacket back flap, as well as on her website [www.aixaperezprado.com](http://www.aixaperezprado.com). Encourage students to think what could have been her inspiration for writing and illustrating *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People*, and what it was like to write her first picture book.

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:

- how Mercedes's childhood influenced her career as a singer and social activist
- why Mercedes became interested in social causes at a young age
- how Mercedes used her music to create change
- how Mercedes's family inspired her to continue with singing and making music
- why Mercedes wanted to speak up for others and make a difference
- how Mercedes's culture and Argentinian and Indigenous pride impacted her and her career as a musician
- how Mercedes made a difference for poor and Indigenous populations in Argentina
- what Mercedes did to help people during her time as a singer and social activist
- why Mercedes Sosa is considered voice of the people and how her music reflected marginalized communities

Encourage students to consider why the author and illustrator, Aixa Pérez-Prado would want to share with young people this story about Mercedes Sosa, Argentinian singer and social activist.

## VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

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

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

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

Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

### Content Specific

Tucumán, Argentina, Independence Day, 21-gun salute, Esperanza, cordillera, pampas, amor, sugar mill, furnace, Peronist Loyalty Day, President Perón, populist party, "Gladys Osorio", Oscar Matus, folklore Argentino, Nuevo Cancionero, Buenos Aires, poverty, Libertad, cantando, Latin America,

Europe, the United States, corazones, military junta, los desaparecidos, La Guerra Sucia, La Plata, gente, La Voz de Latinoamérica, bombo, condor, entusiasmo, Las Madres, Plaza de Mayo, military campaign, dictatorship, fuerza

### Academic

heralded, cemetery, applause, pulse, duet, ancestry, Indigenous, European, humble, abundance, yearned, echoing, disbanded, unity, empowerment, injustice, oppressors, detained, exile, melodies, savored, resistance, empathy

## 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. Where was Mercedes born?
2. What was happening on Mercedes's birthdate?
3. What was Mercedes like at a young age?
4. Where did Mercedes's father work? What did Mercedes and her brother notice?
5. Who was the president in Argentina?
6. What did President Perón's populist party promise?
7. What kind of contest did Mercedes enter? What happened?
8. How did Mercedes continue to sing? Who did she hide it from?
9. What did her father hear on the radio? How did he react?
10. Who did Mercedes marry?
11. What is folklore Argentino? What was Oscar determined to do?
12. What was the Nuevo Cancionero movement?
13. Where did Mercedes and Oscar sing?
14. What themes did Mercedes and Oscar cover in lyrics in their songs?
15. What happened to Mercedes and Oscar's marriage? What did Mercedes continue to do?
16. How did Mercedes's music help others?

17. What happened during La Guerra Sucia? How did La Guerra Sucia affect Mercedes's music?
18. What did Mercedes continue to do during La Guerra Sucia? What happened?
19. Where did Mercedes go after the concert in La Plata? What happened after her arrest?
20. What did Mercedes become known as while she was living in exile?
21. When did Mercedes return to Argentina? What did they tell her when she tried to enter? How did people react when she returned?
22. How did the junta feel about Mercedes's return?
23. Who are Las Madres?
24. What happened to the junta in 1983?

### Extension/Higher Level Thinking

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

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

1. What does the title *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People* mean to you after reading the book? Why do you think the author chose this particular title?
2. Of Mercedes Sosa, author Aixa Pérez-Prado on the last page says, "Even today her songs live on, and her voice continues to inspire." How does Aixa Pérez-Prado convey these messages in her book?
3. The story begins with: "This is the story of a singer whose voice sailed through the air like the wings of a condor, inspiring people everywhere." What do you think this means? How did Mercedes's voice sail through the air like the wings of a condor? Why do you think the author chose this image? What other images does the author use to convey how Mercedes's voice sounded and meant to people in Argentina?
4. How was Mercedes Sosa an advocate for herself and others at an early age?
5. Why do you think Mercedes never forgot the day that she watched her father work in the sugar mill? How did this event impact her?
6. Why did Mercedes have to create a fake name to perform on the radio? How did her family, particularly her father, feel about her singing in the beginning of her career?
7. How did Mercedes's singing career begin? Where did she and Oscar perform? How was their music important to people? What did they sing about?
8. Aixa Pérez-Prado writes, "Through the following years, Mercedes made friends with poets, painters, musicians, and thinkers. They encouraged her to continue using her voice for social change." What does it mean to use your voice for social change? How did Mercedes do this? Can you think of other entertainers today who use their voice for social change? Why do you think it's important for entertainers and singers to use their voice for social change?
9. What were some of the common messages in Mercedes's music? How was she a different artist from other singers during that time?



10. How did Mercedes's music help Argentinian people feel? Why do you think she chose to focus on poor and Indigenous people? How did her music provide a sense of hope and unity?
11. What was the significance of La Guerra Sucia? What happened during Argentina during that time? How did it impact Mercedes and her music? How did Mercedes show resilience during La Guerra Sucia? What did she continue to do?
12. How did living in exile affect Mercedes and her music? Why did Mercedes become known as "La Voz de Latinoamérica" while living in exile in Europe?
13. What happened when Mercedes returned to Argentina? How did she demonstrate courage and resilience upon her arrival? How did people welcome Mercedes back?
14. What events took place when Mercedes returned to Argentina? How did the group, Las Madres, impact the eventual fall of the regime?
15. What did Mercedes continue to do for the rest of her life? How did her passion for social change continue?
16. How would you describe Mercedes Sosa to a person who had never heard of her before? What are some of the qualities you would use to describe her? What are the most important things to say about Mercedes Sosa?
17. Why do you think it's important to have a picture book about Mercedes Sosa? Why is Mercedes Sosa a critical historical figure to learn about? What is her legacy today?
18. 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?

### 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 Mercedes Sosa's dedication to help and uplift others throughout her life. What is your takeaway from this book? What would you tell a friend about this book?
2. What do you think is Aixa Pérez-Prado's message to the reader? Think about possible motivations behind the author's intentions for writing the book. What do you think she wanted to tell her readers?
3. Have students make a text-to-self connection. What kinds of connections did you make from this book to your own life? What do Mercedes Sosa's experiences, thoughts, and feelings mean to you?
4. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books while you read *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People*? Why did you make those connections?

5. Have students make a text-to-world connection. What kind of connections did you make between this book and what you have seen in the world, such as online, on television, or in a newspaper? Why did this book make you think of that?
6. What does making a difference mean to students after reading? After reading *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People*, what does the idea of making a difference mean to you? Why? Does Mercedes Sosa inspire you to make a difference in your community? How?
7. What does music mean to you after reading this book? How did Mercedes use music to enact social change? Why is music important, both for pleasure and for social change?
8. Why is Mercedes Sosa an essential person to learn about today? How did Mercedes Sosa lead the way for Latina women and women of color in the entertainment industry and as a social activist?

### 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 multilingual learners (ML).

1. Assign ML students to partner-read the story with another classmate while listening to a song by Mercedes Sosa. Afterwards, students can create their own drawing to connect with the book's message and write a phrase or lyric to go with their artwork.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading: 1) Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing. 2) Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about what they think the message of *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People* is.
5. Create a "See, Think, Wonder" Chart with different columns for each section. Students can go through spreads from Mercedes Sosa and write and discuss what they see on each spread, what they think about each spread, and what they wondered about what was going on during this part of the book.
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 ML students 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.

7. *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People* is also available as a Spanish edition, *Mercedes Sosa: La voz del pueblo* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/mercedes-sosa-la-voz-del-pueblo>) if this is applicable to your classroom or relevant setting. This high-quality dual language text presents ample opportunity to encourage students to engage with both languages. Have one student read the Spanish text and another student read the English text (if applicable in your classroom). Both students who are reading should be biliterate in both Spanish and English. Ask students to compare their experiences. What was it like reading the story in Spanish? What was it like reading the story in English? Have students discuss the texts in both languages and how they are similar and/or different.
8. Consider consulting [www.multilinguallearningtoolkit.org/](http://www.multilinguallearningtoolkit.org/) for more ideas on how to support Multilingual Learners.

## ACTIVIDADES EN ESPAÑOL PARA APOYO EN PROGRAMAS BILINGÜES Y DE INMERSION DUAL

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)  
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)  
For the CCSS in Spanish, please check out <https://commoncore-espanol.sdcoe.net/CCSS-en-Espanol/SLA-Literacy>

Estas estrategias se pueden usar en su clase de español o en su clase de inmersión dual igual cómo el resto de la guía de actividades.

1. Asigne el libro *Mercedes Sosa: La voz del pueblo* a sus estudiantes. Coloque dos estudiantes juntos para leer el libro en voz alta. Compare las palabras en inglés y en español. ¿Cómo se comparan las palabras? Pida que sus estudiantes practiquen las palabras que tengan dificultad en pronunciar. Estudiantes pueden tener un cuaderno con las palabras difíciles para hacer referencia en el futuro.
2. Durante el tiempo de lectura, haga preguntas de comprensión a los estudiantes en inglés y en español para medir el nivel de comprensión en los dos idiomas. Preguntas pueden incluir: ¿de qué se trata el cuento? ¿Conectaste con uno de los personajes en el cuento? ¿Por qué sí o no? ¿Qué parte te gusta más en el cuento?
3. Elija palabras de vocabulario. Los libros ilustrados bilingües son una excelente manera para que sus estudiantes aprendan nuevas palabras de vocabulario porque el idioma se presenta en contexto. Identifique las ilustraciones relacionadas con el vocabulario nuevo y asigne las palabras de vocabulario a las ilustraciones del libro. Si es posible, haga fotocopias de las páginas. Estudiantes pueden usar subrayadores en un color para inglés y un color para español para las palabras nuevas. También, puede recordar las palabras en un póster para referencia. Reflexione con sus estudiantes sobre cual palabras ya sabían y cuales palabras aprendieron.
4. En casa sus estudiantes pueden pre-leer el libro con sus familias y pueden sugerir que lean el libro juntos. Esto facilita la lectura y en el aprendizaje del vocabulario de los dos idiomas, inglés y español.

5. El uso de cognados puede ser útil en libros bilingües, en español y en inglés. En esta actividad estudiantes pueden buscar cognados en el libro. Los estudiantes pueden trabajar en parejas para identificar y formar una lista si las palabras son cognados verdaderos o falsos. Al final de la actividad es importante distinguir cómo clase la lista de los cognados verdaderos o falsos.
6. Estas actividades solo son sugerencias y puede encontrar más recursos para apoyar a sus clases de inmersión dual y bilingües. Puede leer mas en (<https://blog.leeandlow.com/2013/11/04/using-dual-language-and-bilingual-books-in-third-and-fourth-grade/>).

### 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. Aixa Pérez-Prado writes about Mercedes Sosa: "She gave a voice to the voiceless." Analyze this statement. What do you think this means? How did Mercedes give a voice to the voiceless? How did her music help others? What were the messages and themes in Mercedes's music that helped to give the voiceless a voice?
2. Music and singing can help people, especially children, feel good and it can be beneficial for their health (<https://www.chhs.niu.edu/child-center/resources/articles/music-and-movement.shtml>). Have students think about why music can relieve stress or anxiety. How does music make them feel? Do they like to sing? Do they like to dance? Why or why not? If they like to sing and/or dance, how does it help them feel better if they're feeling anxious, nervous or sad? Have students write a piece about how music makes them feel and why.
3. In *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People*, Mercedes struggled with her emotions: "When Oscar and Mercedes's marriage crumbled and the duo disbanded, Mercedes's heart sank. With a son to care for, she had to find the strength to fly solo." How do you think music and singing helped Mercedes combat these emotions? Have you ever felt like this? What did it feel like? Did you use music or any other outlet to help you cope with feelings of sadness?
4. Flip through the pages of the book and focus on the people's faces on each page. Describe how their faces look and name the emotions they convey. (You might also notice their body language). Use sticky notes to label various emotions. Ask students to act out specific sections of the story, using their faces and bodies to help convey feelings.
5. What are the coping strategies and techniques that Mercedes uses during difficult moments? How does she use coping strategies throughout the story?

6. Why is it important to have empathy for those we don't know? What does empathy look like in *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People*? Discuss how empathy is beneficial to social and emotional wellbeing.
7. How did Mercedes Sosa's persistence and resilience lead to a career in music? What experiences in her life inspired her to become both a musician and social activist? Show evidence from the book.
8. Which illustration in *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People* best shows an emotion? Explain which emotion you think it shows. How does the image portray that emotion?

## 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)

- **Analyze the symbol of the bird in *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People*.** There is a bird on each spread of *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People*. Mercedes Sosa is often symbolized by a bird in her home country, Argentina, because her voice was powerful, resonant, and soared through the air, much like a bird's flight. Explain to students that the illustrator has included a bird in every spread of the book—sometimes visible, sometimes hidden. Encourage them to hunt for the bird on every spread. Ask students to wonder why the artist did this and accept all possibilities. If the bird is hard to spot, give hints (like looking closely at the characters' clothing or skin). Have students record the bird and its spots in a reader's notebook for reference. Afterwards, have students reflect in an analytical essay about why they think the author/illustrator Aixa Pérez-Prado chose to do this. How does a bird symbolize Mercedes?
- **As a follow-up activity, have students create their own personal symbols.** Ask learners to imagine their own symbol—something that represents their talents or abilities, just like the bird symbolizes Mercedes' powerful voice. Have learners write down their ideas of what their symbol might be and exchange papers with a partner to discuss their ideas.
- **Have students think about expository nonfiction versus narrative nonfiction.** How was reading *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People* different from reading a newspaper article about Mercedes? Have students read the article, "Mercedes Sosa: The Singer Who Gave Voice to Her People's Struggle Outlived Several Tyrants" (<https://www.plough.com/en/>)

[topics/culture/music/mercedes-sosa](#)). Students can then create a graphic organizer with the headings, "Mercedes Sosa" and "Expository Nonfiction: "Mercedes Sosa: The Singer Who Gave Voice to Her People's Struggle Outlived Several Tyrants." Students can compare the different formats of the texts and the information they learn in both. What did they learn from both texts? What was it like to take in information from a picture book about Mercedes Sosa versus a newspaper article about her?

- **Have students come up with a list of questions to ask author and illustrator Aixa Pérez-Prado.** What do students want to know about the process behind writing a children's book? How did the author come up with the idea to write *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People*? What was it like for Aixa Pérez-Prado to write this children's book? Why did she pick Mercedes Sosa? Consider contacting Aixa Pérez-Prado and inviting her to your school, library, or other relevant setting for a virtual author visit (<https://www.aixaperezprado.com/>).
- **Encourage students to prepare a presentation or write an essay about something in their community about which they are passionate.** Mercedes's mission was to support her communities and use her music to enact change and critically examine the Argentinian government and society at large. What is something you want to improve in your school, neighborhood, or community? Why is this an important cause? What are some ways you can help others or improve this specific issue? Students may share their findings with a partner, small group, or the whole class.
- **Consider using *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People* as an anchor text to teach students about biography writing.** ReadWriteThink's "Writer's Workshop: The Biographical Sketch" has tips and step-by-step instructions on how to ease students into writing biography and the different techniques and strategies that are used to make engaging and informative stories (<https://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/writers-workshop-biographical-sketch>). Afterwards, have students select a current entertainer and social activist and have them write a short biography about that person. Have students conduct a research study about their own artist from a picture book of their choosing to simulate the process behind *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People*. Have students identify the different features in *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People* that would help to inform their own book about their political figure. What kinds of information do they need to research? How should they present it in the book? What images, diagrams, or photographs would be helpful to their reader?
- **Conduct a figurative language study with students.** Have students go on a figurative language scavenger hunt in *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People*. Refer to Read Write Think's "Figurative Language Resource Page" as a tool for students to use during their search ([http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson\\_images/lesson79/figresource.pdf](http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson79/figresource.pdf)). Create a chart with different rows for figurative language terms (i.e. simile, metaphor) and students can fill it in with specific examples from *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People*. Afterwards, students can experiment using figurative language in their writing pieces poetry inspired by the book.
- **Have students write an essay or reaction to the Afterword from *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People*.** Afterwards, have students reflect on the following guiding questions

in an essay: What did they learn from this section after reading *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People*? What additional information did they learn that was new about Mercedes Sosa and Argentinian history? How did this affect what they thought about the book? Why do you think creator Aixa Pérez-Prado decided to include this Afterword featuring more details about Mercedes Sosa and her life history?

- **Use *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People* alongside Lee & Low titles *She Was the First! The Trailblazing Life of Shirley Chisholm* ([leeandlow.com/books/she-was-the-first](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/she-was-the-first)), *Seeds of Change* ([leeandlow.com/books/seeds-of-change](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/seeds-of-change)), *Midnight Teacher: Lilly Ann Granderson and Her Secret School* ([leeandlow.com/books/midnight-teacher](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/midnight-teacher)), *Rise!: From Caged Bird to Poet of the People, Maya Angelou* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/rise>), and *Marvelous Mabel: Figure Skating Superstar* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/marvelous-mabel>) to show students powerful women in history.** Use a graphic organizer to compare Mercedes Sosa, Shirley Chisholm, Wangari Maathai, Lilly Ann Granderson, Maya Angelou, and Mabel Fairbanks. How do these women inspire you to fight for what you believe in? Have students write a reaction after the graphic organizer exercise about these important women of color in history to address how and why they risked their lives to change those of others.
- **Use *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People* alongside Lee & Low titles including *Shining Star: The Anna May Wong Story* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/span-the-story-of-anna-may-wong/>), *Ira's Shakespeare Dream* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/iras-shakespeare-dream/>), *Little Melba and Her Big Trombone* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/little-melba-and-her-big-trombone/>), *I and I: Bob Marley* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/i-and-i-bob-marley/>), and *Ray Charles* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/ray-charles/>) as a biography unit on artists.** Through each text, have students think about the following questions: What was each entertainer known for? What was their art? How did their art influence other people? Did they use their platform for social change? Why or why not? Students can use a graphic organizer to keep track of their findings across the texts, and then write an analytical essay comparing the musicians and their historical impacts.

### Social Studies/Geography

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

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

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

- **Conduct a “Social Change” project in your classroom.** After reading *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People*, have students pick a cause they believe in (i.e. water justice, climate change, homelessness). Have students brainstorm a list of different causes that they want to create change for. Then, have students pick their top three choices and arrange groups according to interest. In the groups, have students research the topic and come up with a way to enact change, whether it's a letter, a flyer, a petition, etc. Learning for Justice also has resources and plans on conducting social change units (<https://www.learningforjustice.org/>)

[learning-plan/social-change-unit-0](#)). *The New York Times* also has "The Power to Change the World: A Teaching Unit on Student Activism in History and Today" (<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/07/learning/lesson-plans/the-power-to-change-the-world-a-teaching-unit-on-student-activism-in-history-and-today.html>). Ask students to reflect on why they chose that cause and what it means to them. How do they want to make a future impact in the world?

- **Conduct a research study on La Guerra Sucia/The Dirty War in Argentina.** Students can answer the following guiding questions: What was the cause of the Dirty War? Who were the political leaders during the time? How did the dictatorship impact Argentinian people? Who were the desaparecidos and Las madres? Why is this period in Argentinian history important to learn about? How did this period create long-lasting trauma in Argentinian history? Resources include the Carnegie Council's for Ethics in International Affairs (<https://www.carnegiecouncil.org/media/article/the-dirty-war-and-the-history-of-democracy-in-argentina>) and Yale University Press's "Life during Argentina's Dirty War" (<https://yalebooks.yale.edu/2015/06/01/life-during-argentinas-dirty-war/>). Consider having students display their findings on informational posters to share with the class.
- **Investigate "los desaparecidos" from La Guerra Sucia and the role of Las Madres.** Students can analyze the following questions: who were "los desaparecidos?" Who were Las madres, featured in *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People*, and what was their mission? How did they fight for los desaparecidos? What was the significance of los desaparecidos and Las madres in Argentinian history? Resources online include the International Federation of Social Worker's "Argentina and 'Los desaparecidos'" (<https://www.ifsw.org/argentina-and-los-desaparecidos/>), The History Channel's "30,000 People Were 'Disappeared' in Argentina's Dirty War. These Women Never Stopped Looking" (<https://www.history.com/news/mothers-plaza-de-mayo-disappeared-children-dirty-war-argentina>), Learning for Justice's "Madres de Plaza de Mayo" (<https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/texts/madres-de-plaza-de-mayo>), and the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict's "The Mothers of the Disappeared" (<https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/mothers-disappeared-challenging-junta-argentina-1977-1983/>). Have students share their findings with the class and what they learned about this critical history, and how it relates to Mercedes Sosa and her call for action.
- **Have students conduct a research project on female artists using music for social activism.** The Smithsonian American Women's History Museum's article, "Six Musicians Who Led Social Change" provides students with a starting point about learning more about women musicians who have used their art to incite social action and change (<https://womenshistory.si.edu/blog/six-musicians-who-led-social-change>). Have students select a female artist of their choosing and learn more. Students can answer the following guiding questions: who is the artist? What time did the artist live? How was this woman impactful in music? What were the causes that she was passionate about? What is her legacy today? Students can create visual aids of their choosing to share with a partner, small group, or whole class.
- **Encourage students to select a resource from the Selected Bibliography section at the back of *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People*.** Students can examine the piece, whether it's a book, video, photograph, or website, and write a reaction to how they think the



author and illustrator were informed by this information and how it helped develop the text. Have students consider what kind of resource it is, how they know that it contains accurate and correct information, and why research is critical in developing a book. The Library of Congress has a lesson plan for further information about teaching students about using primary sources (<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/>).

- **Create a timeline of Mercedes's life from the book and elaborate on the events that transpired during the period.** To help students understand the historical context of Mercedes's story encourage them to research the events in the book by gathering photographs and other primary source documents about the events mentioned, and then create a timeline. Display both enlarged timelines in the front of the class so that students have easy access to both the dates and events. Students may work in groups in different years (i.e., 1960-1970) and then add their events and findings to the class timeline.

### Art/Media

(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)

- **The story begins with three questions: "Have you ever heard a song that made your heart soar? A canción that captured your corazón? A voice so powerful that it made you feel ready to change the world?"** Have students answer these three questions in an essay about a song that made them feel this way. Why did students select this song? How did it make them feel when they first heard it? Why is it special to them? Students can share their responses with a partner, small group, or whole class, and reflect on the meaning of music and the power it holds.
- **Create a "See it, Say it" Cube. Explain that each side represents a different issue people might see in their community (e.g., pollution, bullying, poverty, linguicism, etc.).** Give students a recycled box (such as a tissue box) and plain paper to cover it. On four sides, they will illustrate or collage issues they believe are unfair or unjust in their community, their home country, or the world, using drawings and/or magazine cutouts. On the top and bottom of the box, have learners illustrate or write about two ways they could help someone or act. This could be speaking out, lending a hand, or supporting a cause in another way such as Mercedes did with her voice. After completing the cubes, invite learners to share their creations. Discuss the importance of raising our voices against injustice, just like Mercedes Sosa did through her music. Encourage students to wonder about how people who are not fluent in a language where they are living can speak out and still make an impact.
- **Learn more about Argentinian folk music, Argentine folklore** (<https://arecotradicion.com/en/noticias/folkloric-music-and-dance-of-argentina/#:~:text=Argentina's%20native%20music%20has%20developed,sounds%20also%20played%20its%20part.>) (<https://folkcloud.com/folk-music-by-country/argentina>). How did this style of music originate? How did this style of music inspire Mercedes? How do her songs use elements of Argentinian folk music? What instruments are used in this type of music? Students can listen to the music and write a reaction piece about how the music made them feel, and what they learned about Argentinian folk music.

- **Have students create a drawing, painting, or other visual representation of a cause in their community that they're passionate about, inspired by Mercedes Sosa.** Why did students choose this cause? Students can create posters, paintings, or other visual representations of the cause that they're passionate about, and then display their work in small groups or for the whole class to see. Conclude the activity with a gallery walk. Allow each student to display their work, and let the other students search for hidden symbols.
- **Have students create a self-portrait that reveals something powerful or special about themselves—whether it's a talent, skill, sport, or academic ability.** For example, someone good at sports might choose a running shoe, while someone who loves art might choose a paintbrush. Encourage them to hide their symbol from the English Language Arts portion of this guide within their illustration and have other students try to find it (just as the bird was hidden in Mercedes Sosa's story).
- **Have students create a poster for a social cause that they're passionate about. Why did students choose this cause?** Students can create posters, paintings, or other visual representations of the cause that they're passionate about, and then display their work in small groups or for the whole class to see.
- **Listen to Mercedes Sosa's music** (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5XhmU1zjQ6CaQkP6DDOKSQ>). On Youtube or any other accessible platform, look up Mercedes Sosa and her songs. Have students listened to Mercedes Sosa's music before? If so, where did they listen to her songs? If they haven't, what are their first reactions to her songs? Students can write a reaction essay to what it was like listening to Mercedes sing. How does she show emotion in her music? Provide students with lyrics in Spanish and English, if possible, in whatever language students prefer.
- **Choose a song of Mercedes Sosa and analyze the lyrics.** Have students select a song of their choosing and look up the lyrics (either in Spanish or in translated English). Students can answer the following guiding questions: what was it like to read the lyrics from a song that was sung by Mercedes Sosa? What themes are evident in the lyrics? How are the lyrics impactful? How do the lyrics tie into what students learned from reading *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People*?
- **Aixa Pérez-Prado chose to use mixed media for Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People.** Have students create a paper collage illustration of an entertainer of their choosing. Students can study Aixa Pérez-Prado's style and arrange paper as best they see fit to encapsulate the ways they want to present their artist. Students may create collages to accompany their own poems or writing pieces about their artist, using materials such as construction paper, old newspapers, magazines, cloth, and other recycled materials.
- **Analyze the cover art for Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People.** Why do you think the illustrator, Aixa Pérez-Prado, portrayed Mercedes Sosa in this way? Is this what you envisioned during the story? How are the different themes from the story shown on the cover? Have students write an essay about the ways that covers can influence how they perceive the people in the book.

- **Interview Aixa Pérez-Prado about her experience illustrating the book.** Aixa Pérez-Prado wrote and illustrated the story. What do you think that process was like? How did she come up with the illustrations? Why do you think she chose a specific medium to represent the text? Consider reaching out to Aixa Pérez-Prado for an interview to learn more.
- **Encourage students to select the illustration that resonated with them the most from *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People*.** Have students write a reflection about the illustration. What stood out to them? How did it make them feel? What did it make them think about?

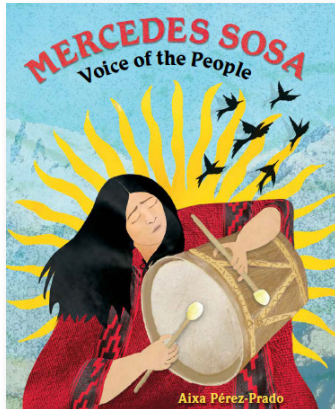
### School-Home Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

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

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

- **Have students share what they learned from reading *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People* with their families.** What did students enjoy about the book? What other books would they want to read that are like *Mercedes Sosa: Voice of the People*? What did students learn about Mercedes Sosa and Argentinian history? If students' families speak Spanish, bring a copy of the book in Spanish home.
- **Listen to music from Mercedes Sosa at home.** Students and families can discuss how the music made them feel. What did they think of when they listened to her songs? How do students and their family members think that her music affected and impacted others?
- **Ask students to interview family members about what music means to them.** Do students' family members enjoy listening to music? What kind of music do they like? How does music make them feel? Are there any musicians that have had a positive impact on their lives? Why or why not?
- **Have students investigate different organizations in their community that help people.** What resources are in the community to help people complete their education, get support on learning English and other language-learning skills, or have access to medicine? Students may bring their findings to class and build a map or book of resources to share so that all families have access.



## Ordering Information

**General Order Information:**

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

**Secure Online Ordering:**

[leeandlow.com/books/mercedes-sosa-voice-of-the-people](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/mercedes-sosa-voice-of-the-people)

[leeandlow.com/books/mercedes-sosa-la-voz-del-pueblo](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/mercedes-sosa-la-voz-del-pueblo)

**By Phone:** 212-779-4400

**By Mail:**

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New York, NY 10016

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR

**Aixa Pérez-Prado** is an author, an illustrator, and a university professor of linguistic and cultural studies. Originally from Buenos Aires, she crafts stories that explore intersectional identities, the need for belonging, and the richness of bilingualism. In her early years, Aixa found inspiration in the powerful voice of Mercedes Sosa and was drawn to the profound messages of social justice, human rights, and compassion in her music. These messages prompted her to embark on a personal journey of self-discovery, exploring her own blended Indigenous and European heritage through the mediums of art, literature, and music. Aixa lives with her family in Miami, Florida. You can learn more about her at [aixaperezprado.com](https://www.aixaperezprado.com).

### Reviews

"Distilling Argentina's history into accessible text, the work ends on an uplifting note, discussing how the figure's 'songs of empathy and esperanza, fearlessness and fuerza helped the country begin to heal.'"—*Publishers Weekly*

"Accessible Spanish terms used within context pop up throughout the pages, enriching the text. . . . The illustrations add intensity, using rich hues, cutouts, and color overlays to enhance the drama of the action, punctuating the emotions beneath Sosa's lyrics and emphasizing the courage it took to sing those songs during the repressive regime. A fitting tribute to an exceptional woman." — *Booklist*

## ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

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