

The Hero Twins and the Magic of Song (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #1)

written by David Bowles

illustrated by Charlene Bowles

About the Book

Genre: Fiction, Graphic Novel

Format: Paperback, 80 pages
10.5 × 7 in

ISBN: 9781947627697

Reading Level: Grade 5–6

Interest Level: Grades 4–8

Guided Reading Level: U

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:
N/A

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

Themes: Courage, Families (Siblings, Twins), Fantasy, Fiction, Folktale / Folklore / Traditional Literature, Grandparents, Graphic Novel, Indigenous / First Nations / Native American, Latinx / Latino / Hispanic, Middle Grade, Overcoming Obstacles, Spanish

Resources on the web:

leeandlow.com/books/the-hero-twins-and-the-magic-of-song/

SYNOPSIS

In the age of Maya demigods, two carefree brothers are called to Xibalba, Land of the Dead. When they fail to return to the sea-ringed world above, One Hunahpu's firstborn sons are raised by their grandmother. Below, in Xibalba, One Hunahpu meets the rebellious Lady Blood, and their love leads to twin sons, destined to restore balance to the cosmos—though they might need some trickster magic to survive the cruelty of their older half-brothers!

Adapted from author David Bowles's retellings and translations of essential pre-Columbian texts like the *Popol Vuh*, the Tales of the Feathered Serpent series brings Indigenous Mesoamerican stories alive for young readers!

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

BACKGROUND

From the Afterword by David Bowles

When the Spanish invaded Mesoamerica, their priests and soldiers ended up destroying thousands of codices, books in which the stories and history of Indigenous peoples—Maya, Nahua, Mixtec—had been carefully preserved. That destruction means that their descendants and the rest of humanity have been robbed of knowledge and lore. But not all of it, because in many communities the old sacred stories were memorized and recited at special moments, so many of the most vital parts of their past were kept alive even as the invaders imposed a new language, religion, culture . . . and writing system: the Roman alphabet.

In time, the elders of those communities began to use the tools of the invaders to preserve the wisdom of their ancestors. In the late 1600s, the leaders of the town of Santo Tomás Chichicastenango in Guatemala collaborated with Dominican friar Francisco Ximénez, sharing with him the most important narratives and chronicles of the K'iche' Maya people, which the friar transcribed and then translated into Spanish.

Popol Vuh, they called this collection. *Book of the People*.

The transcription and translation were forgotten by outsiders. Then the Spanish translation was republished in the mid-1800s. But the original K'iche' Mayan text was stolen and nearly lost until it was finally rediscovered in 1941. It has since been translated into many languages, opening the eyes of the world to the beliefs and history of an incredible people.

The third section of the *Popol Vuh* gives an exciting version of a cycle of sacred stories found throughout southern Mexico and Guatemala: the adventures of the Hero Twins, maize gods whose victory over the rulers of the underworld was seen as a sacred symbol of nature's rebirth each spring, of the cycle of life, death, and resurrection.

We hope that you will also find Hunahpu and Xbalanke as funny and wise and courageous as other children have for thousands of years. By telling their story in graphic novel form, we have attempted to preserve a little of what it must have been like to peruse those ancient manuscripts, back before the Spanish bonfires: images of demigods woven throughout hieroglyphic descriptions of their deeds, a visual delight that nourished hearts and minds.

—David Bowles, Author
February 9, 2023

Maya Civilization and Teaching Resources

The Maya civilization existed around 250 AD to 900 AD in what is now present-day Honduras, Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize (<https://www.history.com/topics/ancient-americas/maya>).

For more information on teaching about the Maya Civilization and Maya History, educators can read author David Bowles's *Feathered Serpent, Dark Heart of Sky*

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(<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/feathered-serpent-dark-heart-of-sky>). This is a well-researched, critically acclaimed introduction to Maya culture, made accessible by an expert in Mesoamerican culture and juvenile literature. Bowles stitched together tales from Maya, Aztec, and other ancient mythology from pre-Columbian Mexico.

Additionally, consult PBS Learning's "The Maya Empire" (<https://ny.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/2bedcdd4-9465-4065-afe6-26f8530cf3cc/the-mayan-empire/>). PBS also has a video and other resources dedicated to writings of the Ancient Maya (<https://ny.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/midlit10.soc.splmaya/writings-of-the-ancient-maya/>). National Geographic's episode, "Lost World of the Maya," provides additional information about the pyramids that the Maya constructed, as well as their cities and systems of astronomy and mathematics (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7MFKy7DJsCY>).

NOTE: When referring to the Maya civilization it is important to note that "Maya" is used when it is related to the people and their culture and "Mayan" is used when relating to the language family and its script.

The Hero Twins and the Magic of Song is also available in Spanish:

Los héroes gemelos y la magia de la canción (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/los-heroes-gemelos-y-la-magia-de-la-cancion/>). The first book in the series is *Rise of the Halfling King* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/rise-of-the-halfling-king/>). Each of these books can be read as a standalone, or they can be read together.

Pronunciation Guide/Guía de pronunciación

Consider consulting the resources tab for *The Hero Twins and the Magic of Song* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-hero-twins-and-the-magic-of-song/>) and *Los héroes gemelos y la magia de la canción* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/los-heroes-gemelos-y-la-magia-de-la-cancion/>) for a pronunciation guide. Listen as author, David Bowles walks readers through how each of the characters are pronounced in both English and Spanish.

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:

- What do you know about the ancient Maya civilization and their language?
- What do you know about Mesoamerica?
- Explain what resilience means to you. How do you continue to be resilient, even when something is difficult or hard?
- What does resistance mean to you? Has there ever been a time(s) you stood up for what was right, even when it would be easier to stay quiet?

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- What does the word "justice" mean? What does justice mean to you?
- Have you ever had to overcome something that other people did not agree with? What emotions emerge?
- If any students have read the first book, *Rise of the Halfling King*, encourage them to share what it was about and what we might expect in this next book. It is not necessary to read the first book to understand *The Hero Twins and the Magic of Song*. The books can be read as a stand alone or together.
- You may want to have students journal their responses to these questions or pose the final question as a KWL discussion and chart so that you can refer back to it throughout and after the reading of the book to further their thinking on the topic(s).

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, *The Hero Twins and the Magic of Song (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #2)*. 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?

Picture Walk: Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, title page, the character/god list in the beginning, illustrations, author's note, and the creators' biographies.

Read Author and Illustrator Biography: Read about David Bowles and Charlene Bowles. What other books for young people have they created? Learn more about the creators at <https://davidbowles.us/> and charlenebowles.com/.

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 write a feeling in their notebook during reading. After reading, ask students why they wrote that feeling down and have them write a journal entry about it.

Graphic Novel: Introduce students to the main elements of a graphic novel. Spend time defining these elements and pointing to each in the book until students are able to identify them:

- Panel: A distinct segment of the comic, containing a combination of image and text.
- Frame: The lines and borders that contain the panels.
- Gutter: The space between framed panels.
- Speech balloon: These enclosed words come from a specific speaker's mouth to show dialogue between characters.
- Thought balloon: These enclosed words show private thoughts with a series of dots or

bubbles going up to it from a specific character.

- Caption: These are boxes containing a variety of text elements, including scene-setting, description, etc.
- Special-effects lettering: This is a method of drawing attention to text; it often highlights drama or exaggeration and reinforces the impact of words such as “bang” or “wow.”
- Foreground: The art can be perceived as closest to the viewer within the panel.
- Background: Provides additional, subtextual information for the reader.

Check out the panel interview with David Bowles on why he adapted this story into a graphic novel for young people: “License to Thrill: Graphic Novel Adaptations for Kids” from Comic-Con@Home 2020: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LrceWULIU-0>.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

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

Have students read to find out:

- who are the hero twins and what their purpose is
- who is Lady Blood and what her purpose is
- what is Xibalba and why it is important to the story
- who are One Hunahpu and Seven Hunahpu and how they end up in the underworld
- how familial relationships and interactions change over time in the story
- what types of issues do the Hero Twins face
- what can you learn about Maya civilization from this story
- what role animals play in *The Hero Twins and the Magic of Song*
- why it is important to tackle difficult challenges
- what is a trickster
- how can humor help resolve conflict or lighten a tense mood

Encourage students to consider why the author, David Bowles, 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,

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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

Underworld, aluxes, ancients, duke, duchess, tassel-headed, maiden, realms, calabash tree, conch trumpet, manor, resin, congeal, sovereigns, milpa, venison, loincloths, tapeti

Academic

hymn, cease, glimmering, gruesome, forbidden, disobey, despair, burgeoned, execute, gourd, begotten, deceit, ungracious, mockery, wield, relented, netful, quivers, torment, botched, anticlimactic, resurrect, essence, pollinate, realm, omen

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. What happens at the beginning of the fourth age? Who are the demigods of maize?
2. What are the demigods One Hunahpu and Seven Hunahpu like? What is their purpose?
3. What does Grandmother wish for her grandsons? Why does she wish that?
4. What is the Underworld called by the ancients?
5. What stands at the edge of Xibalba? What did the King and Queen of the dead declare? Who disobeyed their declaration?
6. Who is Lady Blood?
7. How did One Hunahpu and Seven Hunahpu end up in Xibalba?
8. What is special about the tree where the head of One Hunahpu is?
9. Why is Lady Blood ordered to stay away from the tree?
10. How does Lady Blood awake One Hunahpu? What does she ask him?
11. What does One Hunahpu realize when they are trapped in the Dark House? How is this plan coming true?
12. What do Lady Blood and One Hunahpu teach other? What do they talk about during their meetings? What does Lady Blood realize?
13. What does it mean if Lady Blood becomes an ally to One Hunahpu?

14. What does the magic saliva represent? What is it a symbol of?
15. Why does One Hunahpu tell Lady Blood to abandon the realm of Xibalba?
16. Who is the reader introduced to in the sea-ringed world above?
17. How do the boys feel toward their father and uncle?
18. How do the parents of Lady Blood react to her being pregnant?
19. Who is Holy Hurricane?
20. How does the Royal Guard help save Lady Blood? How do they deceive the king and queen?
21. What does the Royal Guard do after handing over the "heart" of Lady Blood?
22. How does Xmukane receive Lady Blood? How does she react? What does she say to Lady Blood?
23. How do Hun B'atz' and Hun Chowen respond to Lady Blood telling them about their siblings? What does Lady Blood say to them?
24. Are Hun B'atz' and Hun Chowen willing to help their siblings? Why or why not?
25. What does Xmukane demand from Lady Blood to determine that she indeed is her daughter-in-law?
26. How does the princess of Xibalba come to live in the house of the goddess of corn?
27. What are Lady Blood's children named after? What are their names?
28. What is the problem with her children? How do Hun B'atz' and Hun Chowen treat them? What does grandmother suggest they do with the babies?
29. Why were the hero twins annoyed with the crib?
30. As time passes, who helps Lady Blood raise the hero twins? What do they discover about their divine energy? What skills do they have?
31. How do the songs of the hero twins help the world?
32. How do Hunahpu and Xbalanke (the hero twins) spend their days?
33. Why were Hunahpu and Xbalanke devastated when one of their traps killed a baby tapeti? What did they do?
34. How do Hun B'atz' and Hun Chowen treat the hero twins when they go visit their grandmother? Why are they consumed with envy?
35. How are do Hunahpu and Xbalanke kinder than Hun B'atz' and Hun Chowen?
36. What do Hunahpu and Xbalanke do to teach Hun B'atz' and Hun Chowen a lesson? How is grandmother their accomplice?
37. When will Hun B'atz' and Hun Chowen return?
38. How did Hun B'atz' and Hun Chowen almost ruin the divine plan? How will people remember

them?

39. Is this book literature or informational text? How do you know?

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.** After reading the graphic novel, what is the significance of the title *The Hero Twins and the Magic of Song* (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #2)?
- 2.** How are the illustrations in a graphic novel different from those in other illustrated books? How do the illustrations support the text? How is this different from a picture book format?
- 3.** What is the purpose of the rectangular text boxes in a graphic novel? How are they important to the story? How do they affect pacing and plot development?
- 4.** How does the illustrator, Charlene Bowles, convey sound through her art? What elements or techniques does she use in her illustrations?
- 5.** How does the illustrator, Charlene Bowles, use expressions and gestures to convey character traits? Use evidence from the text to support your claims.
- 6.** Find these graphic novel elements in the book: panels, gutters, text boxes, speech balloons, sound effects, and motion lines. How do these elements work together? If you remove any one of these elements, what is the effect? How does each and all of them taken together enable comprehension of the story?
- 7.** How does the loss of Hun B'atz' and Hun Chowen father impact how they feel? How does the way their mother left impact how they feel? How does this impact their behavior?
- 8.** Why do you think it can be difficult to overcome obstacles and fears? Have you ever had to overcome obstacles? How did you feel? Did you have anyone to help you?
- 9.** Describe the dynamic between Lady Blood and Xmukane. Support your descriptions with evidence from the story.
- 10.** How does Xmukane treat Hunahpu and Xbalanke? How does it compare to how she treats Hun B'atz' and Hun Chowen?
- 11.** How is Xibalba described in the story? What perception do people have of Lady Blood in the world above?
- 12.** What does the glimmering tree at the edge of Xibalba represent in the story?
- 13.** What strong characteristics do Hunahpu and Xbalanke possess? How would you describe Hunahpu and Xbalanke as characters to someone who hasn't read the book? Did you connect with Hunahpu and Xbalanke? Why or why not?
- 14.** What role do animals play throughout the story? Provide examples.
- 15.** How do the hero twins, Hunahpu and Xbalanke, show resilience throughout the story? How does Lady Blood show resilience throughout the story?

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16. How do jealousy and envy consume Hun B'atz' and Hun Chowen?
17. 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? What kind of stories did they tell you? How are they meaningful to you?
18. What lesson do Hun B'atz' and Hun Chowen learn by the end of the story?
19. How did you feel about the way *The Hero Twins and the Magic of Song (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #2)* ended? Were you satisfied with the ending? Why or why not?
20. How does the afterword by author David Bowles help us better understand the story, *The Hero Twins and the Magic of Song (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #2)*?
21. If students have previously read *Rise of the Halfling King*, ask students to compare the texts: characters, conflict, setting, and message.
22. Do you recommend this book to a friend? Why or why not?

Reader's Response

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

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

1. **What do you think the author's message to the reader is?** Think about David Bowles's afterword. What do you think he wanted to tell young readers?
2. **Have students make a text-to-self connection.** What kind of connections did you make from this book to your own life?
3. **Have students make a text-to-text connection.** Did you think of any other books while you read *The Hero Twins and the Magic of Song (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #2)*?
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? What in this book made you think of that?

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. Afterwards, students can create their own drawing to connect with the book's message.
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. In pairs, have students give a short talk about Lady Blood or the Hero Twins. Have them discuss what characteristics they admire about the person they chose. Encourage partners to discuss in English and in their home language as needed.
5. Have students draw illustrations to summarize their favorite scene from the story.
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. For Spanish-speaking students, *The Hero Twins and the Magic of Song* is also available in Spanish: *Los héroes gemelos y la magia de la canción* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/los-heroes-gemelos-y-la-magia-de-la-cancion/>)
8. Visit the resources tab for *The Hero Twins and the Magic of Song* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-hero-twins-and-the-magic-of-song/>) and *Los héroes gemelos y la magia de la canción* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/los-heroes-gemelos-y-la-magia-de-la-cancion/>) for a pronunciation guide. Listen as author, David Bowles walks readers through how each of the characters are pronounced in both English and Spanish.
9. Consider consulting www.multilinguallearningtoolkit.org/ for more ideas on how to support Multilingual Learners.

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. In what ways is Lady Blood able to stay persistent and resilient throughout the novel? How does she pass that down to the hero twins, Hunahpu and Xbalanke?
2. What Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) skills do the Hero Twins exhibit over the course of

the book? Some examples of SEL skills include problem-solving, grit and perseverance, and perspective taking. How do the Hero Twins demonstrate these skills? Why was it important for them to demonstrate these skills?

3. How has a family member impacted your life? How do you think Lady Blood helped her sons? Provide evidence from the story to support your thoughts.
4. Who helps you when you are in a difficult or challenging situation? What do they do to help you?
5. How does *The Hero Twins and the Magic of Song (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #2)* show the difference between supportive family dynamics and not-so-supportive family dynamics? What are the characteristics of a supportive family? What are the different ways people show respect and care for one another in healthy families? Students can brainstorm ideas on chart paper that can be presented and accessible for the whole class.
6. Loss is a theme in this story. Have you ever dealt with a loss of someone you love? Why do some people become angry during times of sadness or trauma? What are some other grieving processes people usually go through when dealing with the loss of someone they love?
7. Which illustration in *The Hero Twins and the Magic of Song (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #2)* best shows an emotion? Explain which emotion you think it shows. How does the image portray that emotion?
8. Choose an emotion that interests you: happiness, sadness, fear, anxiety, frustration, hope, perseverance, and so on. Illustrate or act out what that emotion looks like in *The Hero Twins and the Magic of Song (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #2)*.

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)

- **Conduct a graphic novel study with Lee & Low's other graphic novels** (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/category/category/graphic-novels/>). Have students answer the following questions in an analytical essay: What was it like to read these stories as graphic novels? How would it have been different if these stories were written in prose, as novels? How did the authors convey the struggles that the characters were going through in each

of the graphic novels? How are graphic novels powerful as an art form? What social justice issues did each graphic novel present? What was it like to read about these issues through a graphic novel format?

- **Conduct an Author's Study on David Bowles with the following titles from Lee & Low: *The Witch Owl Parliament (Clockwork Curandera Volume 1)*** (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-witch-owl-parliament-clockwork-curandera-1>) **and *Rise of the Halfling King (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #1)*** (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/rise-of-the-halfling-king/>). How are the main characters similar? How are they different? What themes do both books have in common? How are the topics similar? How are they different? Provide students with a graphic organizer to differentiate the two titles, and then have students write an essay answering the previous questions.
- **Students can complete a critical essay.** Have students identify what they believe is the main theme of the story and use details from the book to support why they believe this to be the main theme. Why did students select that theme? After students have written their responses, allow time for peer-to-peer dialogue so students can compare their responses.
- **Have students compare the sets of brothers Hunahpu and Xbalanke** with their half brothers Hun B'atz' and Hun Chowen using a Venn diagram. How are the siblings similar and different? What does their character development look like throughout the story? How do they change over time? Provide evidence from the text to support your argument.
- **Select a scene in which you disagreed with how a character handled a situation, person, or event.** In the voice of that character, rewrite the scene as you think it should have happened. What made you want to rewrite that scene? What do you think should have happened? Have students discuss their writing pieces after and discuss what it was like to take on the perspective of another character different from the one presented in the story.
- **Create a story map that will help students follow the different elements in *The Hero Twins and the Magic of Song (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #2)* during their reading of the graphic novel.** Discuss the main components of the story (characters, setting, problem/solution, theme). You can do this together as a class on chart paper or you can provide students with individual copies of a blank story map organizer. You can find and read more about using story maps graphic organizers here (https://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/story_maps).
- **Encourage students to imagine they can interview the author, David Bowles, or the illustrator, Charlene Bowles.** Students should design interview questions they would ask the creators of *The Hero Twins and the Magic of Song (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #2)* if they were on a talk show, news show, or podcast show. What do students want to learn more about in terms of the writing process or the illustration process?
- **Have students read the Afterword from David Bowles.** What did they learn from the Afterword after reading the story? How did it make them think differently about *The Hero Twins and the Magic of Song (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #2)*? Why did he decide to write this story? Have students write a reaction essay to the Afterword, and present three follow-up questions for David Bowles.

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- **Provide students with a panel sequence or page from the book.** Have students examine the illustrations and text (word boxes and speech balloons) separately. What information do you get from the illustrations alone? From the text alone? How do the illustrations and text work together to express information?

Social Studies

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1-3; Craft and Structure, Strands 4-6; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7-9; and 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 and Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **Ask students to research the people and cultures of Mesoamerica.** How did the Spanish conquest affect their stories and histories? (<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/resource-library-mesoamerica>). Discuss how this information helps students understand *The Hero Twins and the Magic of Song (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #2)*.
- **Have students research the Maya civilization in Southern Mexico.** What was the Maya civilization like? When were they around? What type of writing system did they have? What is unique about how they developed their writing system? What influences of Maya culture do we see today? (<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/modern-day-maya>) Have students share their findings in an informational poster to display around the classroom.
- **Encourage students to examine how Mayan text is used throughout *The Hero Twins and the Magic of Song (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #2)*.** Why do you think David Bowles chose to include the Mayan language in the graphic novel? How is the Mayan language critical to the story? How is the Mayan language important in different regions in Mexico today? Students can refer to the Background Information section of this guide to begin their research and learn about Maya civilization, history, and culture.
- **Have students conduct additional research on the *Popol Vuh*.** What is it? What does it represent? What is the meaning of "Popol Vuh"? Students can complete a KWL chart to record their findings. For additional information, read the Afterword by David Bowles or consider consulting the following resource (<https://maya.nmai.si.edu/the-maya/creation-story-maya>).

Art/Performing Arts

(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 identify scenes in *The Hero Twins and the Magic of Song (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #2)* that show the role of song.** Where in the story are songs used? What is their purpose? How does the illustrator show the reader a song? Have students provide examples from the text and illustrate their responses.
- **Photocopy one scene in the book, selecting one with multiple panels in a plot**

sequence. Cut the panels apart and shuffle them so they are out of order. Place the mixed-up panels into an envelope. Prepare whatever number envelopes you need to distribute them to pairs of students. After collecting their books, have students work in pairs to organize the panels in proper sequence. Prompt students to use cues and context provided by the illustrations and text, as well as their recall of the story. Walk around asking questions and giving feedback.

- **Have students illustrate a feeling one of the characters experienced in the story.** What do they want to convey? What kinds of materials do they want to use? Have students share their pieces with a partner, small group, or whole class.
- **Consider having students come up with questions to interview the illustrator, Charlene Bowles.** What is her process behind creating the illustrations for a graphic novel? How did she work with the author, David Bowles, on pairing the illustrations with the text? Students can reach out to Charlene Bowles for a virtual author visit (<https://www.charlenebowles.com/>).
- **Encourage students to select the illustration from *The Hero Twins and the Magic of Song (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #2)* that resonated with them the most.** Have students write a reflection about the illustrations chosen. What stood out to them? How did their illustrations make them feel? What did the illustrations make them think about?
- **Have students create their own earthly instruments.** First have students create a sketch of what they would like their earthly instruments to look like then allow students to find the materials around the classroom or outside to help create their instruments. Students can reflect on what process they went through in creating their instruments. How did they decide what shape they wanted their instruments to be? How did they decide what material to make their instrument out of? What sound will the instrument make? If time allows, have students test out their instruments.

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)

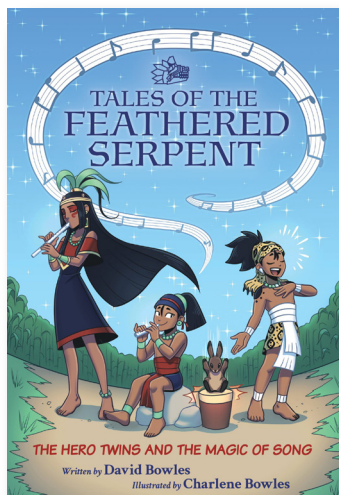
(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **Ask students to create portraits of people who are their personal role models through drawing, collage, or photograph.** In writing, students should describe what actions and qualities they admire about this person. They can also give their role models special abilities and powers. Students can write in prose or submit a poem or song.
- **Have students interview a parent, guardian, or adult mentor about their experiences with fighting for something they believe in or going through a hardship.** How did this person react to and handle the situation when they were faced with obstacles? What advice do they have for someone who has been shunned from their community?
- **Have students bring home a copy of *The Hero Twins and the Magic of Song (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #2)*.** Ask students to read with adults at home. Encourage

The Hero Twins and the Magic of Song (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #2)

Teacher's Guide leeandlow.com/books/the-hero-twins-and-the-magic-of-song/

conversation and discussion after reading. What did they like about reading a graphic novel? What did they learn from the story? What was it like to examine the text and illustrations together?



Ordering Information

General Order Information:

leeandlow.com/contact/ordering

Secure Online Ordering:

leeandlow.com/books/the-hero-twins-and-the-magic-of-song/

By Phone: 212-779-4400

By Mail:

381 Park Ave S, #1401
New York, NY 10016

ABOUT THE AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR

David Bowles is a Mexican American author and translator from South Texas, where he teaches literature and Nahuatl at the University of Texas Río Grande Valley. Among his forty published books are the multiple-award-winning *They Call Me Güero*, *The Prince & the Coyote*, and *Feathered Serpent*, *Dark Heart of Sky: Myths of Mexico*, as well as the series *Garza Twins*, *13th Street*, and *Clockwork Curandera*. He is the current president of the Texas Institute of Letters.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Charlene Bowles is a Mexican American comic artist and illustrator from South Texas. In addition to the *Tales of the Feathered Serpent* series, she has illustrated several readers for educational programs and designed the covers of multiple comics and books, including the *Garza Twins* series. She is presently writing her first children's book and graphic novel.

Reviews

"With vibrant colors and tight pacing, the graphic novel format will pull readers along easily, even into subsequent volumes. The hero twins of Mayan mythology and their wild stories are brought to life in this great series."— *School Library Journal*

"This latest installment in David Bowles' series devoted to Mesoamerican folklore weaves demigod-filled bombast with fanciful hijinks, star-crossed romance, and heaps of humor. Charlene Bowles' artwork continues to leverage bold lines, earthy tones, and fluid action to further delight.... An engrossing tale of fledgling heroics."— *Kirkus Reviews*

"Straightforward and humorous language paired with clear, eye-catching comics-style illustrations make this an engaging retelling of a selection from the Mayan Popol Vuh."— *The Horn Book*

ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

LEE & LOW BOOKS is the largest children's book publisher specializing in diversity and multiculturalism. Our motto, "about everyone, for everyone," is as urgent today as it was when we started in 1991. It is the company's goal to meet the need for stories that children of color can identify with and that all children can enjoy. The right book can foster empathy, dispel stereotypes, prompt discussion about race and ethnicity, and inspire children to imagine not only a world that includes them, but also a world where they are the heroes of their own stories. Discover more at leeandlow.com.