

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

Alejandria Fights Back! ¡La lucha de Alejandria!

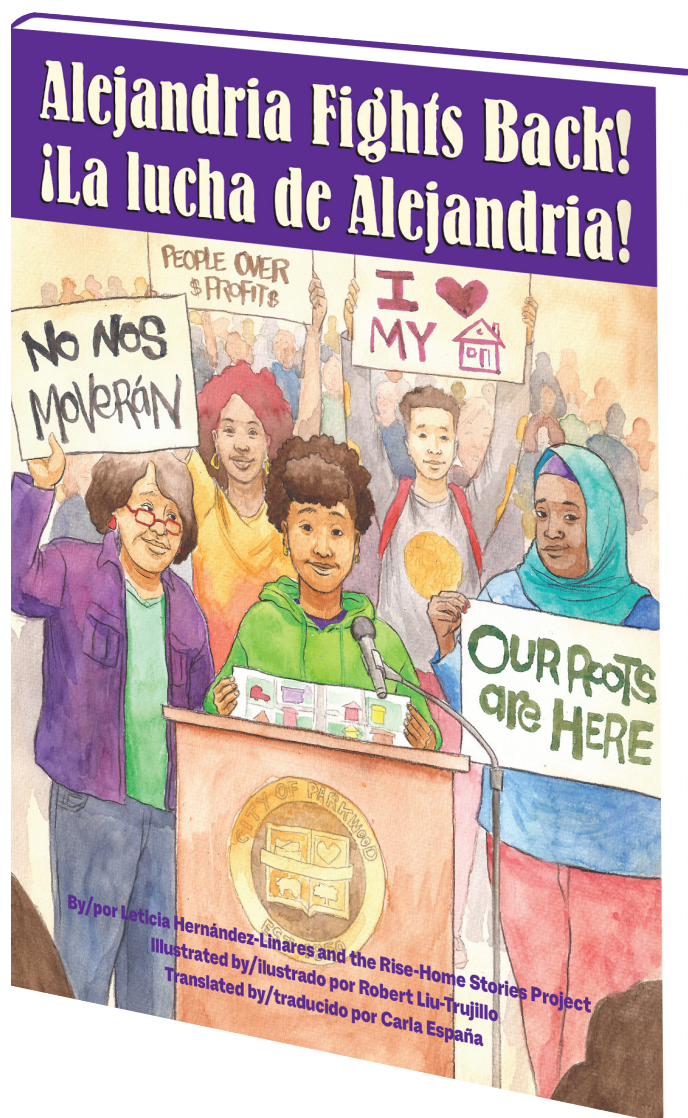
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DEAR EDUCATORS,

We are thrilled you are reading *Alejandria Fights Back! ¡La lucha de Alejandria!* in your learning spaces. In this guide you will find a reading in community plan with ways to engage children in conversations as you read the book, discussion questions, extension activities, and a text set. We encourage all educators to use this book across elementary, middle, and secondary classrooms. You can visit alejandriafightsback.com for more resources.

INTRODUCING THE BOOK

Introduce the book considering one of the following:

- 1. Book Cover Study.** Show the book cover so that all students can see (maybe walking around the meeting area if students are gathered or showing a picture of it projected on a screen). You might want to consider some of the following questions: “What do you notice? What do the signs mean? How do you think the characters feel?” Give the students opportunities to share their observations, taking note of which details you’ll refer back to as you read the book.
- 2. Community Study.** For schools that are in communities that have been directly impacted by housing injustice, you may want to ask some of the following questions: “How is our community changing? How are different people impacted by what is happening? How have different people responded? How do I feel about what is happening to families that have been evicted from their homes?”
- 3. Reading Life Study.** If you are in a character study or theme study unit of instruction, it will be helpful to situate this book in that reading work. For example:
 - a. Character study.** Introduce the book through the character of Alejandria, reading the first page where Alejandria tells the reader about Parkwood. Then share with students the character study focus you’ll carry through this reading, possibly sharing one or more of the following objectives: “Readers track how characters learn about a challenge in their lives; Readers study characters by noticing their relationships with one another; Readers notice how characters respond to challenges; or Readers study how setting is important to a character.”
 - b. Theme study.** Introduce the book through a theme or several themes such as housing justice, community changes, and family/community literacies/knowledge. You can do this by reading the back cover where a summary of the book is given. Then share with students the theme study focus you’ll carry through this reading, possibly sharing one or more of the following objectives: “Readers sometimes focus on how different characters contribute to their understanding of a theme across a text; Readers track how authors and illustrators introduce and develop a theme; or Readers notice which author’s craft moves contribute to moving a theme along such as revealing actions, dialogue, and symbolism.”
- 4. Language Study.** Whether you are teaching in a bilingual or an English medium classroom, you can continue to develop your students’ awareness of language practices by introducing the book with some keywords and bilingual/multilingual word charts (words, sketch, definition, excerpt from the book, student-created sentences). You can refer to the glossary for some inspiration as you also consider the words that would be most impactful for students to review together and in the context of the book.

READING THE BOOK

Reading & Discussion 1

- Teacher reads page 4.
- Students share what they love about their community.

Reading & Discussion 2

- Teacher reads pages 7–9.
- Teacher shares their observations on a problem facing the community and how community members are reacting (noticing what the characters say and do, including observations on the illustrations).

Reading & Discussion 3

- Teacher reads page 10.
- Students share their observations on how Julian and Alejandria feel.

Reading & Discussion 4

- Teacher reads page 13–15.
- Teacher shares their observations of how Alejandria's mom reacts to the eviction letter. Teacher may review words such as “rent” and “eviction.”

Reading & Discussion 5

- Teacher reads pages 16–19.
- Students can share stories that their family members have shared or moments when they've found things to be unfair.
- Students can also discuss how the illustration on pages 18–19 helps them understand how the characters felt.

Reading & Discussion 6

- Teacher reads page 20–26.
- Students can take turns summarizing what happened at the library and community organization. They can then compare that with their library and community organization visits.

Reading & Discussion 7

- Teacher reads pages 28–30.
- At this point there's a major shift in the story. If guiding students on a character or theme study, you may want to pause and name your character or theme focus again. Then, have students name ways that they've been keeping track of character changes/relationships (for character study) or how certain dialogue, revealing actions, or setting details are developing a theme that they were tracking (resistance to housing injustice, community knowledge).

READING THE BOOK, CONTINUED

Reading & Discussion 8

- Teacher reads pages 32–34.
- This is a great opportunity to involve students in performance, taking turns with a reading partner as they deliver Alejandria’s speech. Have the text available for all to see and have the class come together after a few moments to share observations on the illustrations in this scene, noticing the words on the signs that the community members hold.

Reading & Discussion 9

- Teacher reads page 36.
- Teacher lingers on the illustration on page 37 and shares observations from the illustration and the text on page 36. Maybe they discuss the pressures on Mami’s life and what it means when she says “not everyone likes us” and why Mami hadn’t told Alejandria this before.

Reading & Discussion 10

- Teacher reads pages 38–45.
- For the last discussion you can ask students what they’d like to talk about, taking a few suggestions and putting them into smaller groups by their topic choice. After giving them time to share in small groups you can return to a whole class discussion. You can use the discussion questions below as guidance but take your inspiration from your students too!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

On Home and Neighborhood

- The book begins with a description of Alejandria's home. Alejandria says "Home isn't just our apartment—it's the whole neighborhood." How would you describe the area where you live?
- Alejandria tells us about people and places she likes to draw from her neighborhood (p. 4). Think about the people and places from your community that are special to you. Why are these people and places important to you?

On Alejandria's Family and Nicaragua

- Alejandria's Mami and abuela, Tita, are from Nicaragua (p. 4). Keep an eye out for ways we learn a little bit more about Nicaragua throughout the book.
- On page sixteen, we see Ale thinking about what they've learned and Tita's stories from Nicaragua. Tita would say "when the people in charge tried to bully us and push us out, we got together and pushed back." What are other examples we can think of when people had to push back as others in power bullied them? What moments from history and the present come to mind?

On Housing Injustice

- Tita says "Ay, look at this. Another 'For Sale' sign!" and Ms. Beatrice, from the bakery, says "There's a new one every other day" (p. 9). Now, take a look at the illustration. How does this make them feel? Why?
- Mami says "We'll do what we have to do to survive. But this isn't something you should worry about" (p. 15). What does Mami mean?
- Tita and Alejandria go to their local library to search for "tenants' rights" online (p. 21). What do they learn? What questions do you have about tenants, landlords, and tenants' rights?

On Resisting Injustice

- Tita and Alejandria learn that the company that owns their building is also trying to kick out people in other buildings in the neighborhood. A community organizer recommends that they get their neighbors together "and fight as a group" (p. 25). Why would the community organizer make this recommendation?
- Alejandria and Tita go door to door in their neighborhood, handing out flyers with information on a tenants' meeting at City Hall. Julian's dad said that they'd speak if Alejandria spoke at the meeting. Alejandria says, "Me? I'm only nine!" Tita responds, "You're never too young to speak up, hija" (p. 30). Why do you think Alejandria responded that way? What do you think about Tita's response? Has there been a time when you had to speak up when something was unfair? How did you feel? What did you learn?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Script Writing and Performance

Tita and Mami do not agree on what to do about the eviction notice (p. 18). Students can collaborate with classmates to create dialogue that they would add to this scene using what they know about the characters and the impact of housing injustice. They can also use the illustration on pages eighteen and nineteen as inspiration. Students can perform their scenes.

2. Community Study and Community Sketch/Map

Take your students on a community walk (virtual or in-person). Have them share their observations by creating a sketch of community spaces and/or a community map. Depending on your access to different technologies and devices, you may want to consider ways students can create and share their community maps. Some may want to add audio to their maps on a digital presentation, describing their observations, questions and connections to *Alejandria Fights Back! ¡La lucha de Alejandria!* Other students may want to interview a community member and add that audio to their digital version of the community map.

3. Thank You Letters for Community Members

Discuss the people in Alejandria's community that play an important role in her life. Ask students to name those people in their lives. You can provide images of community places, refer back to community study projects, share interactions you've had with community members, invite some community members, or share short video clips of them sending a message to the class. Then, review samples of thank you letters or just share your own. Provide students with time to write their own letters and plan ways to get them to these treasured community members. You will also want to digitize them to add them to your class and school library!

4. Community Oral History

What stories do our community spaces tell? What stories do the elders in our communities hold? Consider supporting your students along an oral history project to provide ways for them to learn more about their community, to create a platform for community members' stories to be amplified, and to connect with students' questions on community history, change, and their role. After students interview a community member and share what they learned, have students return to *Alejandria Fights Back! ¡La lucha de Alejandria!* to add on to what they learned about that community.

5. Local Library Visit

Consider arranging a library visit with your local librarian or have them visit your class virtually to share upcoming programming and answer students' questions. This visit can be planned to align with a research unit or any topic of instruction that requires the support of the local library's services. You can also consider a visit if there's an issue that comes up in the community, in current events or in student conversations, that you'd like students to learn more about using the resources in the library.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES, CONTINUED

6. Language Study

Alejandria Fights Back! ¡La lucha de Alejandria! is a bilingual Spanish/English picture book. Just like there are many different kinds of English, there are many kinds of Spanish! Language is always evolving and we continue to grow as we learn the different ways we call things depending on the place we learn them. You can conduct a study of the translation, of the terms in the glossary and chart what other words students would add.

7. Social Movements Study

In *Alejandria Fights Back! ¡La lucha de Alejandria!*, Tita and Alejandria meet with a community organizer who recommends that all the neighbors get together to fight against the landlord that is threatening to displace them from their homes. You can connect this to a study of other groups that have gathered to protest injustice across history to the present. For example, The Young Lords Party, Black Panther Party, and the United Farm Workers. This can be a brief study with a read aloud, video clips, or images of one movement. With more time, students can study a variety of texts on different movements and compare ways the groups shared their message.

8. Kid & Teen Activist Study

Alejandria joins a growing list of young activists that inspire all of us to seek justice for our community and use our voice for change. Introduce students to the work of other young activists and help them find a resource for them to find out more, returning later to the class with some of what they learned to share with others. Here are some examples of young activists to get you started: Mari Copeny, Sophie Cruz, Marley Dias, Xiuhtezcatl Roske-Martinez, and Naomi Wadler.

9. Picture Book / Comic / Poetry Anthology / Zine Creation for School Library

Consider revisiting any of the other extension activities and asking students to create a picture book, poetry anthology, comic, or zine about that content to contribute to the classroom/school library. Check out Shawna Coppola's *Writing Redefined: Broadening Our Ideas of What It Means to Compose* for guidance.

10. Get to Know Your Local Representatives

Students can get to know their local representatives by learning about recent initiatives, announcements or campaigns (from their websites, social media, local news). When learning about an issue, students can ask: "Who benefits from this decision? Is anyone harmed by this? Who took part in the decision-making? Who was left out? How does this impact the community?"

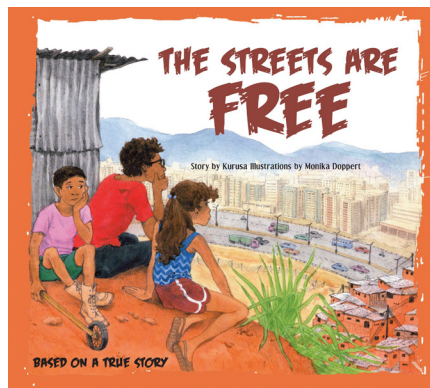
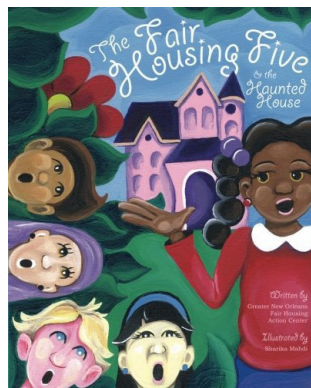
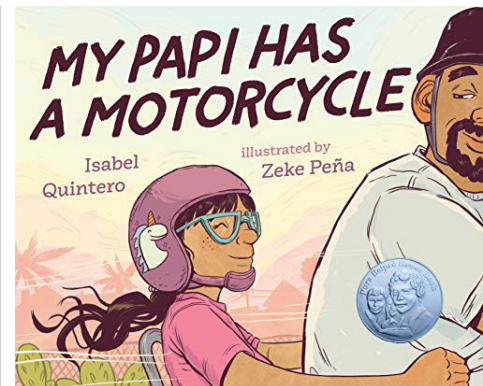
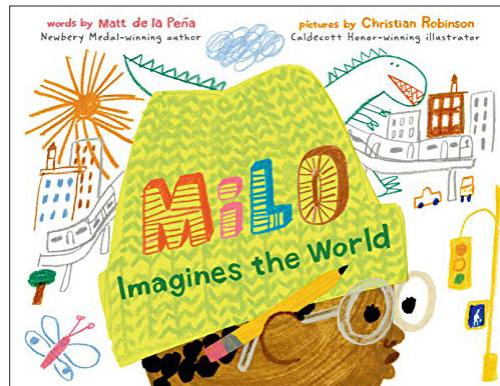
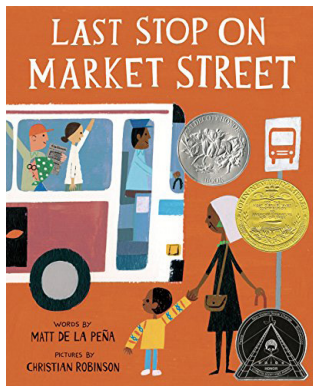
11. Housing Justice Project

Connect with a local community organization to plan a community event to support people facing housing insecurity in the community. This can be a space for community members to share their questions and to be informed of their rights. If your students conducted oral history interviews with community members, these too can be shared at this event. Community maps/sketches can be displayed.

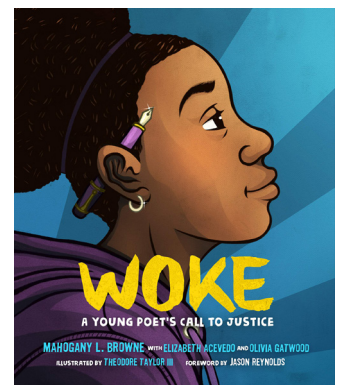
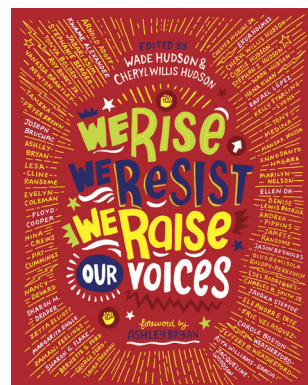
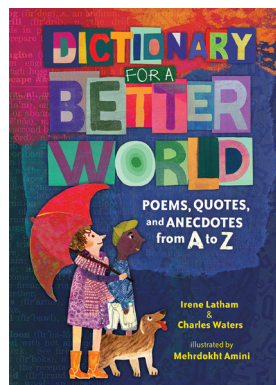
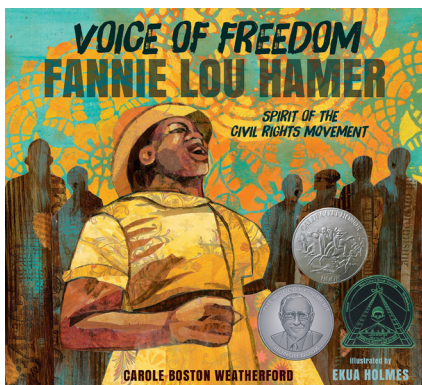
TEXT SETS

There are several texts you can put in conversation with *Alejandria Fights Back! ¡La lucha de Alejandria!* Here are three text sets that support your reading in community plan, discussion questions, and extension activities.

Text Set on Community



Poetry Text Set



TEXT SETS, CONTINUED

Text Set on Changemakers



This teacher's guide was created by Carla España, a middle grade teacher, literacy consultant, researcher, author, and co-founder of the En Comunidad Collective. Her love of stories and teaching comes from her roots in Chile and has been nurtured by hundreds of teachers and students across schools in New York City and beyond. She is the co-author of *En Comunidad: Lessons for Centering the Voices and Experiences of Bilingual Latinx Students*.