

LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS

# educator's guide | ages 6–10







## SERIES BOOKS AND BEGINNING READERS

Series books offer predictable text structures with likeable protagonists, often in familiar settings—all helpful factors as beginning readers start to read independently, as well as practice their emerging reading abilities. Students are also motivated to read series books because they feel “grown up” holding a chapter book with smaller illustrations rather than a small leveled book or a picture book. In addition, series books can promote classroom community around literature as peers read books together and then excitedly share their thinking with one another about story plots, eagerly anticipating the publication of the next book in the series.

The Lola Levine series is a fun, light-hearted set of books with a multiracial female protagonist who is not hesitant to share her strong opinions on gender roles, the importance of kindness, little brothers, writing, and bullying. Her realistic problems are appropriate for first through third grade students and the humor in the narratives hook the reader. After all, who hasn’t experienced an annoying sibling or wanted a pet? By starting instruction with the first books in this series, students will move to read and comprehend subsequent Lola titles on their own.

## MEET THE CHARACTERS

### *Dolores (Lola) Esther Levine*

- First name same as that of her aunt in Peru
- Middle name that of her great-grandmother Levine’s first name
- Dislikes her first name, Dolores, which means pain in Spanish—prefers being called Lola
- Peruvian-Jewish heritage
- Lives far from extended family: Bubbe in Florida, Tía Lola in Peru
- Strong nuclear family: parents take turns driving children to school, special meals cooked on Friday nights, play games together
- Owns a goldfish
- Wants a kitty
- Is loud like her grandmother
- An early riser
- Writes notes and letters to communicate things difficult to express
- Favorite subject: science
- Special favorite foods: matzo ball soup, Peruvian chicken, flan, batidos de plátano, banana shakes, Bubbe’s apple tea full of honey and spices and “lots of good stuff”



### *Lola’s father*

- Jewish
- Long hair worn in a ponytail
- Artist who paints/works at home



### *Lola’s mother*

- Catholic
- Peruvian
- Speaks Spanish
- Writes for a newspaper and works outside the home



### *Lola’s younger brother, Benjamin*

- Kindergartner
- Long curly hair
- Strong personality
- Sensitive stomach
- Wears a mouth guard to play soccer due to an accident that involved two chipped teeth and because he thinks it makes him look fierce



### *Other characters*

- **Grandma Levine:** Lola’s bubbe, Lola’s father’s mother, lives in Florida, has a loud voice and is very dramatic, loves colorful clothing
- **Josh Blot:** Lola’s best friend, principal’s son, loves soccer, owns a cat named Milo
- **Principal Blot:** Josh’s mother, sets consequences for Lola after a soccer incident at school, becomes exasperated with Lola, takes delight in her garden
- **Ms. García:** Lola’s favorite teacher, teaches second grade, speaks Spanish



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## CHARACTER ANALYSIS WITH CLOSE READING

### *Interactive Read Aloud with Open Mind Portrait Response and Character Trait Brainstorming*

Before reading, draw an outline of Lola’s head on the whiteboard. Then introduce students to the book, telling them about the title, author, and character without giving away too much of the plot. Inform students that they are detectives and want to answer the question: “What is Lola thinking?” Write this on the whiteboard Lola’s head.

From here, read chapter 1 aloud to your students. As you read, stop to think aloud about what Lola is thinking—modeling this will help students identify Lola’s thoughts. Sketch images or jot down words to represent the thoughts in Lola’s head. Do this multiple times throughout chapter 1, drawing students into the discussion as they seem ready.

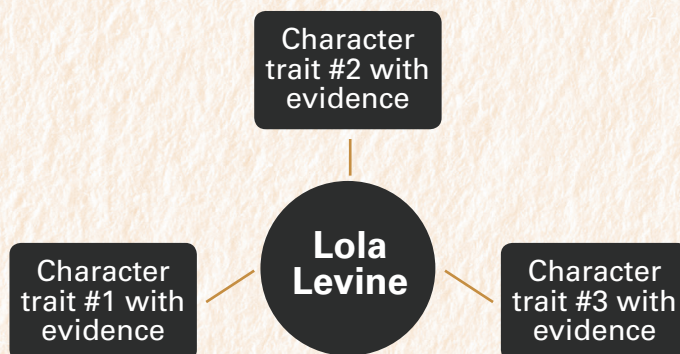
As you move into chapter 2, begin to ask students for ideas about Lola’s thoughts. By chapter 3, provide students with a sheet of paper containing an outline of Lola’s head (or you can have students draw the outline). Ask students to record ideas about Lola’s thoughts while you read the book. Pause at key points in the story (at the end of every chapter or two) to allow students to write or draw Lola’s thoughts in their Open Mind Portraits. Students may also share their ideas with the class, in groups, or with a partner before recording them, depending on what best fits their needs.

Upon completion of the read aloud, ask students to share their Lola portraits (partner, small group, whole class). Next, ask students to think about what kind of person Lola might be based on their Open Mind Portrait notes. In other words, “Who is Lola Levine?” Share a few of your own character traits (e.g., energetic, active, creative, independent, caring).

Students may then draw and color Lola’s head next to the Open Mind Portrait. These portraits are useful for formative assessment, as they provide insights into students’ deep thinking about Lola. Post these around the classroom.

### *Character Analysis and a Close Reading of the Text*

Following the read aloud, work with students and present a “Lola Character Map” graphic organizer; a cluster or web format, like the one pictured below, often works well.



Ensure there is extra space on the chart for use beyond this lesson so students can add new information as they read the rest of the series. Review the list of Lola character traits from the read aloud/Open Mind Portrait lesson. Discuss the difference between a trait and something a person does, for example: athletic or athlete (trait—who Lola is) and plays soccer (action—what Lola does). Determine which ideas listed may be traits and which are character actions or likes/dislikes.

Think aloud and write one of the traits discussed on a Post-It, noting why you think this is a trait and indicating that you will need to reread the text to see if you can find evidence to prove it.

Ask students to help you find any clues in chapter 1 that could serve as evidence for this trait. Reread the text aloud or have the group choral read, guiding the students to locate the page/sentence(s) in the book that serve as evidence for this claim. Record the page number and information on a Post-It to attach to the graphic organizer with the trait listed. Explain to students that they will need to keep searching for evidence for this trait because an author does not simply provide all the information right away but allows readers to learn about the character over time.

As a group, determine two to four more potential traits for Lola and record these on Post-Its to place two to four. The Post-It traits can be removed/replaced with a new trait if there is not enough evidence in the text and students note other important traits. Upon completion, discuss your findings as a class.

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## VOCABULARY

### Using Context to Determine Unknown Words

After reading *Lola Levine is NOT Mean!*, project the following passage from pp. 80–81 on a whiteboard:

“All we need,” Ms. García goes on, “is shredded newspapers, sand, a little water, the fruit and vegetable leftovers from your lunch boxes, and our worm friends, and we have something we call vermicomposting. Can you say ‘vermicomposting?’”

“Vermicomposting,” the class repeats.

“How does it work?” Juan asks.

“Well, the worms eat the garbage, and their poop turns into nutritious fertilizer that we’ll use in our class garden,” Ms. García says.

Read the passage aloud with the students and ask if they know what *vermicomposting* means. Discuss how you can figure out difficult words by using clues in the book. As students explain the word, circle any terms they mention that are provided in the passage. Point to the circled words and indicate that the students were able to do this using the clues in the text.

Now, project the following sentence from p. 19 on the white board:

“Ben knows that I don’t like my full name, even if I’m named after my tía Lola and even if she’s the most awesome aunt ever.”

Ask students to determine the meaning of the word *tía*. Discuss how the author helps the reader understand Spanish words in the same way that she does for the difficult words like *vermicomposting*. Point out that bilingual authors sometimes do not define every Spanish word or phrase they use in a book because many of these words are commonly used in the United States and many people already know the meanings of these words whether they speak Spanish or not. You’ll find examples of this on pp. 26 and 75.

### Living Word Wall

As students move on in the series, ask them to place a sticky note next to each new word they come across as they read. Explain to students that before reading on, they should attempt to figure out the meaning of the word from the context, or clues around it, and write a short phrase explaining the meaning of the unknown word.

Once students have completed the reading, ask them to share their words and the page numbers with the class. Write the words on a whiteboard. Ask students how they got the meaning of the word from the context or other textual clues. Provide scaffolding through thinking aloud if students come across a word they cannot figure out.

Create a Word Wall that includes all the new words students encounter in both English and Spanish. Use one color for the English terms and a different color for the Spanish words and phrases. Students can add to the Living Word Wall as they read through the series.

## WRITING

### Write an Opinion Paper

Lola has lots of opinions, which she freely shares with readers. Many of these opinions are based on things and people she likes or dislikes.

LOLA'S LIKES	LOLA'S DISLIKES
Painting	Sleep because it is overrated
Purple	Cauliflower
Reading & writing	Being called Dolores
Soccer	Her first grade teacher, who told her to use her <b>INSIDE</b> voice in her very own loud voice.

Have students create a list of likes and dislikes. Ask students to select a specific topic from their opinion list and write a first person narrative paper in which they share a topic, state their opinion, and supply at least two reasons for this opinion.

### Writing from Different Perspectives

After students have completed character maps for several of the secondary characters in the series, discuss how each might view Lola. How would her mother describe Lola and her escapades? What about her father or Principal Blot?



## A Focus on Jokes

Everyone loves telling jokes and riddles. Lola's brother, Ben, initiates jokes at the beginning of the first two Lola Levine books, when he wakes his sister up early in the morning. Challenge students to find and discuss Ben's jokes in the text (see below). Are they funny? Why or why not? Or who finds them funny and who does not? Student should then record jokes they have heard, read joke books, and create new jokes in a center time activity.

From *Lola Levine is Not Mean!* (p. 7):

- "What do you call a pig who plays soccer?"
- "Why are soccer players so smart?"

From *Lola Levine, Drama Queen*:

- "What do kitties eat for dessert?" (p. 5)
- "What did the kitty eat for breakfast?" (p. 72)
- "What's a kitty's favorite color?" (p. 90)

## BULLYING

Students in the primary grades understand and may experience bullying, and girls may experience being belittled for their gender. The Lola Levine series presents these difficult topics in an age-appropriate way and can spur important conversations around these issues. Specific quotes from the text are provided below, followed by prompts to start conversations.

From p. 12 of *Lola Levine Is Not Mean!*: "You do realize that a girl can't have a best friend that's a boy, right?"

Conversation prompt: Makayla says this to Lola because Lola is best friends with Josh. What do you think about boys and girls as best friends? Why?

From p. 59 of *Lola Levine Is Not Mean!*: "No one has the right to treat you badly."

Conversation prompt: Think of all the times you noticed Alyssa and Makayla being mean to Lola. Why do you think they do this? What would you like to tell her teacher or the principal about what is being said to Lola? What advice would you give Lola to help her the next time the girls say something mean to her? What would you do if you were Lola?

From p. 69 of *Lola Levine, Drama Queen*: "Boys and girls should look however they want!"

Conversation prompt: Lola makes this statement when Ben reports that his friend Maya is teased for cutting her hair short following a scissor accident. Lola thinks about her own short hair and that both her father and brother wear their long hair in ponytails. What do you think about boys with long hair or girls with short hair?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What problem did Lola solve in *Lola Levine Is Not Mean!*? How did she solve it? What did she learn?
2. What problem did Lola solve in *Lola Levine, Drama Queen*? How did she solve it? What did she learn?
3. Were these problems similar or different? How?
4. How do you think Lola grows or changes from Book 1 to Book 2?
5. What do you think the next Lola book will be about?

### about the author

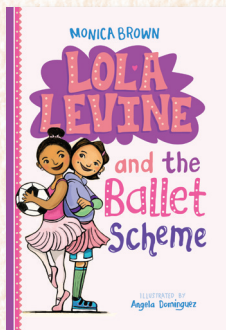


Monica Brown, PhD, is the author of many award-winning books for children, including *Pablo Neruda: Poet of the People*, *Waiting for the Biblioburro*, and *Marisol McDonald Doesn't Match*. Monica's books are inspired by her Peruvian-American heritage and desire to share Latino stories with children. She is a professor of English at Northern Arizona University. Visit her online at [monicabrown.net](http://monicabrown.net).

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## about the books



HC 978-0-316-25844-9  
TP 978-0-316-25847-0  
Also available as an ebook

When new classmate Bella, a ballet dancer, walks into Lola's class at Northland Elementary, all Lola can see is pink everywhere—pink ribbons, a pink sweatshirt, and pink tennis shoes. Yuck! Pink is Lola's least favorite color. Plus, ballet isn't nearly as hard as soccer, is it?

Lola and Bella can't seem to stop squabbling. But when a mishap during class lands them in Principal Blot's office, Lola's mom comes up with a scheme—a ballet scheme—that just might make these classroom rivals realize that ballerinas and soccer players have more in common than they ever thought possible.

But is it too late for Lola to make a new friend?

**"Readers already familiar with Lola will be happy for a return visit, while newcomers—like Bella—will learn to appreciate her charm."** —*Booklist Online*



HC 978-0-316-25853-1  
TP 978-0-316-25850-0  
Also available as an ebook

The Levines are finally going to get a pet—a furry one, that is. They are excited about adopting a kitty, but they don't get very far in the process when Ben starts sneezing. Oh no, he's allergic! Luckily, the Levines adopt a puppy instead, but potty-training the puppy is harder than it looks.

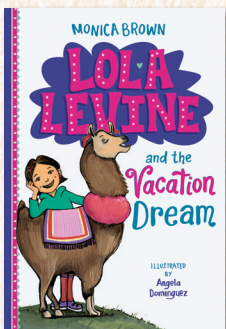
Since the first book in the series, *Lola Levine Is Not Mean!*, Lola has been asking her parents for a new pet. Now it's finally happening! And in true Lola fashion, we can expect a few mishaps, a bunch of funny moments, and a cute new pet all wrapped in one adorable book.

★ **"A great read for Lola's fans and any kid with a yen for a furry pet of their own."** —*Kirkus Reviews*



HC 978-0-316-25836-4

2017 Arkansas Battle of the Books  
2018 Washington Otter Award  
2018 Texas Houston Name That Book (K-2)  
2018 Beverly Cleary Children's Choice Award



HC 978-0-316-50639-7  
TP 978-0-316-50638-0  
Also available as an ebook

The Levines head to Peru for a family vacation in this heartwarming chapter book by acclaimed author Monica Brown.

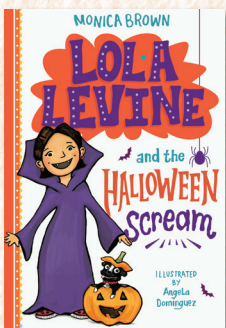
Lola is named after her Tía Lola, who lives in Lima, Peru. Lola misses her aunt and dreams of visiting her. After Lola's dad has a successful art show, Lola's dream comes true. The Levines are going to Peru!

Thousands of miles from home, Lola and Ben discover all the new adventures Lima has to offer. They even visit the Peruvian school where Tía Lola is the principal.

Will Lola and Ben manage to stay out of trouble?



HC 978-1-338-19342-8



HC 978-0-316-50642-7  
TP 978-0-316-50643-4  
Also available as an ebook

It's Halloween—Lola's favorite holiday, and Ben's too. She loves pumpkins, scary costumes, monsters, and graveyards—and she likes to scare people too. But when Lola plays a joke on her super best friends, Josh Blot and Bella Benitez, it does not turn out well.

Can Lola learn from her mistake and still have a happy Halloween?



HC 978-0-316-25843-2

2018 Texas Bluebonnet Award  
2018 Texas Houston Name That Book (3-6)

