

A Teacher's Guide for FRIZZY

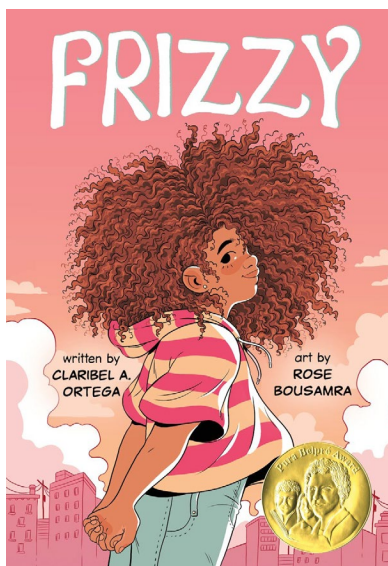


ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR

New York Times Bestselling and award-winning author **Claribel A. Ortega** went from journalism student, editing her classmates' often hilarious ads and ramblings on the back page of SUNY Purchase's Independent Newspaper, to a small-town reporter, where she enjoyed going to board of ed meetings and texting the town mayors about the line at Starbucks.

Claribel's debut middle grade novel *Ghost Squad* is a *New York Times* Bestseller and is being made into a feature film. *Ghost Squad* won Best in Middle Grade at the 2021 Ignite Awards, was a Goodreads Choice Award finalist, and an International Latino book awards honorary mention for 2020. Her other titles include *Witchlings* (Scholastic) and the graphic novel *Frizzy* (First Second), winner of the 2023 Pura Belpré Award for Children's Text, with Rose Bousamra.

Rose Bousamra is a freelance illustrator and comic creator born and based in Michigan. *Frizzy* (with Claribel A. Ortega), winner of the 2023 Pura Belpré Award for Children's Text, is their first graphic novel, with their solo debut graphic novel *Gutless* also being published with First Second. When they're not making or reading comics they love baking sweets and playing fantasy video games.



ABOUT THE BOOK

Winner of the 2023 Pura Belpré Award for Children's Text
Winner of the 2023 Eisner for Best Publication for Kids

New York Times-bestselling author Claribel A. Ortega and star debut artist Rose Bousamra's *Frizzy* is about Marlene, a young Dominican girl whose greatest enemy is the hair salon! Through her struggles and triumphs, this heartwarming and gorgeous middle-grade graphic novel shows the radical power of accepting yourself as you are, frizzy curls and all.

Marlene loves three things: books, her cool Tía Ruby and hanging out with her best friend Camila. But according to her mother, Paola, the only thing she needs to focus on is school and "growing up." That means straightening her hair every weekend so she could have "presentable", "good hair".

But Marlene hates being in the salon and doesn't understand why her curls are not considered pretty by those around her. With a few hiccups, a dash of embarrassment, and the much-needed help of Camila and Tia Ruby—she slowly starts a journey to learn to appreciate and proudly wear her curly hair.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Educators

- As educators we must understand the graphic novel's importance and power in engaging students in the narrative, via text and images. Their multimodality provides opportunities for visual, textual and literacy skills to work individually and collectively to support critical thinking, story analysis, and reading comprehension. Before using *FRIZZY* in the classroom, get familiar with research¹ that covers and supports the use of graphic novels in language arts classrooms.
- Graphic novels and comics are a medium that uses juxtaposed panels, images and symbols in sequence to portray a narrative, we should get familiar² with the different elements and components used in graphic novels to share information with readers. Graphic novels use panels in different shapes and sizes, word balloons and thought bubbles, blank spaces and gutter (space between panels), and other icons and symbols to tell a story.
- In *FRIZZY*, the Dominican beauty salon and women's hair, are scenarios and elements of community, kinship and political grounds. Both are sites that shape and reflect one's identity and are influenced by whiteness, power dynamics, anti-Blackness, and "traditional" beauty standards. Since hair is a terrain of identity building and relationship building between Marlene and her family, educators that are not familiar with hair politics and Dominican communities, should read and learn about it³ before discussing *FRIZZY* with students.

Students

- Educators and students carry and bring their identities to school and classroom settings. Identities shape and impact their experiences: how they see themselves, how others see them, and their interaction with cultural works such as books and graphic novels. In *FRIZZY*, Marlene carries her identities, her human relationships, and self in different scenarios and is in constant evaluation and development of who she is.
 - Identities Portraits: encourage a visual and textual activity, where students are free to use words, images, collages to create identity portraits. Discuss with students that identities could include physical traits, emotional traits, hobbies and favorite things, and characteristics that make them who they are.
 - Expectations and Social Issues Discussion: The story includes issues of generational trauma, bullying, parents' expectations, societal beauty standards, and death of a parent that could be reflective of some students' experiences and could also be triggering for others. Discuss with students the availability of school counselors and other emotional support to these and other related issues. Along with the school counselor, have a collective discussion with students about social pressures and expectations.

1 Dallacqua, A.K. (July 2012). Exploring literary devices in graphic novels. *Language Arts*, 89(6), 365-378.

2 McCloud, Scott (1993). *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*. New York: William Morrow, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers.

3 Candelario, G. (Autumn 2000). Hair race-ing: Dominican beauty culture and identity production. *Meridians*, 1(1), 128-156.

- What expectations do we have from schools? From our families? From our society?
- The text incorporates a few words in Spanish as well as cultural elements characteristic of Latinx communities. Share the following with students:
 - “Quince”: it is short for “quinceañero”. It is a traditional patriarchal celebration in Latin American and Latinx communities for when a girl reaches her 15th birthday. It is a big birthday party that is seen as a coming-of-age passage from childhood to womanhood.
 - “ción/cion”: it is short of “bendición”. It translates to “blessing” and it is said when asking for the blessing of parents, older family members and elders. It comes from the christian/catholic influence in Latin America and blessing for protection.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- Based on the title and cover, what do you think this graphic novel will be about? How do you think the person on the cover is feeling and saying to you as a reader?
- Page 7 includes one full-page panel of Marlene in a beauty salon, which visual cultural cues and elements can you identify and what does it tell you about the setting and narrative?
- In Chapter 2, there is a sequence of events and different characters participating in Diana’s quinceañero, Marlene’s cousin. Create a chart of how Marlene looks and behaves and what family members say about her versus how Diana looks, behaves, and what family members say about her. Compare and contrast your findings.
- Marlene’s reality is navigating family expectations, bullying at school and understanding and developing her own identities. What things she does or thinks about to escape her reality?
- Marlene is sent to spend time with her tía Ruby, and her tía mentions the word “anti-Blackness”. How is it defined? What are some examples of anti-Blackness in the book?
- In pages 155-175, we see how Marlene and tía Ruby bond over hair and their washing routine. Write down details and visual elements of the washing routine and how Marlene is feeling throughout the whole process. What is Marlene learning during this process? What are you learning as a reader from this process and her relationship with tía Ruby?
- In the last chapter, Marlene faces her Mami and tells how she really feels about going to the salon. Why didn’t Marlene tell her from the beginning? How do you think Marlene feels now after being honest with her mother?
- Marlene and her mom break a power dynamic between children and adults. Her mom tells her “you taught me what it means to be brave and that it’s okay to be yourself”. What would you like to teach adults in your life?
- In FRIZZY, hair represents stories, history, identities and pride. What other elements from your culture, identities and backgrounds represent history and pride for you or your family?
- As a classroom there is individual and collective vocabulary building and enhancement. Make a list of the words and cultural elements that are new to you. Share it with your classmates and find similarities and differences.

POST-READING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- Revisit the Identity Portraits created before reading FRIZZY. What would you add, change or delete after reading about Marlene and her story?
- The graphic novel uses different sizes and quantities of panels to tell a variety of narratives. Use the following six panel page to portray textually and visually your experience while reading FRIZZY. .

This guide was written by **Sujei Lugo**. Sujei Lugo holds a Ph.D. in Library and Information Science and is a children's librarian, independent researcher, and children's book reviewer.

