

QUETZALI

AND THE COMIC BOOK QUEEN

VS THE **ALEBRIJE**

OF DARKNESS

LIVE IN THE SCHOOL CAFETERIA





PLAY SYNOPSIS

Get Ready for a Super Adventure!


Middle schooler Lali loves podcasts, comic books, and Superhero Day at school. But what she doesn't expect is to wake up one morning with a magical feather growing out of her arm. Unsure of what it means, Lali confides in her best friend, Nicki, who is a comic book superfan. Nicki immediately declares that the feather is the start of a superhero origin story—and that Lali might have powers she hasn't even discovered yet.

While Lali tries to navigate this strange new development, a new principal, Mr. Z, arrives at their school and immediately raises suspicions with his peculiar behavior. Lali and Nicki soon learn that Mr. Z isn't just an eccentric administrator—he's working for a colorful, spiky, and sinister creature known as the Alebrije of Darkness. Straight out of Nicki's comic books, the Alebrije of Darkness is a mythical villain with plans to plunge their world into chaos, starting with their school.

As the situation grows more intense, Lali turns to her mother for support and discovers an incredible family secret: her mother also possesses magical feathers and knows more about the powers Lali is developing. With her mom's guidance, Nicki's comic book expertise, and a fiery plan involving hot peppers, Lali begins to harness her newfound abilities. Along the way, she learns that being a hero isn't just about having powers—it's about bravery, teamwork, and doing what's right.

The story builds to a climactic showdown in the school cafeteria, where Lali must face the Alebrije of Darkness and Mr. Z. With the help of her friends, her mother, and her own courage, Lali fights to protect her school, her family, and her community. In the end, she learns that true heroism lies in standing up for the people you care about and embracing who you are.


Infused with action, humor, and rich Mexican culture, this play celebrates the power of friendship, family, and the hero within all of us.



WHAT ARE ALEBRIJES?

Alebrijes are bright, colorful creatures made from dreams! They were first created by an artist named Pedro Linares in the 1930s, who dreamed of fantastical animals after falling ill. These creatures combine parts of different animals—like the wings of an eagle, the body of a lizard, and the tail of a lion. In Mexican culture, alebrijes are symbols of creativity and individuality, reminding us to embrace our unique traits. They've become a cherished part of Mexican art and folklore.



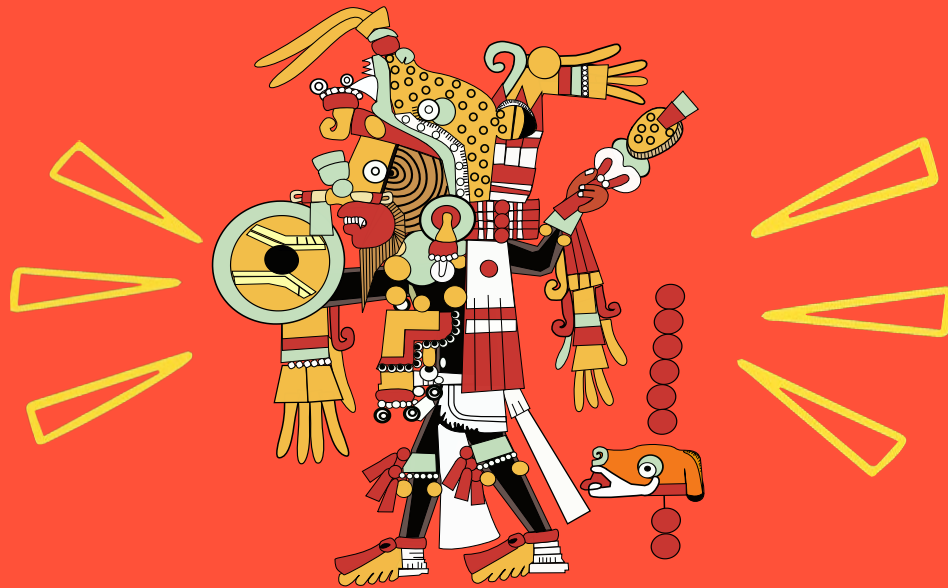


The Magical Quetzal Bird

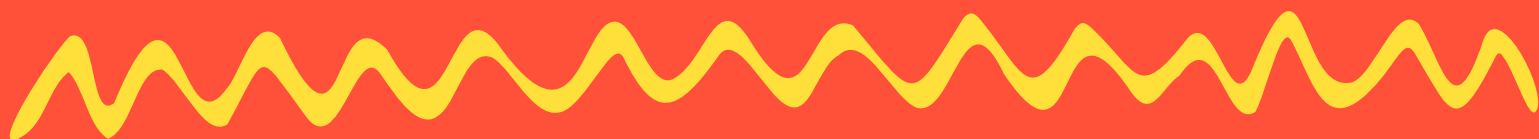
The quetzal bird is one of the most beautiful birds in the world, with shimmering green and red feathers that look like they came straight from a treasure chest! In ancient Mesoamerican cultures, like the Maya and the Aztecs, the quetzal was a symbol of freedom, beauty, and bravery. Its feathers were considered sacred and often used to honor kings and gods. The quetzal is so important that it even inspired stories like Quetzali and The Comic Book Queen, where courage is found in a magical feather.



AZTEC HEROES AND FEATHERS



THE AZTECS TOLD INCREDIBLE STORIES ABOUT GODS AND HEROES, OFTEN FEATURING FEATHERS AS SYMBOLS OF POWER AND TRANSFORMATION. ONE FAMOUS GOD, QUETZALCOATL—THE FEATHERED SERPENT—WAS BELIEVED TO BRING KNOWLEDGE AND CREATIVITY TO HUMANITY. FEATHERS WERE ALSO SEEN AS A CONNECTION TO THE DIVINE, WITH LEGENDS DESCRIBING HOW THEY COULD GIVE PEOPLE EXTRAORDINARY STRENGTH AND COURAGE. IF YOU'VE EVER DREAMED OF BEING A SUPERHERO, THE AZTECS MIGHT SAY YOU'RE NOT SO DIFFERENT FROM THEIR MYTHICAL HEROES!



Unmasking the Magic: Alvaro Saar Rios on Crafting Quetzali



1. What inspired you to write the show?

Part of the inspiration came from my son's love for mythology stories. Another part came from my desire to create a superhero story that I would have wanted to see when I was a kid. Most of the superheroes stories I saw as a kid did not have characters that looked like me or my family or even my community. I felt this was an opportunity to create a superhero that might be of a different culture as the audience but one the audience could still connect to just like I did as a young person.

2. Why did you include alebrijes and the quetzal bird in the story? What do they symbolize for you?

Before I started writing this play, I didn't know much about alebrijes or quetzal birds. I knew they existed but that's it. I included them in my play as a reason to learn more about them. I have hopes that my journey learning about things I don't know much about will somehow be a part of the storytelling so that audiences can learn about them.

3. Why do you think storytelling about personal growth is so important for young audiences?

Stories about personal growth show us that we (the audience) are not the only ones who experience conflicts or challenges. They also give us an idea on how others might handle a specific conflict or situation. Personal growth is part of being a human and having stories about this can help us learn about ourselves and others.

4. How did you develop the characters?

I develop my characters by attaching a personal trait that I or a friend might have. I feel this helps add shape to the characters. For example, when I was creating Nicki's character, I thought it might be interesting to have her be someone who loves comic books like me. As for Lali's character, I tapped into my own love for podcasts. I have no idea how to make a podcast but I felt this might be something interesting to use for Lali's character. And because I didn't know much about making a podcast, I listened to all kinds of podcasts and watched videos on how to make them.

5. Whats the process like to write a commissioned play?

After signing the contract, I gather inspiration by reading books, plays, and comics while brainstorming character ideas. I set a deadline for this phase, then write and revise a story synopsis with feedback from friends. Next, I quickly draft the play, take a break, and revisit it for revisions. Finally, I collaborate with the Artistic Director until the play is complete.

6. How has your cultural background influenced your storytelling?

My cultural background is my source of inspiration for my play ideas or characters. The Alebrije of Darkness was inspired by magical characters dreamed up by Mexican artist Pedro Linares. My play Luchadora! is set in the world of Mexican wrestling and my play On The Wings of a Mariposa takes place during Day of the Dead.



7. Why is it important for young audiences to learn about Mexican culture and mythology?

I think it's important for audiences to learn about any cultures different from them because it helps us see that we may do or eat or enjoy different things but we have so much similarities, too.

8. If you could have one superhero power, what would it be and why?

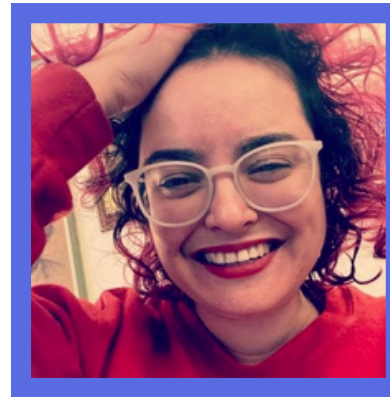
I have some pretty strange luck so I feel that if I had a superpower it wouldn't be as useful as flying or the ability to shapeshift. With my luck, my superpower would be the ability to make candy appear out of thin air. Definitely a superpower kids would love but not one that would be useful in many situations. Useful if I am at a birthday party but not if the city is being attacked by someone like The Alebrije of Darkness

9. What's one thing you hope audiences notice or remember about this play?

I would hope they identify in some sort of way with one of the characters in the play. Lali may be Latina but she's also a teenager. And she has wants and hopes and problems like any other teenager. Not every teen grows a feather like Lali but something might happen to their own body that might be exciting or confusing or just plain strange and I hope they, like Lali, have someone to talk about it with.



Behind the Wings: Quetzali's Director, Ana Maria Campoy



1. What inspired you to direct this play?

The playwright, Alvaro Saar Rios, introduced me to this play. His writing and infectious enthusiasm for this project is what initially drew me to it. I worked on his play, Luchadora! last spring at Seattle Children's Theatre as an actor. We met during the process and hit it off talking about our love of cultura y cuentos (culture and stories) and the importance of arts access (everyone deserves access to art!). Alvaro truly honors the youth voice in his writing~ the young characters in his plays are dynamic and determined. I also love how he celebrates the women of the Chicax/Mexican-American communities throughout his work, showing their leadership and grit, whether it's taking on alien invaders or a rival Luchador.

2. How do you relate to the characters?

We all have moments in our lives where we are trying to figure out who we are and what our role is within our communities. And we would like to face all that with a friend! Lali and Nicki are in middle school~ peak time of self-exploration, sometimes pushing the boundaries (and landing in detention), but always wanting to do the right thing, with our best friend alongside us. As a child of Mexican immigrants, I connect deeply with Lali's wrangling between when she wants to ask for help and when she wants to ease the burden on her Mom. Nicki's thirst for knowledge and her love of reading gives me flashbacks to that insatiable excitement you have when you find the thing that you love and see yourself in when you're that age. Their friendship and how they reflect back to each other is so wonderful. They are open about their feelings, share their curiosities or nerdoms without judgement, and celebrate each other's brilliance. We all want a Lali or Nicki in our life.

3. What do you hope the audience takes away?

For the young people watching: we inherit so much from our ancestors~ joy, superpowers, forms of communication, traditions. Be curious and ask questions. You might discover so much more about yourself. To their adults watching:

Remember to share your stories, your magic. Listen to young people's questions and be willing to learn with them. We aren't done growing as adults and isn't that wonderful? To all: Time we have with each other and on this Earth is precious. As we recognize what we inherit from our ancestors, let us consider what our actions~ to each other and the Earth~ will help us be good ancestors. What superpowers do we want to pass down?

4. Why are personal growth stories so important for young audiences?

Personal growth is hard! It's life-long and messy. It can be uncomfortable and being courageous takes practice. Don't be afraid to ask for help or even have a little lie-down like Lali. I too can face things better after a nap or a phone call with my best friend.

5. Why is Mexican culture and mythology important?

I want young people to explore the richness of Mexican mythology and culture, which is diverse, complex, and deeply rooted in Indigenous, European, Black, and Asian influences. Mexico's history includes countless cultures, languages, and communities—like Japanese immigrants creating popular snacks, escaped enslaved people forming free communities, and Irish immigrants joining Mexico during the Mexican-American War. With over 63 Indigenous languages and unique regional slang, Mexican culture reflects its vibrant, multifaceted heritage. These stories highlight humanity's fascinating diversity and interconnectedness.



**BE
BRAVE**

6. Whats your vision for this play?

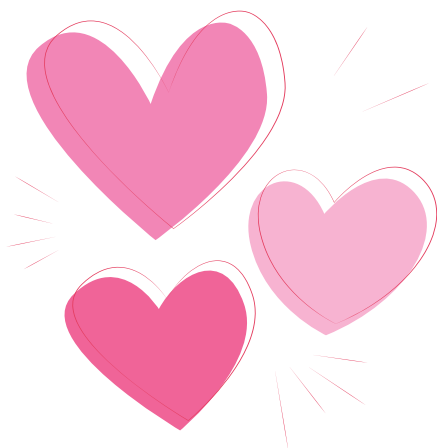
I hope that this play reminds us all that we, even superheroes, need each other more in this world, not less.

7. If you could have one superhero power, what would it be and why?

Oh this is a hard one! I 'm always stuck between being able to speak any language or teleportation....Okay teleportation. I would get to visit my Abuela in Sonora.

8. If you had a magical feather like Lali, what powers would it give you?

Vanquish fear and pour compassion and love into the hearts and minds of those who are prejudiced.






Feathered Heroes Unite!

Imagine finding a magical feather—what powers does it give you? How will you use them to help others? Let's start by discussing what makes superheroes special and share our favorites from comics, movies, and books.

Now it's your turn to create a superhero! Grab some paper and markers to sketch your hero. Give them a name, superpowers, a cool costume, and a mission to make the world a better place.



Next, bring your hero to life in a short comic strip or story. What challenge do they face, and how do they save the day? If you're feeling brave, present your superhero to the class!

Show off your creation and tell your story.

Ready to become the ultimate storyteller and design your superhero? Let's go!



C.3.3
C.4.3.b

THE HERO IN ALL OF US



What makes someone a hero? We'll start with a fun group discussion about heroes —mythical, comic book, and real-life— and what they all have in common. Then, you'll create your own hero by designing their name, powers, sidekick, and mission on a special worksheet, complete with a portrait to bring them to life. Finally, we'll reflect on why we admire heroes and how we can be heroes in everyday life. Let's get started!

TH:Cr1.1.3.a

VA:Cr1.1.3

-----'S
SUPERHERO

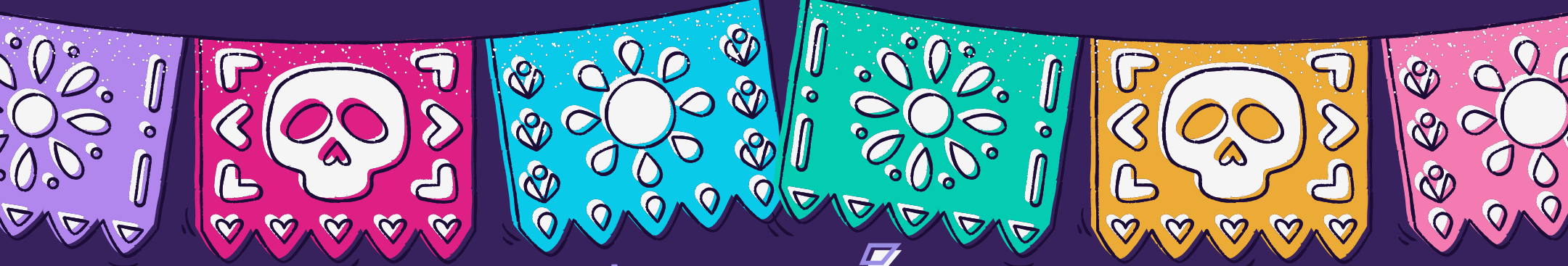
Superhero name

I want to help

Words to describe me

My super powers





VIVA MÉXICO!

Materials:

- Colored tissue paper
- Scissors
- String

Let's explore Mexican culture by making colorful papel picado banners! Fold tissue paper, cut patterns, and reveal beautiful designs. We'll string them together to decorate the classroom. Ready to get creative and celebrate?

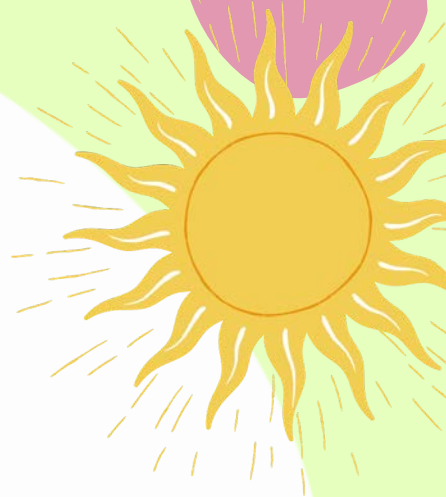
Let's start!

VA:PR6.1.3) VA:CR2.2.3)



AZTEC ADVENTURES

Let's dive into the Aztec creation story and meet the gods Tezcatlipoca, the trickster, and Quetzalcoatl, the wise leader. You'll get to step into the story by playing key roles, from gods to animals, as we bring the myth to life with movement and expression. Afterward, we'll reflect on the lessons from the rivalry and teamwork in the story. Ready to unleash your creativity and explore ancient wisdom?



TH:Cr1.1.3.a)

TH:Cr1.1.3.c)

Script: Battle of the Gods: How the World Was Made!

Narrator: A long time ago, the world was dark and empty. The gods decided to create the earth, the animals, and humans. Tezcatlipoca, the god of trickery, and Quetzalcoatl, the Feathered Serpent, began to work together.

(Tezcatlipoca and Quetzalcoatl step forward and pretend to shape the earth.)

Narrator: Together, they formed the earth, mountains, and oceans. But soon, they began to argue about who should rule the new world.

Tezcatlipoca *(with a sly tone)*: I am the strongest! I will rule this world and bring order to it.

Quetzalcoatl *(calmly)*: Strength is not enough. The world needs wisdom and kindness to thrive.

Narrator: Their argument grew so heated that Tezcatlipoca struck the sun from the sky, plunging the world into darkness.

(Tezcatlipoca pretends to swipe the sun away, and The Sun steps back dramatically.)

Narrator: Quetzalcoatl, full of determination, decided to bring light back. He transformed into a mighty wind and carried the sun back into the sky.

(Quetzalcoatl spins gracefully as The Sun returns to their position.)

Narrator: Together, the gods created animals to roam the earth.
(Animals crawl and prowl around the stage, showing off their movements.)

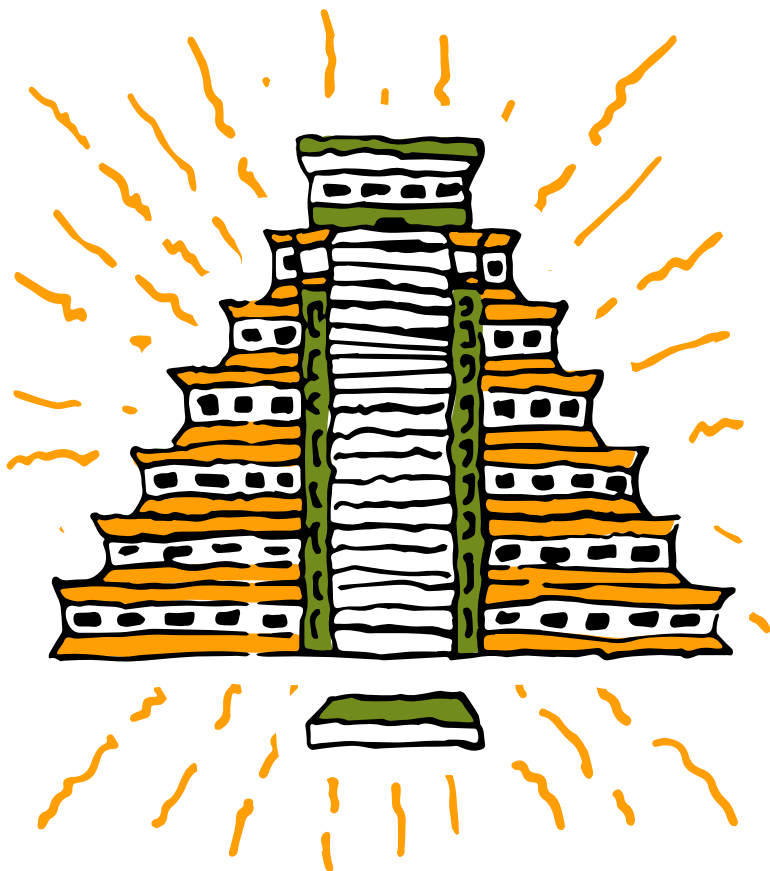
Narrator: But the gods wanted more. They created humans to take care of the land and honor the gods.
(Humans step forward and pretend to plant seeds, build homes, or look amazed at the world around them.)

Tezcatlipoca *(grudgingly)*: Perhaps we both have a role in this world, Quetzalcoatl.

Quetzalcoatl *(nodding)*: Together, we are stronger.

Narrator: And so, the world was created through the balance of chaos and wisdom, strength and kindness.

(All characters take a bow.)



PODCAST POWER: TUNE INTO YOUR ALEBRIJE ADVENTURE!

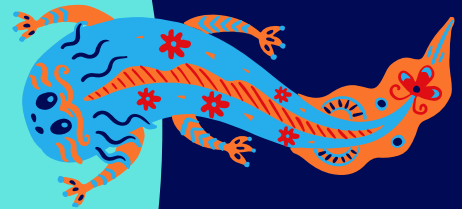
Get ready to become a storyteller! In pairs or groups, brainstorm and script your own podcast episode. You can explore two options: share your thoughts on courage and bravery from the play, or imagine using a magical feather to make the world better. Once your script is ready, record and add sound effects to bring it to life! Will your podcast be adventurous, heartfelt, or funny? It's all about your unique voice and creativity. Afterward, reflect on how the play's characters inspire you and celebrate the magic of storytelling!



**C.4.3
MA:Cr1.1.4)**

Team Spirit, Alebrije Style!

In groups, create your own alebrije, with each person embodying a part from a different animal. Practice its movements and sounds, then join the class to form one giant alebrije with a name and powers. Perform and reflect on how collaboration brought your creation to life!



TH:PR5.1.3.A
TH:CR1.1.5.C



Cultural Quest: Discover, Compare, and Celebrate!

Create a vibrant poster showcasing a cultural myth, tradition, or holiday meaningful to you, inspired by elements from the play like alebrijes or the quetzal bird. Compare your tradition to one from the play, using a Venn diagram to explore similarities and differences. Reflect on how traditions shape identity and celebrate diversity. Let your creativity and curiosity shine!



3.H.CH.1
C.4.2

Be Bold: A Tale of Courage and Creativity

Create a short play about bravery and uniqueness! Tell a story of courage, real or imagined, with bold characters overcoming challenges.

Perform it with creativity and reflect on celebrating your individuality.



Guiding Questions:

- What makes your character feel scared?
- What special strength helps your character overcome challenges?
- What is the message you want to share with the audience?

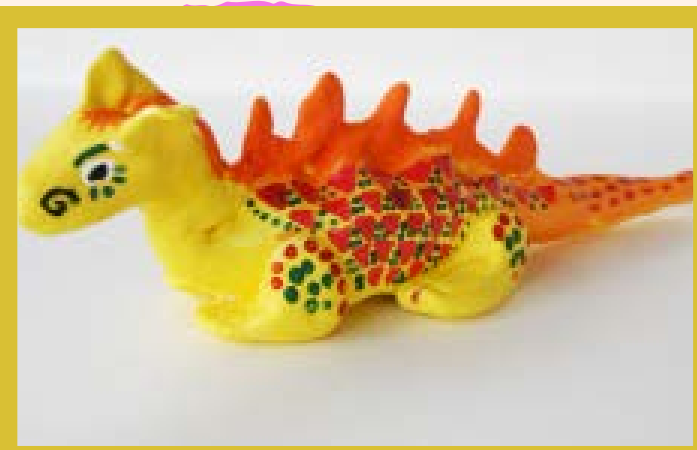
Your Mythical Sidekick Awaits!

MATERIALS:

- AIR-DRY CLAY
- ACRYLIC OR TEMPERA PAINTS
- PAINTBRUSHES
- WATER CUPS
- PAPER PLACEMATS
- PERMANENT OR WATER-BASED MARKERS



Create your own alebrije—a colorful mythical creature! Shape it with air-dry clay by combining animal traits like wings, tails, or claws. Let it dry, then decorate with paints, feathers, and patterns to show its magical powers. Finish by sharing your creature's name, powers, and story with the class during a gallery walk!



BOOKS!



ALEBRIJES BY DONNA BARBA HIGUERA

In a world full of rules and danger, Leandro teams up with Rios, his super-cool, magical alebrije (think dragon-meets-unicorn vibes), to take on a daring adventure. Together, they uncover secrets, face bad guys, and prove that even the smallest heroes can do big things!

I AM QUETZAL BY ADDER ARGUETA

Did you know there's a bird so magical it's practically a superhero? Meet the quetzal, a dazzling bird with a story as epic as its feathers. This book is a whirlwind journey into its legend and why it's such a big deal in Central America!

MANI SEMILLA FINDS HER QUETZAL VOICE BY ANNA LAPERA

Mani is on a mission to find her quetzal voice —no, it's not a bird call, it's her inner superpower! Along the way, she discovers bravery, her unique talents, and why it's awesome to embrace your culture. Get ready to cheer Mani on as she finds her place in the world!

COCO: MIGUEL AND THE AMAZING ALEBRIJES BY DISNEY BOOK GROUP

Join Miguel as he ventures into the Land of the Dead, where colorful, mythical alebrijes (part jaguar, part dragon, all awesome) come to life! Based on the movie Coco, this story is packed with music, magic, and a reminder that family is everything.

