

# MAYA

AND THE RISING DARK



RENA BARRON

PARENT'S GUIDE



Houghton Mifflin Harcourt  
Books for Young Readers

# MAYA AND THE RISING DARK

BY RENA BARRON

## INTRODUCTION TO THE PARENT'S GUIDE

### Purpose of the Parent's Guide

This guide is intended to provide an easy reference for parents and guardians who would like to explore the educational and craft activities developed for *Maya and the Rising Dark*. Similar to the educator's guide, it will include instructions for each activity. This guide includes a detailed synopsis of the plot and story elements for parents who may not have time to read the full story.

### Age/Grade Level

**Age Range:** 8 - 12 years

**Grade Level:** 3 - 7

**Lexile Measure:** 720

**Series:** Maya and the Rising Dark (Book 1)

**Genre:** Contemporary Fantasy

**Hardcover:** 304 pages

**Publisher:** HMH Books for Young Readers

**Language:** English

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### Learning Goals

Critical thinking, problem solving, analytical, and literacy skills through inferencing, determining theme, identifying vocabulary, citing textual evidence to support opinions, and describing the plot of the story.

### Development of Material

This guide provides suggested activities developed to align with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for Reading: Literature, Writing, and Speaking and Listening.

## Detailed Synopsis of the Story

Twelve-year-old MAYA dreams that she can be as brave and fierce as her favorite comic book heroine, the warrior goddess, Oya. With summer almost here, she's excited for obvious reasons: no more school and no more math homework. Even better: This summer, PAPA's going to take Maya to her very first Comic-Con where she can meet other Oya fans.



A few weeks before break, Maya has a dizzy spell while puzzling out a math problem in after-school tutoring. It's a symptom of her anemia, so she takes deep breaths and leans against a wall to keep herself steady. While waiting for the episode to pass, something strange happens. Through the window, she witnesses the color bleed from the trees and the sky like paint washing away in the rain. Everything turns gray, and she's the only one who sees it happening. But in the blink of an eye, things are back to normal, and Maya thinks that she daydreamed the whole thing.

When she was little, Papa used to tell her stories about his secret job and why he was away from home so much. He told her how he fought off Martians on a trip to the International Space Station, or how he's a spy for a city built in the clouds where everyone eats ice cream for breakfast. Once, he told her that he'd been captured by elokos, forest elves who could hypnotize you with the chimes of their tiny bells. To escape, he had sung a lullaby to put them to sleep.

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## Synopsis (Continued)

But now Maya's too old to believe his stories, even if she secretly still loves them. They're only tales he makes up so he doesn't have to talk about his real job. With MAMA working the nightshift at the hospital and Papa away, Maya wonders why her father always returns from his trips so tired. No matter how many times Maya asks about Papa's job, he says that all will be revealed when the time is right.

When Papa's home, he and Maya practice with staffs in the backyard. Maya's technique improves every time they spar. Not only can she defend herself, but she's even beaten Papa a few times. While they're sparring, a boom sounds so loud that it rattles the ground and nearly topples Maya to her knees.

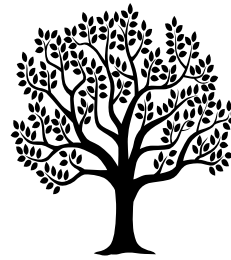
Their practice comes to a halt after what Maya assumes is an earthquake. Suddenly Papa is very worried and tense. To her disappointment, he tells her that he must leave again tonight. He's just come back, and she's afraid he'll miss taking her to Comic-Con. When night falls and Mama heads to work, Papa sets off again, and as always, he takes his staff with him. Maya wonders why he needs a staff for his job.

Although Maya knows she shouldn't, she follows Papa and hides in the shadows so he doesn't see her. When Papa turns the corner at the end of the block, he disappears. Maya can't believe her eyes. When she steps closer, shadows writhing like snakes reach out for her. She jumps back, but she doesn't get away in time. The shadows latch on to her wrists, dragging her into the darkness. Before the shadows devour her, someone grabs Maya's shoulder.

It's her cranky old neighbor, MISS IDA. She and her twin sister MISS LUCILLE fuss at kids for walking on the grass or playing kickball on the sidewalk. When Maya tries to explain what happened, Ida tells her to stop letting her imagination get out of hand. She fusses at Maya for being out at night without her parents' permission. No matter what Maya says, Miss Ida doesn't listen to her.

When Maya tells her friends, FRANKIE AND ELI, they believe her. Although, Frankie, the science geek, claims that everything has a reasonably normal explanation. Eli, the boy who lives and breathes everything paranormal, thinks their neighborhood's haunted by ghosts. Both agree that something weird is happening. Last week, a sinkhole almost swallowed Mr. Miller's poodle. The week before that, a fifth-grader swears she saw two crows talking to each other in a strange language. Even the bullies are afraid to go out after dark.

After Eli heads off to officiate bingo night at the community center with his grandmother, Frankie comes up with a hypothesis about the shadows. She suggests that she and Maya go out at night with flashlights. Since shadows can't exist in light, their flashlights should act as a repellent.





# MAYA AND THE RISING DARK

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## Synopsis (Continued)

While Frankie dives into a long-winded explanation about light theory, Maya notices the cranky Miss Ida and Miss Lucille hurriedly leaving their house. Now that she's paying more attention, she doesn't think they act like normal old ladies. The twins always go for a stroll around the neighborhood at sunset and never return until late at night. When they think no one is watching, they don't even use their walking canes.



Determined to find out what the twins know about the shadows, Maya and Frankie follow them during their nightly stroll. When all the streetlights suddenly blink out, the girls lose track of the twins and shadows attack Frankie. When the flashlight fails to push back the shadows, Maya uses her staff training to free her friend.

Maya and Frankie flee the shadows, but in their haste, they run into a dead-end alley. Where to both girls' horror, a pack of hungry hyenas corner them. If Maya remembers her geography, there are no hyenas in North America, and definitely not in Chicago. When the hyenas shapeshift into werehyenas, a hybrid of a hyena and a man, Maya doesn't think she's daydreaming this time. Frankie sees them too.

Just as the werehyenas attack, a bright light flashes and knocks Maya on her butt. Once she climbs to her feet again, she finds Frankie looking down at her glowing hands and the werehyenas gone. Maya asks

Frankie what happened, but Frankie is in shock. She says that there must be a perfectly reasonable explanation.

Maya and Frankie both rush home, and Maya finds Papa in a panic. He's relieved that she's okay, and ushers her back inside. Maya tells him about the shadows and the twins and the werehyenas. Papa believes her without question, and finally tells Maya that his job is to keep creatures like the werehyenas from wreaking havoc in the human world.

Maya doesn't know what he means by human world as if there are other worlds. Before she can get answers, Papa gives her some bad news. He'll be leaving for a long time on his next trip, and he doesn't know when he's coming back. Maya's upset and doesn't want Papa to go, but he says he has a responsibility to do his job, and if he fails, all will be lost. It was easy to dismiss Papa's stories as make-believe before the writhing shadows and the werehyenas, but now Maya isn't so sure what she believes anymore.

Before Papa leaves again, he gives Maya his staff and tells her to keep it close. A few days after Papa's gone, Maya meets Eli and Frankie at the park. When bullies from school pick a fight, Maya springs to action with Papa's staff to defend her friends. Remembering all of her training, she fends off the bullies with ease. That is until they sprout wings and fly out of her reach. Even with all that's happened, Maya is still shocked. So much that she hardly feels the vibration of the staff against her palms, nor does she see that the staff is glowing with magic. While she's distracted, the bullies knock the staff from her hands.

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## Synopsis (Continued)

One of the cranky twins, Miss Lucille, steps in to save the day. If Maya didn't know any better, she'd think the twins were following her around. Miss Lucille takes to the sky after the bullies and sends them through a vortex that opens in the sky. Maya sees Miss Lucille's true form—a body made of blue light.

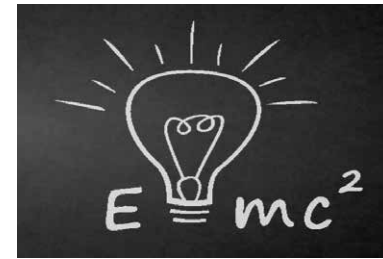
Miss Lucille escorts the children back to Maya's house, where Mama is waiting. After Maya's close encounter with the bullies, Mama can no longer hide the truth and tells Maya everything. The twins, Miss Ida and Miss Lucille are charged with protecting her. Her father is Elegguá, the guardian between our world and The Dark—a realm where shapeshifting creatures have been banished for all eternity.

When her father's away, he's patching up holes in the veil that separates the two worlds or catching malicious darkbringers that have slipped through the cracks. Those bullies at the park weren't kids at all; they were darkbringers who had shapeshifted into human form. Maya learns that Eli and Frankie each have orisha lineage, too. In fact, a third of the people in the neighborhood are godlings, part orisha and part human, including Miss Ida and Miss Lucille.

Only children of Elegguá's bloodline can keep The Dark contained and prevent the veil between worlds from failing. Her father's immortal enemy, the LORD OF SHADOWS—the master of The Dark—wants to unleash his darkbringers upon the human world. He hunted down and killed her father's other children from his previous lifetimes. Maya can hardly believe any of this is true. As an only child, she'd always wanted siblings. Finding out that she has siblings, or had siblings, comes as a shock. For the first time,

Maya considers what this means for her life, especially now that the Lord of Shadows wants her dead, too.

Worst yet, Miss Ida arrives in a panic with news that Maya's father is trapped in The Dark, and the veil is failing. The twin let it slip by accident that there are ancient gateways to enter The Dark. When the Lord of Shadows appears in Maya's dream, she puts the clues together to discover that the closest gateway is inside the building where Comic-Con is held each year. Maya believes that Papa was going to take her to Comic-Con to show her the truth. For Papa to have a chance at survival, she must take his magic staff to him, which means she'll have to enter The Dark.



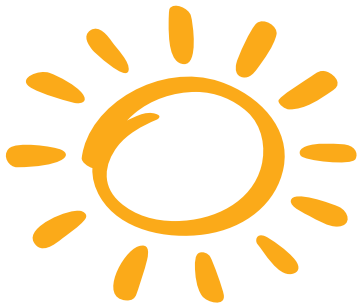
Mama insists that Maya stay put and not leave the house. With Papa missing and the recent attacks, Maya understands why Mama is worried about her safety, but she can't stand by and do nothing. Reluctantly she lets her friends, Eli and Frankie, come with her as she takes a bus to Comic-Con. At the event, Maya and her friends evade darkbringers trying to stop them from finding the entrance to The Dark. Maya realizes that she can control her father's magical staff—sometimes with disastrous results. She hadn't meant to turn that girl's hair purple, or turn the popcorn at the concession stand into worms.

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## Synopsis (Continued)

Thanks to her sharpening senses, Maya helps her friends dodge the darkbringers, and they enter The Dark through a broom closet. But before Maya and her friends get very far in the search for her father, they are ambushed by more powerful darkbringers. To her utter frustration, Maya fails to truly control the power of the staff to defend against the darkbringers. Lucky for Maya, her science geek friend Frankie shows another hint of true godling power like she'd done before with the werehyenas. With her force fields, Frankie is able to fend off their enemies. Only, it isn't enough.



A powerful force slams into the friends and spits them out in the human world again. They land at the national forest in Kentucky, tired and hungry, and decide to camp for the night. Once they bed down, the sound of chiming bells lures the friends away from their sleeping bags one by one. By the time Maya and her friends snap out of their trances, they've been tied to sticks and are about to be roasted over huge fire pits by elves that look like the elokos from her father's stories. She remembers that in the story her father had escaped the elokos by singing.

When the friends sing, the elokos fall asleep, and they are able to wiggle themselves free. But when they return to camp, Maya finds her backpack missing along

with the magical staff. Without the power of the staff, Maya doesn't know how to free her father from The Dark.

Maya is upset and afraid that she's failed her father, but she's not willing to give up so quickly. Soon she realizes that she doesn't need to go back to Chicago to reach The Dark. The night her father had disappeared into shadows, he entered The Dark without using a gateway. With encouragement from Frankie and Eli, Maya discovers that she can open a gateway into the Dark on her own like her father.

Against Maya's protests, Eli and Frankie insist on returning with her to The Dark. Maya doesn't want to put her friends in danger, but she's happy they're coming. Once Maya and her friends are again in The Dark, they encounter a darkbringer army. Frankie and Eli stay behind to protect the gateway while Maya sets off to find her father. Frankie and Eli escape back to the human world through the gateway before it closes.

Maya finally finds her father in a magical prison that looks like the gym from her school. Papa apologizes for not telling Maya the truth about his role as guardian of the veil sooner. He only wanted to keep her safe after he failed to protect his other children, who the Lord of Shadows killed. Once Maya unties Papa, it's her turn to apologize for losing his magical staff. Papa tells Maya that there's no magic in the staff, that the power comes from within her.

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## Synopsis (Continued)

Before Maya has time to process this, the lights flicker out and shadows fall upon the room. The Lord of Shadows appears. He's a mass of ribbons of black and purple shadows that constantly shift and reform themselves into the shape of a man. His voice sends shivers down Maya's back. Despite her fear, Maya stands ready at her father's side, but Papa tells her that he's too weak to defeat the Lord of Shadows and she must flee.

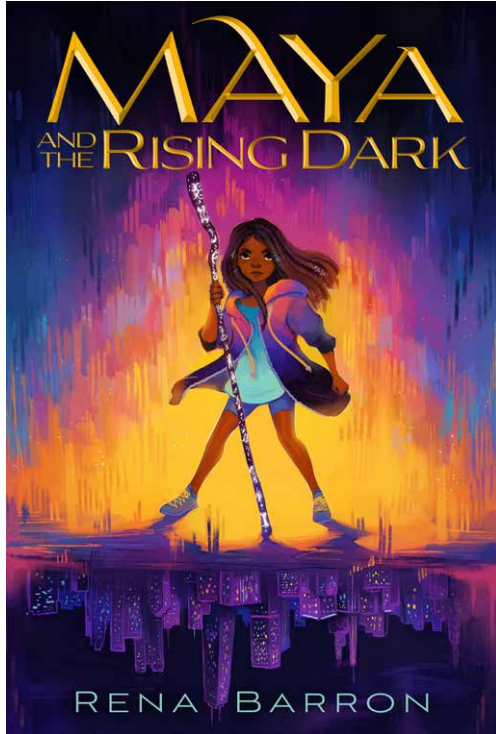
If Maya doesn't leave The Dark soon, she'll grow weak too, and she'll be stuck there with her father. There'll be no one left in the human world who can stop the veil from failing. If the veil fails, then humans will be at the whim of the sinister Lord of Shadows who would see them destroyed. But Maya won't leave without her father. She releases a burst of power that casts a bright light to distract the Lord of Shadows. Seizing the moment, Maya opens another gateway back into the human world. Maya and her father flee through the gateway with the Lord of Shadows hot on their trail, but Maya closes the gateway behind her before he can enter the human world.

Maya and Papa appear on the sidewalk in front of her house, where Mama, the cranky orisha twins, and her friends are waiting. With the family finally reunited, Mama pulls both Papa and Maya into a warm embrace. Maya vows to train with her father to become stronger so she can help guard the veil and keep the Lord of Shadows at bay.

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9781328635181 • HC • Age Range: 8-12 years • Grade Level: 3-7



## About the Book

Twelve-year-old Maya is the only one in her South Side Chicago neighborhood who witnesses weird occurrences like werhyenas stalking the streets at night and a scary man made of shadows plaguing her dreams. Her friends try to find an explanation—perhaps a ghost uprising or a lunchroom experiment gone awry. But to Maya, it sounds like something from one of Papa’s stories or her favorite comics.

When Papa goes missing, Maya is thrust into a world both strange and familiar as she uncovers the truth. Her father is the guardian of the veil between our world and the Dark—where an army led by the Lord of Shadows, the man from Maya’s nightmares, awaits. Maya herself is a godling, half orisha and half human, and her neighborhood is a safe haven. But

now that the veil is failing, the Lord of Shadows is determined to destroy the human world, and it’s up to Maya to stop him. She just hopes she can do it in time to attend Comic-Con before summer’s over.

## Common Core State Standards Methodology

*Maya and the Rising Dark* provides an excellent opportunity to apply critical thinking, problem solving, analytical, and literacy skills through inferencing, determining theme, identifying vocabulary, citing textual evidence to support opinions, and describing the plot of the story. This guide provides suggested activities developed to align with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for Reading: Literature, Writing, and Speaking and Listening. Each activity includes a reference to the CCSS strand, domain, and standard supported. Visit the Common Core State Standards website [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org) for additional information.

## Pre-reading Activities

### 1. The Core of Storytelling: Myths, Legends, Folklore, and Fairy Tales

Storytelling is common to every culture. People enjoy listening to and telling a good story. The five basic elements of a story include characters, setting, plot, conflict, and resolution. Some of the most enduring forms of storytelling have been handed down through myths, legends, folklore, and fairy tales. It is important to understand and respect that some people or cultures may consider a myth as historical fact. *Note: Some of these terms overlap in their meaning.*



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Definition (Ref: Kids.WordSmyth)	Example
<p>A <b>myth</b> is a story or group of stories to explain how the world began and why nature and people behave the way they do.</p>	<p><b>Central American Myth:</b> Huracán was the god of the wind and storm. He played a large role in the three attempts to create humankind, destroying the second generation that displeased the gods and creating the third and final version of the human race out of corn. The word <i>hurricane</i> is derived from the name Huracán. (Ref: Your Dictionary)</p>
<p>A <b>legend</b> is a story or group of stories that have been handed down from a time long ago and that many people know but cannot prove to be true or untrue.</p>	<p><b>North American Legend:</b> Johnny Appleseed traveled around America with nothing but the clothes on his back, a cooking pot on his head, and hands full of apple seeds. He threw apple seeds wherever he went, so that apple trees would grow up and produce apples for others to eat. (Ref: Transparent Language)</p>
<p><b>Folklore</b> consists of stories and traditions of a group of people or a culture handed down through the years.</p>	<p><b>West African Folklore:</b> There once lived a king with a magic drum that everyone wanted. A tortoise concocted a scheme to get it, but he didn't realize its power. He returned it to the king and was given something to sustain him and his family with food. (Ref: World of Tales)</p>
<p>A <b>fairy tale</b> tale is a story involving magical events and creatures in a make-believe world. It sometimes incorporates a lesson to be learned.</p>	<p><b>European Fairy Tale:</b> Little Red Riding-Hood is given some food to take to her grandmother. She sets off, and on the way, while traveling through the woods, she meets a talking wolf. Little Red Riding-Hood tells him that she's going to visit her grandmother. The wolf runs ahead to the grandmother's house, disguises himself as the old woman, and tries to eat Little Red Riding Hood. (Ref: Interesting Literature)</p>

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Give examples of some popular stories that can be classified as myths, legends, folklore, or fairy tales. Can you think of examples that fall under multiple definitions below?

Definition	Example
<p>A <b>myth</b> is a story or group of stories to explain how the world began and why nature and people behave the way they do.</p>	
<p>A <b>legend</b> is a story or group of stories that have been handed down from a time long ago and that many people know but cannot prove to be true or untrue.</p>	
<p><b>Folklore</b> consists of stories and traditions of a group of people or a culture handed down through the years.</p>	
<p>A <b>fairy tale</b> is a story involving magical events and creatures in a make-believe world. It sometimes incorporates a lesson to be learned.</p>	

CCSS Alignment: ELA-Literacy.RL.3.2, RL.3.10, RL. 4.10

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## 2. Fiction or Reality

Indicate which of the following statements are true or false.

Statement	Fiction or Reality
1. The Titans were deities that came before the Olympians in Greek mythology.	
2. The legend of Johnny Appleseed is based on a real person.	
3. King Arthur is a fictional character in children's books, such as <i>King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table</i> . He was not a real person.	
4. <i>The Princess and the Frog</i> is a fairy tale.	
5. Folklore teaches us stories of how the world was made and includes heroes and gods.	

CCSS Alignment: ELA-Literacy.RL.3.1, RL.3.2, RL.3.10, RL.4.1, RL.4.3, RL.4.4, RL.4.10, RL.5.10

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### 3. Learning About Maya's Hometown: Chicago

*Maya and the Rising Dark* is set in Chicago, Illinois, a city known for many famous attractions. Research these popular locations in Chicago and jot down details in order to get a better idea of the setting of the story.

Attraction	Location	History/Importance
Chicago Water Tower	Downtown (Magnificent Mile)	Built in 1869 and is the second oldest water tower in the United States. It is one of the only buildings still standing that survived the Great Chicago Fire.
Museum of Science and Industry		
<i>Cloud Gate</i> /Millenium Park		
Willis/Sears Tower		
Buckingham Fountain		

CCSS Alignment: ELA-Literacy.RL.3.1, RL.3.2, RL.3.10, RL.4.1, RL.4.3, RL.4.10, RL.5.10, RL.6.1



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## Reading Comprehension/Companion

### 4. Identifying Clues in the Text

Maya and her friends and family have hobbies, interests, and special powers that are mentioned throughout the book. Use context clues to jot down descriptions for each character.

Name	Physical Description	Hobby, Interest, or Special Power
Maya		
Frankie		
Eli		
Papa (Eddy and Elegguá)		
Miss Lucille		
Miss Ida		
Nana (Nana Buruku)		
Mr. Jenkins (Shangó)		
Miss Mae (Oshun)		
Ernest (Eshu)		
Zane (Ogun)		
The Lord of Shadows		
Commander Nulan		

CCSS Alignment: ELA-Literacy.RL.3.1, RL.3.3, RL.3.4, RL.3.5, RL.3.10, RL.4.1, RL.4.3, RL.4.10, RL.5.2, RL.5.4, 5.10, RL.6.1, RL.6.2, RL.6.4, RL.7.1

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## 5. Before/After



Maya enjoys her father's stories throughout the text. Building on the "Core of Storytelling: Myths, Legends, Folklore, and Fairy Tales" pre-reading activity, think of the mythological creatures mentioned in her father's tales. In a small group, use the storyboard below to build a story with a beginning, middle, and end featuring one of them.

Book Title \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of the Author \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

STORY BOARD	BEGINNING	Details
		Details
	MIDDLE	Details
		Details
	END	Details
		Details

CCSS Alignment: ELA-Literacy.RL.3.1, RL.3.3, RL.3.4, RL.3.5, RL.3.10, RL.4.1, RL.4.3, RL.4.4, RL.4.10, RL.5.10

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## 6. Creative Writing

The orishas play an important role in *Maya and the Rising Dark*. In our world, the belief in orishas started with the Yoruba people of West Africa and spread with the Atlantic slave trade. Can you think of a cultural tradition you celebrate, how

it may have changed or stayed the same through the years, and write a short explanation about the history of that tradition?

CCSS Alignment: ELA-Literacy.RL.3.10, RL.4.10, RL.5.10, W.3.2, W.3.8, W.4.2, W.4.8, W.5.2, W.5.9, W.6.2, W.6.9, W.7.2, W.7.9

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## Discussion Questions

1. *Maya and the Rising Dark* includes themes such as good versus evil, the importance of family, and learning about your heritage. What other themes can you identify? Pick one and explain how the author conveys it in the text and develops it over the course of the novel. Please cite specific examples and details.
2. At the beginning of the book, Maya thought what she saw was her imagination or a daydream. What are some things you daydream about, or what happens when you let your imagination run wild?
3. Rena Barron wrote *Maya and the Rising Dark* with influences from the traditions of her ancestors. What traditions from your heritage or ancestors would you want to share with Maya?
4. Maya lives in Chicago, a city that is known for many popular tourist attractions, buildings, and food. Can you name one thing that Chicago is known for?
5. Maya's father has a staff with symbols on it to represent him as the guardian of the veil. If you had a staff, what symbols would you want on yours?
6. How might the plot change if Maya was aware of her father's true identity earlier on?
7. Throughout the book, Maya realizes that her favorite comic book and its characters start to come to life. What book or comic book would you want to come to life?
8. Maya risks her life to save her father despite her family insisting it is too dangerous. Has there been a time when you wanted to do something that might be unsafe and your parents stopped you? Why do you think they did this?
9. In chapter 9, Miss Lucille explains that the *veil* that Papa created is a barrier between the human world and the Dark world. It keeps humans safe from the Lord of Shadows and the darkbringers. What real-life "veil" helps human life exist on Earth? There are negative consequences when the tears in the veil appear in the book. What kind of negative consequences can happen if there are tears in our veil?
10. Miss Lucille also explains to Maya and her friends that the Lord of Shadows waged war on the orishas. What is his reason for starting this war? How was this war resolved?
11. At Comic-Con, Maya and her friends realize that the gateway to the Dark is a broom closet. Where would you hide a secret gateway to the Dark? Explain why you think it would be safe there.
12. In chapter 17, Maya realizes the consequences of her actions after she sets a fire and harms young darkbringers. Have you been in a situation where you hadn't thought through the consequences of your actions?
13. Maya and her friends instantly assume the children are bad because they are darkbringers. How might this situation have been different if they didn't immediately judge them based solely on their appearance? Please explain.
14. Maya experiences many dreams and nightmares throughout the book. Describe a recent nightmare or dream you have had. What do you think it means? Did it have anything to do with your real life?
15. Which supporting character do you believe plays the most important role? Use specific examples from the text to support your opinion.



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16. Maya suffers from a medical issue called anemia. At important moments throughout the story, she often feels dizzy from her condition. Do you have something that you have to overcome or live with? How do you handle it?
17. Maya, her father, and her friends all share similar goals. Compare and contrast the ways they go about achieving these goals. What does that reveal about their characters?
18. When Maya and her friends go to Comic-Con in chapter 14, she sees people dressed up as her favorite superhero. Do you have a favorite superhero, and what makes them your favorite?
19. In chapter 18, hoping to keep Eli and Frankie safe, Maya tells them to go back instead of continuing their journey into the Dark together. How might the story have changed if Eli and Frankie had listened to her? What were the benefits of them sticking together as a team?
20. In the text, Maya meets many orishas in her neighborhood. Name some of these orishas and describe what they represent within the fictional world of Chicago.
21. When Miss Lucille explains the origins of the orishas and the darkbringers, she explains that the darkbringers, “consumed the resources from the ocean” (p. 91). How did this impact the growth of the world around them?
22. In chapter 24, Frankie describes the staff as a conduit, “a channel to carry something from one place to another” (p. 238). Can you think of an everyday example of a conduit? Describe it.
23. Frankie’s theory about the staff helps Maya feel more confident in herself. What’s another instance where Frankie’s science-based reasoning was helpful?
24. *Maya and the Rising Dark* is told from the first-person point of view. How does Maya’s point of view affect the story? How might the story differ if it was told from a different point of view? What if the Lord of Shadows was telling the story?
25. Miss Ida and Miss Lucille are two of the characters who help Maya and her friends. Cite two specific examples from the text where the twins aid Maya and her friends.
26. Papa, Maya, and her friends all fall victim to the elokos at some point in the story. What creatures from Greek mythology do the elokos remind you of?
27. Eli is forced to hurt the darkbringer in the helicopter to save himself and his friends. Can you describe how this decision affects Eli? Do you think he wishes he could have found another solution?
28. Throughout the book, Maya makes many discoveries about herself, her loved ones, and the world around her. How does Maya’s world view change from the beginning of the book to the end?
29. At the end of the story, Maya becomes a guardian of the veil in training. How do you think her life will change with her new role?

CCSS Alignment: ELA-Literacy.RL.3.1, RL.3.3, RL.3.10, RL.4.1, RL.4.2, RL.4.4, RL.4.10, RL.5.1, RL.5.2, RL.5.4, RL.5.10, RL.6.2, RL.6.4, RL.7.1, RL.7.2, SL.3.1, SL.3.2, SL.3.6, SL.4.1, SL.4.2, SL.6.1, SL.7.1

# MAYA AND THE RISING DARK

BY RENA BARRON

## Arts and Crafts Activity

1. If you were secretly a darkbringer, what would you turn into so you could surprise Maya and her friends? Would you have curved horns? A barbed tail? Draw your darkbringer self.
2. Maya quickly discovers that most people in her life are orishas. Draw a picture of your family and friends and write what their orisha powers would be. Then add details to show what they would look like as their orishas.
3. In Maya's neighborhood, most of the houses are greystones, an architectural style popular in some Chicago neighborhoods. Draw your house or your idea of a perfect house and share your favorite thing about it.

CCSS Alignment: ELA-Literacy.RL.3.10, RL.4.10, RL.5.10

# MAYA AND THE RISING DARK

BY RENA BARRON

## Vocabulary

As you read *Maya and the Rising Dark*, consider the words below. Does the context provide clues to their meaning? Explain why or why not.

- extracurricular (p. 5)
- biased (p. 11)
- insinuate (p. 31)
- hypothesis (p. 43)
- repellent (p. 44)
- splice (p. 54)
- replicate (p. 74)
- equilibrium (p. 93)
- mannequin (p. 101)
- millennium (p. 128)
- recessive (p. 129)
- liberator (p. 135)
- celestial (p. 137)
- wielding (p. 149)
- dense (p. 150)
- fantastical (p. 163)
- misnomer (p. 169)
- velocity (p. 176)
- quarantined (p. 188)
- exquisite (p. 192)
- abyss (p. 201)
- manipulate (p. 239)
- dread (p. 267)
- self-righteous (p. 274)

## *Maya and the Rising Dark* Word Puzzle

Z R O T A R E B I L S Q S M E  
 R E P E L L E N T I O E E I X  
 R L H L Y A S D S W L R V L T  
 N A A V V I F E Y F K E I L R  
 M I S C N L H N R Z M P S E A  
 O A U U I T A I I I S L S N C  
 V R A Q O T G T S D S I E N U  
 V T W P E H S N E S Y C C I R  
 E A Y S T N O A E T B A E U R  
 E H N E D M N R T C A T R M I  
 R E O F E V F A O N I E Q Q C  
 D U D R E A D U M V A L Y Z U  
 S D E S A I B Q G G F F P B L  
 M A N I P U L A T E V K M S A  
 M U I R B I L I U Q E C I P R

ABYSS	EXTRACURRICULAR	MANIPULATE	RECESSIVE
BIASED	FANTASTICAL	MANNEQUIN	REPELLENT
DENSE	HYPOTHESIS	MILLENNIUM	REPLICATE
DREAD	INSINUATE	MISNOMER	SELF-RIGHTEOUS
EQUILIBRIUM	LIBERATOR	QUARANTINED	SPLICE

CCSS Alignment: ELA-Literacy.RL.3.1, RL.3.4, RL.3.10, RL.4.4, RL.4.10, RL.5.4, RL.5.10, RL.6.1, RL.6.4, RL.7.1

# MAYA AND THE RISING DARK

BY RENA BARRON

## About the Author

Rena Barron grew up in small-town Alabama, where stories of magic and adventure sparked her imagination. After penning her first awful poem in middle school, she graduated to writing short stories and novels by high school. Rena loves all things science fiction, ghosts, and superheroes. She's a self-proclaimed space nerd. When she's not writing, she can be found reading or brushing up on her French. You can visit her online at [renabarron.com](http://renabarron.com).



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## Q&A with Rena

**Q:** What inspired you to write *Maya and the Rising Dark*?

**A:** For *Maya and the Rising Dark*, I was inspired by this idea of a girl who loved superheroes and stories. No surprise that I loved reading and telling stories while I was growing up, especially anything to do with Greek mythology. I hadn't known a lot about the rich stories of my ancestors from West Africa, and I'm still learning about them now. For Maya's story, I fused my love of mythology with my desire to understand the beliefs of my ancestors.

**Q:** Was Maya's neighborhood inspired by a real Chicago neighborhood?

**A:** Yes! Maya's neighborhood is based on the Back of the Yards on the southwest side of Chicago, where I lived several years ago. For people who know Chicago, it's a neighborhood that usually makes the news for the wrong reasons. When I wrote Maya's story, I wanted to focus on the sense of community and joy that thrived in the neighborhood despite what we always saw on the news. It's important for everyone to see that Chicago isn't just skyscrapers, pizza, and famous

attractions. There are so many neighborhoods that tourists and even locals have written off as "no-go" zones, and I wanted to write about a part of the city we don't often see in a positive light.

**Q:** Why do you think it was important to write this story?

**A:** When I was growing up, I never saw myself represented in the books that I loved to read. I never got to be the hero or go on a fantastical adventure to save the world. Nowadays, there has been a slow change in traditional publishing to correct that bias. I wrote Maya's story to help fill the gap so that every child will have the opportunity to read about people who represent them and also read about people from different backgrounds, too.

**Q:** Why do you think representing different people and perspectives is important in books?

**A:** Some people say that books aren't real, so it doesn't matter that a Black girl isn't the main character, but that's easy to say if you've always seen someone who looks like you in the books you've read. Books help us build empathy and



# MAYA AND THE RISING DARK

BY RENA BARRON

share common hopes, fears, and dreams. I write stories that reflect the rich diversity of the real world, so we can all see ourselves as the center of our own stories and imagine endless possibilities.

**Q:** Were Maya and her friends inspired by real people?

**A:** Absolutely! This may sound self-indulgent, but Maya, Frankie, and Eli all have parts of my personality. I was a huge X-Men fan when I was their age, and also loved science and ghosts. I still adore those things! I was in after-school math tutoring, so Ms. Vanderbilt is inspired by my

seventh- and eighth-grade math tutor. My mom listened to a lot of blues music, so Ernest (aka Eshu) has a harmonica because it's the instrument I remember the most from my childhood.

**Q:** What do you have in store for readers for book two?

**A:** I don't want to spoil the story, but let's just say that Maya, Eli, and Frankie will face new threats to their neighborhood and discover a secret that will change their lives forever.

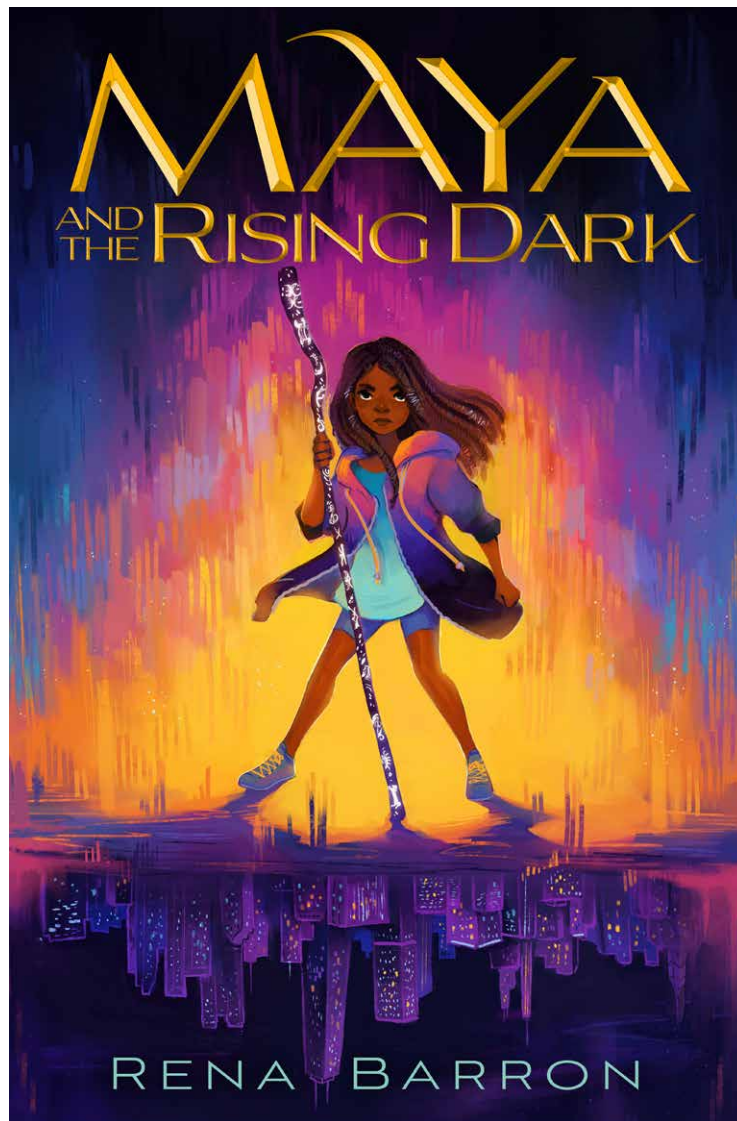
CCSS Alignment: ELA-Literacy.RL.3.10, 4.10, RL.5.10



PARENT'S GUIDE

# MAYA AND THE RISING DARK

BY RENA BARRON



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