



# WHAT FELL FROM THE SKY

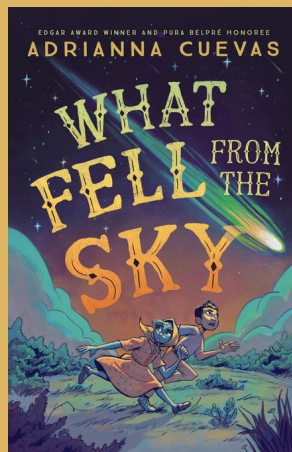
## Teacher's Guide

## About the Book

All Pineda Matlage wants is to get through the school year and maybe pull an epic prank or two with his friends Junior, Ernesto, and Patsy. But class is disrupted when a slew of American soldiers descends upon their rural Texan town of Soledad. They'll be carrying out a training exercise and taking over everything, from Pineda's school to the local government.

But Pineda knows why they're really here. For days he's hidden the strange creature who fell from the sky in his parents' barn. He promised her he'd find her family and help them return home. But with soldiers now on every street corner and armed checkpoints across every road, reuniting his new friend with her missing parents seems an impossible task. Especially when they realize that the army's presence is really a coverup for capturing his alien friends—being observed in a laboratory by the US government for reasons of their own.

Enlisting the help of his friends, a Black soldier adjusting to a newly integrated army, and townspeople tired of the military's destructive presence, Pineda and all of Soledad will embark on an adventure none of them could have ever expected.



## **Background Information**

### **The Invasion of Lampasas, Texas**

In March of 1952, more than 100,000 United States soldiers dropped from the sky and invaded Lampasas, Texas, a town of only 5,000 people. They imposed martial law, closing schools, churches, and government buildings. They took over the newspaper and radio station and imposed a 6:00 p.m. curfew. The entire exercise, dubbed Operation Long Horn, was a reaction to the threat of nuclear war and communism from the Soviet Union (now Russia). All of the military speeches and flyers in this book are taken from actual speeches and propaganda distributed during the event.

The operation didn't quite go as planned. Soldiers were injured as they parachuted into town. One pilot was killed when his plane collided with another plane. Farmers' crops and fences were destroyed, and livestock were killed. Many citizens of Lampasas reacted strongly to having their rights stripped away by an invading military, even though it was all simply for show. The whole maneuver went so poorly that when Lampasas residents learned of the military's plan to conduct a similar exercise the following year, they refused to sign the required easements for use of their land. The operation was conducted far away in Louisiana instead.

### **The Korean War**

The Korean War was a war fought between two countries, North Korea and South Korea. It started in 1950 when 75,000 soldiers from the North Korean People's Army poured across the 38th parallel which divides Korea into North Korea (communist) and South Korea (democratic). American troops soon entered to help South Korea. This war lasted for 3 years with back and forth battles. The Korean War was a symbol of what happened in the Cold War between East and West. The US wanted to fight communism to prevent it from spreading in other places like North Korea.

### **Army Integration**

On July 26, 1948, President Harry Truman signed Executive Order 9981, creating the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services. The order mandated the desegregation of the U.S. military. Despite the order, the president faced push back from many of the leaders within the military. The leading generals argued that officers would not promote or send Black troops for schools, while their white

counterparts would become violent due to being forced together. The recent experience of combat, however, showed this to be inaccurate. The majority of men and officers who fought with Black units, reported they performed admirably and would not have issues serving alongside black units again. White units which had not served with Black Soldiers tended to reflect the racial views the generals feared. It was a slow process and the Army was not fully integrated until November 1954.

### **Comets, Asteroids, and Meteors**

A comet is a small, icy object that orbits the sun and has a long "tail" of gas. Some comets can be seen from Earth every few years, while others pass by once in a person's lifetime. Comets are made of ice, dust, and tiny pieces of rock, but to people on Earth, they look like streaks or smudges across the night sky. The main difference between asteroids and comets is their composition, as in, what they are made of. Asteroids are made up of metals and rocky material, while comets are made up of ice, dust and rocky material. A meteor is an asteroid or comet that has entered Earth's atmosphere.

### **Pre-Reading Activity**

Watch the following YouTube video about the military operation that took place in Lampasas, Texas. <https://youtu.be/52PdV0U6-Bc>

And look at these pictures from the event.



How would you feel if this happened where you live?  
Do you think the military should have practiced their exercises so close to civilians?

## Discussion Questions

1. In chapter 1, Pineda describes the things you can know about him based on what his desk looks like. What could someone know about you based on your desk or backpack?
2. In chapter 1, Pineda talks about the characteristics he gets from his Cuban mother and his American father. How do these things affect how he feels about fitting in?
3. In chapter 2, the Newcomer talks about “gray objects sailing right below me. Dark green sticks pour from the gray vessels.” What do you think the Newcomer is describing?
4. In chapter 3, what are two rules that the Aggressor Nation has imposed on the town?
5. In chapter 5, what are two pieces of evidence that Pineda’s dad shows him to prove the whole military operation is fake?
6. How does the Newcomer look different than Pineda?
7. In chapter 9, Pineda says “It’s not fair that we have to give up a part of who we are just because people can’t be bothered to say our names correctly.” What do you think about his statement?
8. What are some of the differences and similarities Luisa has noticed between her planet and Pineda’s?
9. In chapter 21, Luisa wonders if Corporal Shipley has to cover up his skin just like she does. Why might she think that?
10. What are some of the things the townspeople have become unhappy about regarding the military operation in town?
11. In chapter 27, Pineda says that being there for Luisa is something that doesn’t need a language. What do you think he means by this?
12. In chapter 31, Pineda tells Luisa about his parents. Do you think Luisa and Pineda’s mother have anything in common?
13. At the end of chapter 32, Pineda wishes Luisa wasn’t so different. Why do you think he feels this way?
14. In chapter 35, Luisa wonders if there’s some Earth tradition she’s not following that’s making people mad. She thinks they can’t just be mad at her simply because of what she looks like. Why are people treating Luisa differently and why do you think this might not make sense to her?
15. In chapter 38, we learn Mean Lady Kolchek’s real identity. What clues did Pineda’s father, Ernesto, and Mrs. Pritchard give about this without knowing?

## Discussion Questions

16. In chapter 40, Miss Kolchek refuses to help Luisa. Do you agree with her decision?
17. In chapter 41, Corporal Shipley tells Pineda and his friends about being part of the Red Ball Express during World War II. Pineda mentions that they didn't learn about it in school. Why do you think that it wasn't taught at school?
18. In chapter 48, Pineda says it wasn't Corporal Shipley's fault that Luisa got taken but he disagrees. Why does Corporal Shipley think he's still responsible for what happened? Do you agree with his opinion?
19. In chapter 55, Pineda finally asks his friends to stop calling him Pete. Why do you think he does this?
20. Starting in chapter 57, the story breaks off into seven different points of view to tell the climax of the story. Why do you think the author chose to do this?
21. Throughout the story, Luisa has consistently called things strange. But in chapter 64, she switches to saying things are 'not strange at all.' What do you think causes this change?
22. At the end of the story, Pineda says he wishes that the next time someone new or different comes to town, people would just welcome them. Based on your knowledge of history and of current events, do you think this happened?



167 YEARS  
INVOLVEMENT  
ENDS IN TEXAS

**The Lampasas Dispatch**

TEXAS AGAIN  
IS MADE A  
REPUBLIC

FOR MANEUVER PURPOSES ONLY — This Publication Created for Operation Long Horn ... NOT INTENDED FOR GENERAL DISTRIBUTION

Volume 1  
Lampasas, Texas, Thursday, November 10, 1939  
Number 2

# TEXAS MADE A NATION

**Greetings To The People Of Lampasas From The President Of The Aggressor Nation**

Marshal Aggressor the president of Aggressor extends heartfelt greetings to the people of Lampasas in a telegram from the glorious Redland he ruled —

"Welcome to the fold of the Aggressor warriors of freedom. Now you can at last cast off the bonds of capitalism and back to the warmth of Aggressor Leadership. You are urged to cooperate with the Aggressor Military Forces in your city or to expedite the expulsion of the rapidly weakening United States Forces from the fair state of Texas. It is my earnest wish that I may soon be your guest and receive your calculated hospitality. I am certain that in the true spirit of your gallant forefathers you will all take arms and fight side by side with our valiant Aggressor soldiers and crush the capitalist oppressors, which has shamefully enslaved Texas for so many years."

It is the solemn duty of our great president to fully reveal the value that Lampasas and Texas can be the Aggressor crusade to free the world of all decadent forms of government. Such anyone who needs the president's heart warming message cannot help but feel a surge of patriotism which makes them willing to make any sacrifice to further the advance of the influence of the great and good world Aggressor Nation.

All our Texans are hereby directed to take stock of their present good fortune and resolve to immediately and forever pledge allegiance to the Nation which will eventually free the western hemisphere of all traces of the alien that has possessed all the center of civilization — the United States Capitalism over a century and a half.

Join The Texas Peoples Army

The Texas Peoples Republic is a country on Army leave as the Texas Peoples Army, Eastern, to fight Aggressor Army to liberate the last slith of Texas, followed still from any rank held by them in any other military service. This offer will not be made to drafted person.

Pay and allowances are the same as the conscripts pay rates of Aggressor. In addition the volunteer

**Aggressor Win Ends Bondage**

An Aggressor Military Government Group assumed control of Lampasas today when the 5th Middle Government, led by the Aggressor (Colonel) Albur M. Schippenick, raised the Aggressor Flag at the County Court House at 9:00 AM.

"Aggressor outside the helping hand of friendship to join," said Ray Schippenick, "has not our great President, Marshall Aggressor, stated that we have come to burn the bonds by which the city, capitalists, and about our managers have enslaved you since 1847 Long live the Texas Peoples Republic and the glorious Aggressor Nation!"

Ray Schippenick further stated that the primary mission of his Military Government Section was to restore order, eradicate the few remaining traces of decadent US influence in Lampasas and to insure that citizens do not inadvertently interfere with the Aggressor Military effort.

Proclamation at the same time were the local military government laws which have superseded those based on the imperialistic US Constitution. These new laws are based on the democratic laws of Aggressor and are able to the original Texas Republic laws.

One near Huddell's Aggressor. He served in the German Army in World War II as a Major. Upon the formation of Aggressor in 1938 he entered the Aggressor Army near Mexico and saw combat in the California, Forts and Colorado Campaign leading to his present rank. He was wounded early in the Carolina campaign of 1932 and upon recovery was assigned to the Institute de Governmento Militia de Sevilla, graduating from Fort Summa Gun Lodge in the

## Extension Responses

Select one of the following quotes from *What Fell From the Sky*. Write an extended response explaining whether you agree or disagree with the opinion presented in the quote. Be sure to:

- Clearly state your central idea
- Organize your writing
- Develop your writing in detail
- Choose your words carefully
- Use correct spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and grammar

1. Being different is never good.
2. New things can be overwhelming.
3. Being there for [someone] doesn't need a language.
4. Sometimes we just need people to help us feel like we belong.
5. Hard to miss something you don't remember.
6. Some people just like to hang on to their hate.
7. The people with the most foolish ideas talk the loudest.

## For Further Reading

*Far Out* by Anne Bustard

*Who Owns the Moon* by Cynthia Levinson and Jennifer Swanson

*Finding Junie Kim* by Ellen Oh

*Hidden Figures: The True Story of Four Black Women and the Space Race*  
by Margot Lee Shetterly and Winifred Conkling

*The Owls Have Come to Take Us Away* by Ronald L. Smith



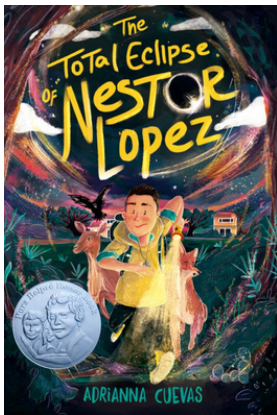
Courthouse in Lampasas, TX



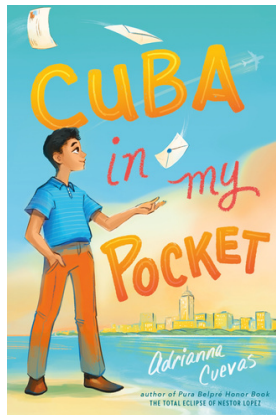
## About the Author

Adrianna Cuevas is the author of the Pura Belpré honor book *The Total Eclipse of Nestor Lopez*, the Edgar Award winning *The Ghosts of Rancho Espanto*, and many other popular middle grade titles. She is a first-generation Cuban-American originally from Miami, Florida. A former Spanish and ESOL teacher, Adrianna currently resides outside of Austin, Texas with her husband and son. When not substitute teaching at her local high school, cheering for the Florida Panthers hockey team, and setting off the smoke alarm in her kitchen, she is writing her next middle grade novel.

## Also by Adrianna Cuevas



also in Spanish



also in Spanish



also in Spanish

