

ADRIANNA CUEVAS

The  
Total Eclipse  
OF NESTOR  
LOPEZ

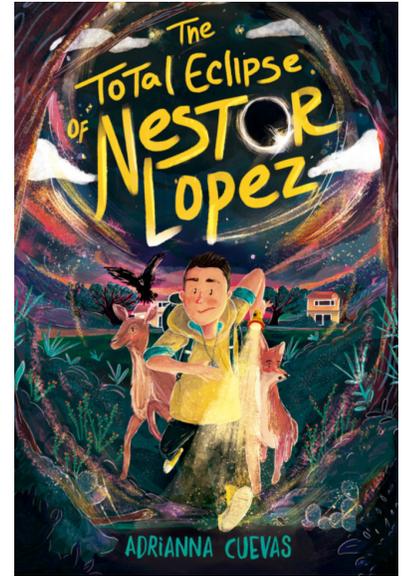


## ABOUT THE BOOK

All Nestor Lopez wants is to live in one place for more than a few months and have dinner with his dad.

When he and his mother move to a new town to live with his grandmother after his dad's latest deployment, Nestor plans to lay low. He *definitely* doesn't want anyone to find out his deepest secret: that he can talk to animals.

But when the animals in his new town start disappearing, Nestor's grandmother becomes the prime suspect after she is spotted in the woods where they were last seen. As Nestor investigates the source of the disappearances, he learns that they are being seized by a mysterious creature whose power grows during the solar eclipse. And the next eclipse is just around the corner...



Now it's up to Nestor's extraordinary ability and his new friends to catch the culprit- and save a place he just might call home.

"A marvelous, magical mystery that deftly blends family, friends, and folklore."

- David Bowles, author of Pura Belpre Honor Book *They Call Me Guero*

"Mystery, adventure, humor, friendship,... and talking animals- *The Total Eclipse of Nestor Lopez* has it all!

Readers will love this funny, fast-paced, heartwarming story."

- Celia C. Perez, author of Pura Belpre Honor Book *The First Rule of Punk* and *Strange Birds*

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### *Military Families*

A common part of military life is moving. Most military families move every 2 to 3 years, but some move more often than that. It is possible that a child in a military family will have moved 10 times by the time they're twelve. Also, deployments are an expected part of life for a military family.

## ***Cuban-American Heritage***

Nestor and his grandmother say goodbye to each other with the refrain *Chao, pescao. Y a la vuelta picadillo*. This means *Bye, fish. And tomorrow ground beef*. This saying comes from the ration booklets the people of Cuba had under the dictator Fidel Castro. One day they would be allowed to have fish, the next day beef. Fidel Castro ruled Cuba from 1959, when he overthrew the government, until his death in 2016. Many Cubans fled Cuba during Castro's reign. Nestor's grandmother refers to this when she talks about being sent to the United States by herself.

## ***Tule Vieja***

The legend of the tule vieja originates from Panama and Costa Rica. The witch that terrorizes New Haven is different from the traditional tule vieja. While the tule vieja Nestor encounters can turn into various animals by biting them, the Panamanian and Costa Rican tule vieja takes on a permanent half-woman, half-bird form. Short bat wings sprout from her back, and sharp hawk talons take the place of her feet. Wandering through towns at night, she searches for her lost children, drawn by the cries of newly born babies and the howls of dogs. Much like the Latin American tale of La Llorona, a woman who drowned her children and now searches for them along the riverbank, the tule vieja snatches small children from their homes, believing they are her own.

## ***Solar Eclipses***

A solar eclipse happens when the moon gets between the Earth and the sun and the moon casts its shadow over the Earth. A solar eclipse only occurs during a new moon. Depending on the alignment of the Earth, moon, and sun, a partial eclipse, a total eclipse or an annular eclipse may take place. The totality of a solar eclipse, where the moon completely covers the sun, can last up to seven and a half minutes, but most solar eclipses are much shorter.



## PRE-READING ACTIVITY

*The Total Eclipse of Nestor Lopez* begins with the following lines:

I grip Dad's old Army compass, willing myself not to launch it at the obnoxious raven heckling me from the bedroom window. I've lived in five other places, but the birds in New Haven are by far the most annoying.

1. These lines are spoken by Nestor, the narrator of the book. Based on what Nestor says, what are two things we learn about him?
2. Have you ever had to move? What advice would you give someone that was facing a similar situation?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(15 questions)

For each response, use at least one piece of text evidence to support your answer.



1. Nestor's packing boxes make up a big part of chapter 1. What does the reader learn about Nestor's likes and dislikes through the packing boxes?

2. In chapter 1, Abuela says, "Esas tontas escaleras." If you don't speak Spanish, what clues can you look for in the text to figure out the meaning?



3. In chapter 2, the reader is given clues that there might be something dangerous in the woods. What clues can you find?
4. In chapter 4, the reader learns that Abuela might be keeping secrets. What secrets is she hiding and what evidence from the texts tells you what those secrets are?
5. In chapter 5, Nestor tells Maria Carmen and Talib about moving a lot. How is his perception of his moves different than what Maria Carmen and Talib think of them?
6. At the end of chapter 7, the witch is mentioned for the first time. What clues has the reader seen so far of her existence?

7. In Nestor's letter to his father at the beginning of chapter 7, he tells his dad, "This animal is known for howling at the moon and has even been known to adapt its habitat to cities." What animal do you think Nestor is talking about and why do you think Nestor chose this animal to quiz his dad over?

8. In chapter 9, the reader learns a little about Abuela's childhood. How do you think her situation and Nestor's are similar? How are they different?

9. What similarities do you notice throughout the story between Nestor and his father?

10. In chapter 12, Brandon suggests that Nestor's grandmother might be the

witch. What evidence so far would prove him wrong? What evidence suggests she might actually be the witch?



11. In chapter 17, a secret is revealed about Abuela. What clues did the reader have up to this point regarding this secret?

12. After Nestor's letter to his dad in chapter 18, what do you think of the 'Always Be Positive, Always Be Happy' rule that Nestor's mom has?

13. How does Nestor's opinion of Brandon change over the course of the story? What do you think causes the biggest change?

14. At the end of chapter 22, Nestor says, "I've done the stupidest thing I've ever done in all our moves. I've let New Haven become home." Why do you think Nestor feels this way?

15. How does Nestor's letter to his father in the last chapter allude to what's really been going on in New Haven?

## EXTENSION RESPONSES

Select one of the following quotes from *The Total Eclipse of Nestor Lopez*. Write an extended response explaining whether you agree or disagree with the opinion presented in the quote.

Be sure to:

- Clearly state your central idea.
  - Organize your writing.
  - Develop your writing in detail.
  - Choose your words carefully.
  - Use correct spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and grammar.
1. Sometimes it hurts too much missing somebody, so you try to convince yourself you don't really need them. And you think that trying not to love them so much makes it hurt less when they're gone. It usually doesn't work.
  2. I think [Dad] forgets that the instant camaraderie in the military doesn't exactly happen in middle school. It's more like cage-match fights to the death with cafeteria burritos and chocolate pudding.



## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

1. Have students create their own animal trivia questions. This could take the form of a Jeopardy-style quiz or a board game.
2. Have students research the next solar eclipse and make a map detailing the eclipse coverage with time lapses.
3. Have students make a guide meant for new students at their school. This could be a brochure, a website, or a presentation.
4. Have students research animals native to their area. In their presentation about these animals, have them present what they think each animal would say if it could talk.

## ONLINE RESOURCES/FURTHER READING

*A Galaxy of Sea Stars* by Jeanne Zulick Ferruolo

*Each Tiny Spark* by Pablo Cartaya

*Charlie Hernandez and the League of Shadows* by Ryan Calejo

*Sal and Gabi Break the Universe* by Carlos Hernandez

Creating Eclipses in the Classroom, <https://www.unawe.org/activity/eu-unawe1302/>

5 Things You Need to Know About Military Families, <https://www.uso.org/stories/2277-5-things-to-know-about-military-families>



### ***ABOUT THE AUTHOR***

**Adrianna Cuevas** is a first-generation Cuban-American originally from Miami, Florida. After teaching Spanish and ESOL for sixteen years, she decided to pursue her passion for storytelling. Adrianna currently resides outside of Austin, TX with her husband and son where they enjoy hiking, traveling, and cooking lots of Cuban food. ***The Total Eclipse of Nestor Lopez*** is her middle-grade debut.

Visit her online at [www.adriannacuevas.com](http://www.adriannacuevas.com)



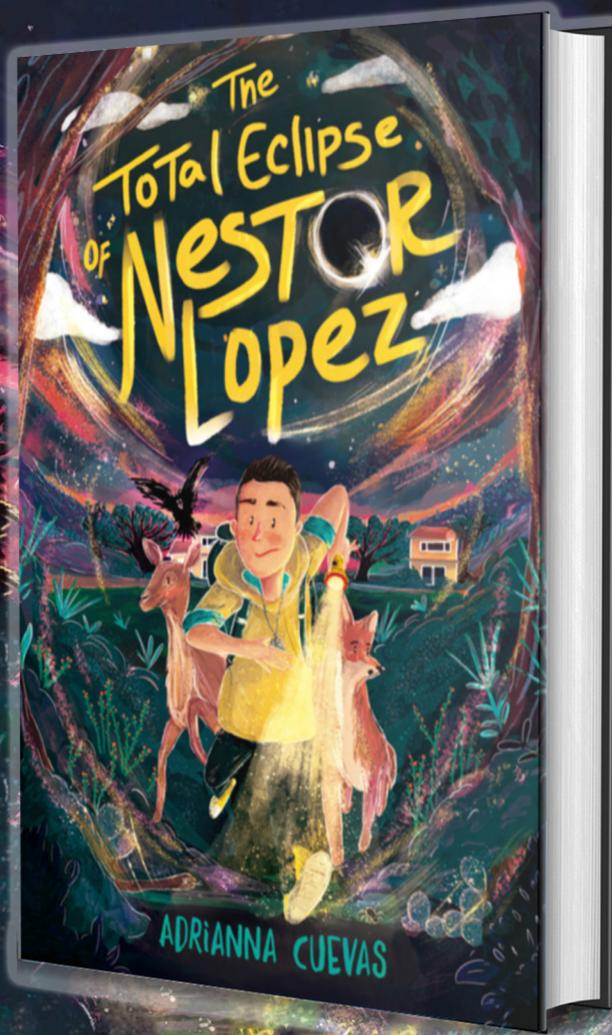
### ***The Total Eclipse of Nestor Lopez***

*Hardcover*

ISBN: 0374313601

\$16.99

This guide was created by Adrianna Cuevas.



DESIGNED BY my **LZ** design  
by PETER LOPEZ