

*The Total Eclipse of Nector Lopez*  
**Discussion Guide**  
Grades 4 - 6

**Before Reading: to activate schema, build background knowledge, and set a purpose.**

- Before reading, have a class discussion to activate prior knowledge about military families, Cuban-American Heritage, the legend of Tule Vieja, solar eclipse, and quiz bowl
- *Titles Can Be Telling\**: Reread the title of the book. Think about what's included in the title, the image chosen for the cover, and what you notice. Make a prediction based on the cover and consider how the title influences the story. (revisit after reading the story and see if your predictions are correct)
- Frontload vocabulary (see vocabulary list)

**During Reading: to engage students, check for understanding, and make connections.**

- What can Nector Lopez do? Why does he change schools frequently? What is the significance of the baseball mitt? (ch. 1)
- Where is Nector? Why is this location different than previous? What does Nector do at each new location? (ch. 2)
- Describe Nector's first day of school. Do you think Miss Humala handled the pudding incident correctly? (ch. 3)
- Why did Maria Carmen come to the house? What do the pink tags represent? (ch. 4)
- Why can't the students go into the woods? (ch. 5)
- What animal did Nector find and help? How did Nector hide him? (ch. 6)
- Why does Nector usually not make friends or join clubs when he moves? (ch. 7)
- Why does Nector think he has an unfair advantage for quiz bowl? What did Brandon say and who did it upset? Why? (ch. 8)
- Describe what Nector learns from Val. What rumor is said about Abuela? Do you think Abuela has the same gift as Nector? (ch. 9)
- Describe the quiz bowl competition and the events that occurred. (ch. 10)
- Maria's mom acts differently towards Nector. Why? Why was Brandon setting traps? (ch. 11)
- What did the animals do? Why? Why did the snake visit Nector? (ch. 12)
- What event caused mom to be upset? How did she react? (ch. 13)
- What did Nector find out from Milla? What does Miss Humala mean she she says "I'd strongly advise you against wandering alone when you shouldn't"? (ch. 14)

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- What did we learn about Ms. Humala? How do you think this will affect the outcome of the story? (ch. 15)
- How did Maria Carmen, Nector, and Talib come up with a plan? (ch. 16)
- What happened to Abuela? What did we learn about Abuela? What was abuela doing in the woods? What's the witches' plan? (ch. 17)
- Why do you think Ms. Humala is helping her mom? What do you think's their end goal? Why did Nector's friends parents treat him poorly? (ch.18)
- What did Brandon ask for help? (ch. 19)
- Why do you think Ms. Humala is making the student label the times for the eclipses? What happens to Brandon's dad? (ch. 20)
- What happened to Abuela? How do you think Maria Carmen's mother will react when Nector comes to stay over? (ch. 21)
- Do you think Ms. Humala is trying to help or stop her mother? Why do you think the tule vieja wants Nector? (ch. 22)
- What happened when they fell asleep? (ch. 23)
- How did the rescue mission go? What did they find in the cave? (ch. 24)
- How did the witches' plan change? Describe what happened and how they defeated the witch? (ch. 25)

**After Reading: to summarize, question, and reflect.**

- Revisit the Titles Can Be Telling\* Worksheet from the pre reading activity. What do the cover and title mean now that you have read the story? How do you think the title connects to the story? Does the title fit the story?
- The Influences on Character\*: Consider all the influences on the character - the problem(s) the character is facing, the other characters with who he or she comes in contact, and the setting of the story. Notice how the character interacts and reacts to these different forces. What effect(s) do characters, setting, and problems have on how the character acts earlier and later in the story?

**If your students enjoyed this book...**

- Encourage them to continue to discuss it and refer to it in other lessons and conversations.
- Let them explore more about the topic by reading other books with similar themes, structure, characters, or content.