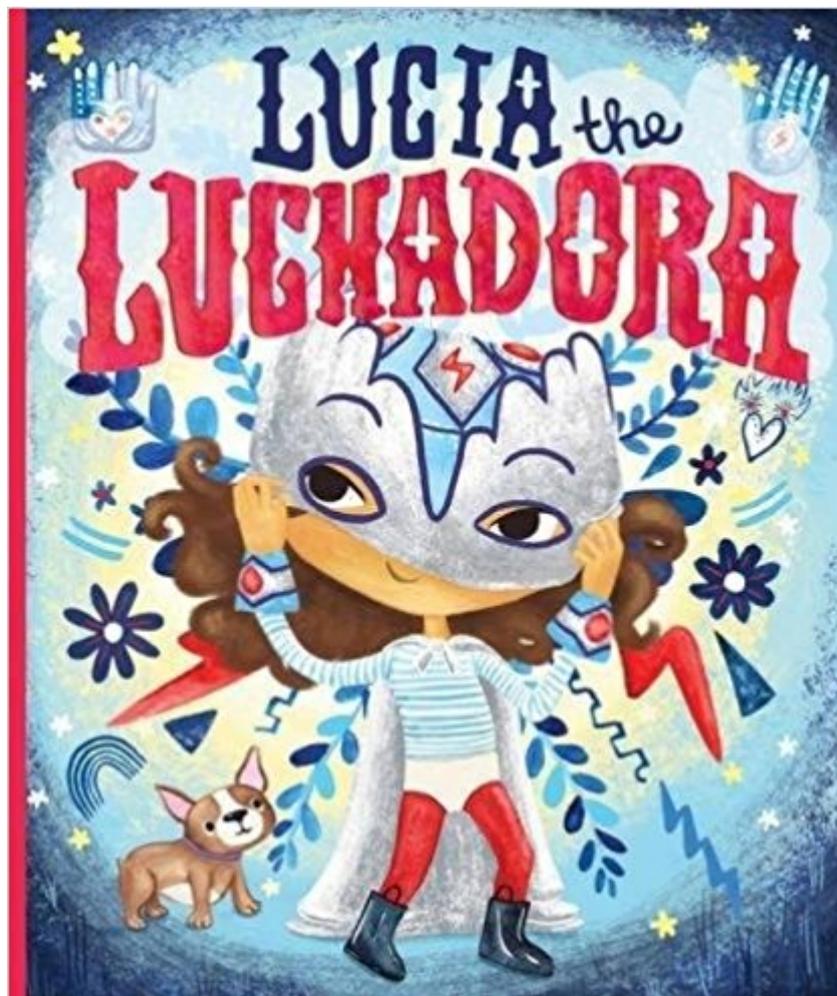


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# Lucia The Luchadora



## Synopsis

Lucía - a zips through the playground in her cape just like the boys, but when they tell her "girls can't be superheroes," suddenly she doesn't feel so mighty. That's when her beloved abuela reveals a dazzling secret: Lucía comes from a family of luchadoras, the bold and valiant women of the Mexican lucha libre tradition. Cloaked in a flashy new disguise, Lucía returns as a recess sensation! But when she's confronted with a case of injustice, Lucía must decide if she can stay true to the ways of the luchadora and fight for what is right, even if it means breaking the sacred rule of never revealing the identity behind her mask. A story about courage and cultural legacy, Lucía the Luchadora is full of pluck, daring, and heart.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 32 pages

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Shipping Weight: 14.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.9 out of 5 stars 18 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #40,144 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #8 in Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Mexico #76 in Books > Children's Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Science Fiction > Superheroes #112 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Multigenerational

Age Range: 3 - 7 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 2

## Customer Reviews

"A shining debut outing for author and illustrator, this endearing and humorous title is sure to put a bit of KA-POW into storytimes! A must-have."-School Library Journal (starred review)"Garza shines in her children's debut. The text bursts with infectious energy and Lucía's endearing personality. A madcap pace keeps the story moving along with humor, heart, and bravado in equal measures. Likewise, Bermudez's colorful, buoyant illustrations radiate pure joy. Nifty text placement, variations in type color, and use of sound effects add to this delightful package, making it a joy for readers to root for this plucky young girl. A KA-POW kind

of wonderful." Kirkus Reviews (starred review) "A shining debut outing for author and illustrator, this endearing and humorous title is sure to put a bit of KA-POW into storytimes! A must-have. School Library Journal (starred review) AS SEEN IN: Austin American-Statesman and the Houston Chronicle.

Cynthia Leonor Garza spent most of her childhood under the hot South Texas sun running around with her three brothers. She's a journalist who has worked for several newspapers and her commentaries have appeared on NPR and in The Atlantic. Of all the lucha libre masks she owns, her favorite one is pink and gold. She currently lives with her two young daughters and husband in Nairobi, Kenya. This is her first picture book. Alyssa Bermudez grew up in New York City, where culture and liveliness fed her imagination. Her illustrations have appeared in animation, and on packaging and textiles. Alyssa, along with her mini Mexican folk art collection and two little dogs, can be found in the beautiful and faraway Tasmania, where she currently resides. Lucia - a the Luchadora is her debut into the magical world of picture books.

Read this with my four year old as soon as it arrived; she LOVED it. It's such a lively book, full of action and energy, and all the onomatopoeia was super fun. And beyond just being a really enjoyable book, there's a lot of meat for parents to love. There's a great message about being a strong girl, about caring about and helping people, about not bullying. And, obviously, there's some diversity here that our bookshelf has been lacking. Both my daughter and I are thrilled to have this book, and we both want to be luchadoras, now!

Fell completely and utterly in love with Lucia! What an amazing book with such a powerful message. Even my middle school students loved the book. Highly recommend it to all!

such a great story that empowers any young lady! Full of action and color, this is a great treat for all children. Love it!

My 5-year old, who happens to be named Lucia, LOVES this book

It's action-packed and fun to read :)

My daughter, Lucia, loves this book!

Can't wait to give it to my niece Lucia for her 1st birthday

Wonderful book to read to kids with an empowering story. The illustrations are beautiful with bright eye-catching colors. Kids will enjoy dressing up as the characters. A definite buy for the little ones.

It was probably seven or so years ago. I was working as a children's librarian in New York City. We were hosting a class of kids, first or second graders, and after I had read them some picture books and covered the rudimentary basics on how to treat the titles they checked out, we let them run free to find whatever subjects they wanted. As I returned to the front desk about four or five of them trailed me. I sat down and they said, voices bright with hope and anticipation, "Where are your Mexican wrestling books?" And I had nothing for them. Absolutely nothing. Sure, we had a section on wrestling but it was all WWF stuff. No DK compendiums of the greatest Mexican wrestlers. No biographies of the most famous ones. Not even a single solitary picture book. A couple years passed and Yuyi Morales wrote two picture books that involved wrestling (Nino Wrestles the World and Rudas) while a couple other middle grade novels and additional picture books were released. Still, I felt like I was waiting for something. A book that years later I could pretend I could at last hand over to those kids. And then, this year, I saw Lucia the Luchadora and something in me broke wide open. Cleverly equating luchadoras with superheroes while tackling issues of sexism and cultural assumptions head on, this is the book that gave my 5-year-old daughter the idea to create her own luchadora outfits in fine and fancy style. Literally inspirational. Lucia is a little down. She was having a lot of fun running around the playground acting like a superhero, but when she tried to play with the twins Mick and Nick they just told her that girls can't be superheroes at all. Seeing her granddaughter sad, Lucia's abuela lets her in on a little family secret. Squirreled away in a old box lies a shiny satin cape and a special silver mask. Long ago, Abu was a luchadora, a Mexican wrestler in the vein of the great luchador El Santo, who was never unmasked. Inspired, Lucia wears the mask and cape to the playground and everyone not only stands in awe of her but they too start constructing luchador and luchadora costumes of their own. Yet it isn't until Lucia sees another girl teased by Nick and Mick that she discovers that sometimes the greatest thing a hero can do is simply to be seen for who she truly is. A note about the history of luchadores and luchadoras follows at the end of the book. Equating luchadoras and superheroes

isn't a new idea in general, but it's fair to say I've never seen it done in a picture book before. What's odd is that it's so obvious you can't help but remain baffled as to why this is the first time it's been done. Of course, it's not as if the North American market is positively overflowing with Latino-American picture books. In spite of the existence of the Pura Belpre Awards for Latino/Latina writers and illustrators, a study conducted by the CCBC in 2015 found that only 2.5% of picture books published contained characters with Latinx backgrounds. Garza's choice to make the book culturally appropriate AND massively appealing in its subject matter is remarkable. We hear a lot about kids needing more diverse books and this is very true. But we additionally need more fun diverse books, and "Lucia" fits that need perfectly. Briefly putting aside the cultural ramifications of Garza and Bermudez's book, let's also consider it this way: This is the only female superhero picture book I've ever seen that didn't involve a trademarked character. By the way, I just wrote that sentence and then went on a mad Googling spree to see if what I said rings true. It's not completely right. The Ladybug Girl books by Jaqueline Davis and David Soman, for example, are technically about a girl pretending to be a superhero. And certainly there are female superhero side characters in books like Kapow by George O'Connor. But Ladybug Girl, for all her charms, is very soft and low-key. The thrill of Lucia is that she's leaping off of monkey bars and outrunning her enemies. My daughter, a bit of a Superfriends addict (circa 1977) has always considered Ladybug Girl perfectly acceptable, if not half as energized and exciting as Lucia the Luchadora. This is a book that positively sizzles on the page. Much of the credit of this sizzling action goes to Ms. Garza, author extraordinaire. Right from the start she's acting on some pretty classic comic book tropes. Onomatopoeic words appear beside Lucia as she goes "POW" and "BAM" like a classy episode of the classic Batman and Robin television show from the 60s. That's how the book opens, and I can attest to the fact that there are few things that rivet the attention of child readers faster than kids their age in familiar spaces (in this case, the playground) acting like super heroic action heroes. Of course cool settings only take you so far. Lucia's true journey begins when the boys refuse to involve her in their games. Garza keeps their nasty comments low-key (the mocking rhyme of girls being "sugar and spice and everything nice" plays a hand) but you get why Lucia's glum. The story arc was important to me at this point. Should anyone

ask you, writing a concise, smart picture book is ridiculously hard. You have to pack a big punch into a small space, and basically create conflict, likeable characters, a moral for young readers (optional), a climax, and a conclusion all within about 32 pages or so. When it turned out that Lucia's true heroic act wouldn't be rescuing a puppy from a twisty slide but removing her mask to show solidarity with another girl, I felt like this was a moment of true empathy that child readers would actually understand. Helloooooo, teachable moment! Ms. Garza's text is great and I'm sure it would get some attention regardless of the illustrator. That said, she lucked out here. Authors don't typically get to pick the artists that work on their books. That's the final call of the book's editor, and in this case the editor somehow learned of Alyssa Bermudez. Lucia the Luchadora is Ms. Bermudez's debut picture book (Garza's too, for that matter) and a perusal of her online portfolio reveals colors, patterns, and images that gleefully rejoice in overkill. This isn't an illustrator afraid of busy art. With Lucia, Bermudez takes Garza's text to heart and doesn't just give the sound effects their own oversized letters but also adds an explosion of white in the background behind the characters too. Then there's her attention to detail. Whether it's the rosary beads and perfume on the grandmother's dressing table or the fact that Abu's green eyes match the eyes of the luchadora of her memories, there's a talent at work here. This being Ms. Bermudez's first time around the block, I did find a couple small details that distracted from the story. Lucia's leap from the monkey bars always appears to be headfirst, which makes her landing on her feet just a bit unlikely. Also, the dark swirly slide that everyone on the playground appears to fear would make a lot more sense if it were enclosed. Out in the open it's just a slide, albeit a rather lovely dark red/purple one. Now please excuse me but I'm gonna go off on the killer typography here for a second. I don't know why, but the older I get, the more I pay attention to fonts in picture books. I never notice their colors when I'm reading a book to my kids, but when I go back and examine it, I sometimes notice that the change in the color of a font actually affects how I read the book aloud to my child. In this book the first words are "I zip through the playground in my red cape," in red. After that the words are in blue and white, then red again. Some of these color choices are made out of necessity (white against the dark backgrounds and dark against the light) but considering how often they change you might think it would be distracting to the reader. It isn't. It just feels natural to the text. Better

than natural, it feels necessary. And did I mention the endpapers? Boy, you know I like a book when I start waxing eloquent on endpapers. The first ones you see display testimonial images to both Lucia's abuela's life (wedding photos, pictures of her cat, icons of Mary, lighted candles) and her loves (El Santo, her luchadora mask, etc.). Even better, when you turn that first page to look at the title page, the backside of the endpaper is now a repeating pattern of wrestling images done in blue ink. This becomes the pattern on the top of Lucia's mask on the back endpapers. Who pays attention to that kind of detail?!? Class acts. That's who. Books for kids on Mexican wrestlers still have a long ways to go. Honestly, until I see a DK or Eyewitness or National Geographic Press title summarizing the greatest wrestlers of the past and present for kids in a clear format, I'll continue to remember those kids in the library and their innocent request. Children's librarians are hemmed in by the constraints of the publishing industry. If they don't make 'em, we can't buy 'em. That's why a book like Lucia the Luchadora is so important. Funny, exciting, and truly beautiful, this book is good for what ails you. Kids will eat it up with a spoon but beware. After reading this book they may want to know even MORE about luchadores and luchadoras. You better get ready to answer their questions. I suggest you bone up on your reading now. Start with this book. You hardly find one better. For ages 4-6.

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