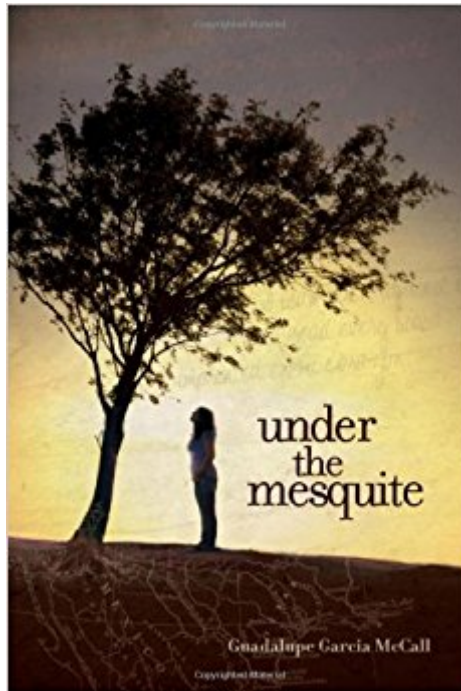




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Under The Mesquite



Synopsis

Lupita, a budding actor and poet in a close-knit Mexican American immigrant family, comes of age as she struggles with adult responsibilities during her mother's battle with cancer in this young adult novel in verse. When Lupita learns Mami has cancer, she is terrified by the possibility of losing her mother, the anchor of her close-knit family. Suddenly, being a high school student, starring in a play, and dealing with friends who don't always understand, become less important than doing whatever she can to save Mami's life. While her father cares for Mami at an out-of-town clinic, Lupita takes charge of her seven younger siblings. As Lupita struggles to keep the family afloat, she takes refuge in the shade of a mesquite tree, where she escapes the chaos at home to write. Forced to face her limitations in the midst of overwhelming changes and losses, Lupita rediscovers her voice and finds healing in the power of words. Told with honest emotion in evocative free verse, Lupita's journey toward hope is captured in moments that are alternately warm and poignant. Under the Mesquite is an empowering story about testing family bonds and the strength of a young woman navigating pain and hardship with surprising resilience.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A resilient Mexican-American girl copes with familial obligation and loss in this free-verse novel.

Drawing from her own teen years for inspiration, McCall highlights life in the borderlands: 'En los Estados Unidos / I trained my tongue / and twisted syllables / to form words / that sounded hollow, / like the rain at midnight / dripping into tin pails / through the thatched roof / of our abuelita's house.'

Lupita's first-person tale captures pivotal moments of her high-school years in the border town of

Eagle Pass, Texas, with glimpses back at her first six years in Piedras Negras, Coahuila, Mexico. During her freshman year, Lupita discovers that her mother has cancer. While her mother fights the disease and her father struggles to support the family financially, Lupita sometimes becomes the de facto parental unit for her seven younger siblings. As she worries about food and money, Lupita experiences the typical troubles and triumphs of a teenage girl; her drama teacher, Mr. Cortez, helps her find an outlet for her talent and her pain. Meanwhile, family members continue to draw strength and support from each other on both sides of the border. With poignant imagery and well-placed Spanish, the author effectively captures the complex lives of teenagers in many Latino and/or immigrant families. A promising, deeply felt debut. --Kirkus Reviews (starred review)

Told in verse sprinkled with Spanish terms (a glossary is included), this story of Lupita's high-school years details her increasing responsibility within her large Mexican American family after Mami is diagnosed with cancer. Caring for seven younger siblings, keeping up with schoolwork and her drama roles, and staying connected with her classmates and friends while the worries gnaw at her take their toll, but she is strong. There are also moments of intense vulnerability. As high-school graduation nears, Lupita sees that her mother may not be there for it: Suddenly I realize / how much I can't control, how much / I am not promised. The close-knit family relationships, especially Mami and Lupita's, are vividly portrayed, as is the healing comfort Lupita finds in words, whether written in her notebooks or performed onstage. --Booklist

I could go on and on about how gorgeous Ms Garcia McCall's writing is and how she seamlessly flits between Spanish and English words and explores two completely different cultures and the issues that come with being uprooted and how perfectly she captures and portrays the emotions that come hand-in-hand with illness in a close, loving family and pain and sadness and hope and about growing up and letting go and looking to the future without forgetting the past and the journey you must go on and maternal love and.... and.... and..... You know what? Just read it and I promise you won't be disappointed. --Wear the Old Coat

A resilient Mexican-American girl copes with familial obligation and loss in this free-verse novel. Drawing from her own teen years for inspiration, McCall highlights life in the borderlands: En los Estados Unidos / I trained my tongue / and twisted syllables / to form words / that sounded hollow, / like the rain at midnight / dripping into tin pails / through the thatched roof / of our abuelita's house. Lupita's first-person tale captures pivotal moments of her high-school years in the border town of Eagle Pass, Texas, with glimpses back at her first six years in Piedras Negras, Coahuila, Mexico. During her freshman year, Lupita discovers that her mother has cancer. While her mother fights the disease and her father struggles to support the family financially, Lupita sometimes becomes the de facto parental unit for her seven younger siblings. As she worries about food and money, Lupita

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This stunning debut novel in verse chronicles the teenage years of Lupita, a character drawn largely from the author's own childhood...The simplicity of the story line belies the deep richness of McCall's writing. Lupita, a budding actress and poet, describes the new English words she learned as a child to be like lemon drops, tart and sweet at the same time and ears of corn as sweating butter and painted with chili-powdered lime juice. Each phrase captures the essence of a moment or the depth of her pain. The power of Lupita's story lies also in the authenticity of her struggles both large and small, from dealing with her mother's illness to arguments with friends about acculturation. This book will appeal to many teens for different reasons, whether they have dealt with the loss of a loved one, aspire to write and act, are growing up Mexican American, or seeking their own identity amid a large family. Bravo to McCall for a beautiful first effort. --School Library Journal

Guadalupe Garcia McCall was born in Mexico and moved to Texas as a young girl, keeping close ties with family on both sides of the border. Her poems for adults have appeared in more than a dozen literary journals. She lives near San Antonio, Texas.

Lupita is the oldest child in a growing family of Mexican-Americans who love each other very much. Even so, she feels her bond with her beloved mother is the closest of all. To prove this, she searches through her mother's purse to find a small, wizened brown thing. It is her umbilical cord. Her Mami saved it. So begins Guadalupe Garcia McCall's debut book, a novel in free verse that describes Lupita's coming of age. The verses include the longing for Mexico even as their family puts down roots (and plants roses bushes amid which a stubborn mesquite thrives) in Texas, Lupita's discovery of drama class and poetry, and her mother's cancer. In one of the most dramatic parts of the story, Lupita is put in charge of her younger siblings while her father goes out of town to stay with her hospitalized mother. The children don't obey her, neighbors and relatives resent giving them food for such a prolonged period -- apparently an entire summer -- and Lupita marvels at how easily her mother took care of them. However, in this section, as in the others, any emotional impact is supplied by the reader. McCall's understated verse is bare bones writing that calls upon her readers to enrich Lupita's small moments and larger journey. Under the Mesquite won this year's

Pura Belpré's work honors as work that "portrays, affirms and celebrates the Latino cultural experience in an outstanding work of literature for children and youth", as stated on its American Library Association home page. While it's not the best written piece of literature, with poetry on the level of what its young readers will be able to write themselves, it is an important work in putting on the pages of a book experiences that speak directly to young Latino/Latina readers. McCall, herself a teacher, has written a book that will be shared in many classrooms and libraries.

This is a beautiful, heartbreaking verse novel about a teenage girl named Lupita whose mom is stricken with cancer. As Lupita faces the possibility of losing her mom, she holds things together at school by being true to herself amid the opposition of friends and at home by taking care of her siblings. She takes solace in acting in drama class and writing in her notebook under a mesquite tree. Lupita is a strong young woman; pain and grief won't conquer her.

For full synopsis please see above. Written in free verse *Under the Mesquite* is the story of Lupe and her family not only dealing with her mother's illness and death but it is also a view into the life of Mexican-Americans. Wanting their children to have a good education and a better life than possible in Mexico, the family moves to a border town in Texas although they visit their relatives often. We learn about the move, the birth of more siblings, the dad working far away, the siblings relationships, the mom's illness and the aftermath of her death. The writing is beautiful and sprinkled with Spanish words and phrases. Since I now work in a school with many native Spanish speaking students I have already introduced this book to some students. Many have never read a book written in this style and between that and the Spanish they are lining up to check it out. Recommended for 5th grade and up. Read it as an arc courtesy of Lee & Low Books via Netgalley.

A really engaging story, that definitely got me thinking about what I truly value in my family. Bought it for school, but I'll definitely be keeping this.

Under the Mesquite was a very sweet book. It touched me to see the dedication of the young woman to her family. With all the burden she assumed she never lost sight of her high goals in life. The ties of the young author to her mother were admirable. This young woman was strong and wise beyond her years. I found this story very telling of the warmth, love and duty exemplified in most Mexican families.

The reason I picked four stars is because I thought it was a good book and had a nice story to tell but there were some parts where I got bored and also the Spanish was confusing and it was hard going to the back of the book and back to the page I was at but in all I am happy that this book was on my summer reading list. ;)

This book will invoke a whole spectrum of emotions. What a beautiful tribute to the author's mother. The book reveals the challenges families face and the strength derived from love of family. This book is very inspiring. We plan to introduce this chapter book (written in poetry) to participants in our teen girls' summer camps. I can hardly wait to hear the discussions!

It was a very beautiful book. The poems were touching and hit on very serious subjects in a way that was still accessible, especially for young readers.

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