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Cynthia Leonor Garza , Alyssa Bermudez (Illustrator)

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Lucia 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: Lucia comes from a family of luchadoras, the bold and valiant women of the Mexican lucha libre tradition. Cloaked in a flashy new disguise, Lucia returns as a recess sensation! But when she's confronted with a case of injustice, Lucia 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.

Lucia the Luchadora Details

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Author : Cynthia Leonor Garza , Alyssa Bermudez (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review Lucia the Luchadora for online ebook

LaShana Avery says

This is a great book for any parent trying to teach their child that girls can do anything. It also provides cultural context into the world of Lucha Libre. I loved the illustrations in this book as well.

Jennifer says

Loved it. I love the inclusion and the history and the might girl! Hooray for more diversity in books (and in Lucha Libre!)

Elizabeth says

I love that Lucia talks about feeling "spicy mad." (It's a nice contrast to the bullies' jeer that girls can't be superheroes because they're just made of "sugar and spice," and also feels rooted in her Mexican heritage, and it gives us a great illustration of her surrounded by various chiles all looking angry.)

I love that it's her grandmother (rather than a male adult) who introduces her to the lucha libre history in her family (grandma was a luchadora! how many kids' books have grandmas who were badassess in their youth? especially badassess in a physical capacity).

I love that she inspires all the other kids on the playground to start wearing lucha libre masks.

I love that she never has to compromise her physicality.

The ending is a little confusing. (view spoiler)

Jennifer Haight says

Lucía the Luchadora is the powerhouse debut picture book of author Cynthia Leonor Garza, and illustrator Alyssa Bermudez. It reinforces that girls can equal and surpass boys in sport, encourages compassion and helping others, all while being a heaping ton of fun.

She enters the playground with a "Pow," and a "Bam," but the boys tell Lucia that girls can't be superheroes. Lucía tells her Abuela about her problem and learns a secret, her Abuela used to be a special kind of

superhero, a luchadora. Lucía is given her Abuela's mask and cape and when she wears them to school, other kids start to wear capes and masks too. When an emergency arises at school Lucía is the one to swoop into action and save the day, proving that girls can be superheroes.

The text is splatted and swirled onto the pages in unexpected places in rainbow colors. The illustrations are fresh, expressive, and bold with plenty of details for young eyes to dive into on every page. Besides the great look and message Lucía the Luchadora can be used by educators as an example of onomatopoeia. From the eye catching cover, to the beautiful end papers, to all of the pages in between, this book wins.

My rating: 4.5 of 5 stars

Marissa Elera says

Fun!

Amanda says

I'm torn over this book; I'm all about the messages--Girls can be super heroes! and Fight for what is right! and Don't listen to bullies!--however, the writing and art are uneven. The dark, swirly slide is mentioned right away, but NEVER shown on this page. WHY? Instead, a merry-go-round is, which doesn't make sense. It's shown on the next page, out of context, where the focus is on the boys so that the reader would never even really notice.

Next question: Who is the cat who is shown throughout the WHOLE book, for Pete's sake? The cat is dressed like a super hero, but never named. How does the dog get up to the top of the terrifying slide? Weirdness.

Question at the end: WHY does the pink crusader look so sad? This is never answered, and somehow Lucia taking off her mask just makes everything magically all better. This doesn't make sense--ESPECIALLY if as it says on the back of the book, and throughout the book "Most importantly, a luchadora, never reveals her true identity."

Jana says

Angry because the boys won't let her play superheroes with them, Lucia dons a mask and cape that her grandmother gave her and she becomes a secret superhero herself. Since no one knows her identity, she feels free to be what she wants to be, even a superhero. This might be fun to share with kids to show them that girls can do the same things boys can do and to help all kids have self-confidence.

Gayatri says

Oh Man! the masks, the capes KAPOW!

Betsy says

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. Helloooooooo, 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.

June says

Lucia wants to play superheroes with the boys, but is told "Girls can't be superheroes!" Her abuela gives her a luchadora costume that hides her gender telling her "With that mask, you can become anything you dream of being." When the boys try to prevent another girl from playing Lucia removes her mask.

Popular wrestling topic that promotes gender equality.

Abigail says

Lucía loved to play in the park, enjoying imaginative games of make-believe, in which she starred as the superhero. When the boys tell her girls can't be superheroes, she gets a little down, until her Abuela tells her about the amazing wrestlers known as Luchadores, and gives her the beautiful mask and cape that transform her into a Luchadora. Feeling empowered, she enjoys the splash she makes in her new disguise. But when this idea of girls not being superheroes once again surfaces, she must reveal her identity to put a stop to it...

An immensely engaging book, one which pairs an engrossing story with colorful, appealing artwork, Lucía the Luchadora is the picture-book debut of both author Cynthia Leonar Garza and illustrator Alyssa Bermudez. It is published by POW!, the new children's book imprint of the Brooklyn-based publisher, powerhouse. I appreciated the fact that Lucía's stint as a superhero ended up involving both feeling great about herself and doing something for others, as the narrative felt a little "me, me, me!" at the beginning. I was glad to be proven wrong, and delighted to find a story about Luchadores, as these popular Mexican wrestlers are an important part of many American children's culture, and have hitherto been under-represented in our books. There is even an afterword giving more information about Luche Libre. The accompanying artwork is lovely, with a vibrant color scheme that reminded me a bit of the work of Brigitte Barrager. The decorative endpapers were a nice touch as well! Recommended to anyone looking for children's stories about being a superhero in general, or about Luchadores specifically.

Joss says

LOVE THIS.

Cassandra Gelvin says

Could give Jack Black a run for his money.

The main character is a little girl named Lucía, who is wearing a cape in the playground and pretending to be a superhero. Two boys playing in the same playground are also pretending to be superheroes, and she tries to play with them but they don't let her, saying, "Girls can't be superheroes. Girls are just made of sugar and spice and everything nice." Understandably, she gets mad. Her grandmother, who was watching this, tells Lucía that as a young woman she was a luchadora -- a Latin American masked wrestler. She gives the granddaughter her silver mask and silver cape. The next day at the playground, the two boys are playing around and she comes with her silver mask and silver cape and the boys try to fight her for some reason, attempting to crash into her, but she is fast and acrobatic. She leaps off the monkey bars and sticks the landing.

Before long, other people start wearing Lucha Libre masks on the playground. Then she sees another girl on the playground wearing a pink mask with red glittery hearts and she says she wants to run over and say hi to the girl, but those same boys from before tell the new girl that girls can't be superheroes. So Lucía climbs up to the top of a scary tall slide that all the kids are scared of going down, and she slides down and all the other kids are amazed and cheer. The girl in the pink mask still looks really sad. Then Lucía seems to realize (it's not explicitly stated) that with her mask on, nobody can tell she's a girl, so she breaks the luchador's code and takes off her mask to reveal her secret identity. Then other kids start clapping, and other luchadores pull off their masks, revealing that some of the other kids were also hiding the fact that they were girls. And then the kids all play together.

I really like the message of equality and female empowerment, and how it doesn't say that girls are better than boys, just not to discriminate against people because they're girls. As females, if it takes us hiding who we are for people to notice us, then maybe we need to do that temporarily, but it's important to also show who you truly are to help others. I really enjoyed the book.

Message: Girls can be whatever they want to be.

For more children's book reviews, see my website at <http://www.drmtmk.com>.

Geena Kenemore says

So cute

Keyan says

Lucia is a spunky girl who just wants to be like one of the boys, but they don't even notice her until she becomes a Luchadora and saves the day. I love this tale of girl power and bravery.
