

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

MUSE SQUAD: THE CASSANDRA CURSE

BY: CHANTEL ACEVEDO



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ABOUT THE BOOK

The first in an action-packed debut middle grade fantasy duology about a Cuban American girl who discovers that she's one of the nine Muses of Greek mythology. Perfect for fans of *The Serpent's Secret*, the *Aru Shah* series, and the *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series.

Callie Martinez-Silva didn't mean to turn her best friend into a pop star. But when a simple pep talk leads to miraculous results, Callie learns she's the newest muse of epic poetry, one of the nine Muses of Greek mythology tasked with protecting humanity's fate in secret.

Whisked away to Muse Headquarters, she joins three recruits her age, who call themselves the Muse Squad. Together, the junior muses are tasked with using their magic to inspire and empower—not an easy feat when you're eleven and still figuring out the goddess within.

When their first assignment turns out to be Callie's exceptionally nerdy classmate, Maya Rivero, the squad comes to Miami to stay with Callie and her Cuban family. There, they discover that Maya doesn't just need inspiration, she needs saving from vicious Sirens out to unleash a curse that will corrupt her destiny. As chaos erupts, will the Muse Squad be able to master their newfound powers in time to thwart the Cassandra Curse . . . or will it undo them all?

INSIDE YOU'LL FIND...

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

CREATIVE WRITING ACTIVITIES

BEFORE YOU READ

Have you ever helped a friend in need? How did you support them? How did you feel afterwards?

Do you know what a "Pep talk" is? It's a conversation meant to offer courage to another person. Have you ever been given a pep talk by a friend? Did it work?

The nine muses were Greek goddesses who ruled over the arts and sciences and who inspired these subjects in others. If you could ask a muse for help on a particular school subject, which one would it be?

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Called "a master storyteller" by Kirkus Reviews, Chantel Acevedo is the author of four books for adults, including *The Distant Marvels* (Europa Editions), which was a finalist for the 2016 Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction, and most recently, Her essays have appeared in *Vogue* and *Real Simple*, among others.

MUSE SQUAD: THE CASSANDRA CURSE, Acevedo's new middle grade series (called "Riveting and suspenseful" by *School Library Journal*) was published by Balzer + Bray in 2020.

She is Professor of English at the University of Miami, where she directs the MFA program.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) How is Callie's family described in the book? What is her relationship like with her mother, brothers, father and stepmother?
- 2) Callie helps her best friend, Raquel, with her audition but things quickly get out of hand when her muse magic kicks in! Do you think Raquel ever questions her success? Why or why not?
- 3) Callie is whisked away to muse headquarters and soon meets the rest of the muses. Four of them are kids. How are they different from one another? How might they be similar?
- 4) During a field trip, the Muse Squad makes a decision regarding the orca in captivity. What are the arguments for and against their choice? What do you think about Clio's response?
- 5) Maya has a passion--saving the Earth! how does Callie support that passion? Do you think Maya will make a difference some day?
- 6) While Callie learns what it means to be a muse, as well as a good friend, you might say that all the muses have a lot to learn. What learning journeys might Nia, Thalia and Mela be taking, too?
- 7) Callie and the rest of the Muse Squad must learn the nine rules of being a muse. Can you think of other rules they might follow?

CREATIVE WRITING ACTIVITIES

- 1) If you could be any kind of muse, what would you inspire in others? Write a letter to Mt. Olympus, explaining to the Greek gods why YOU would make the next great muse!
- 2) The muses have a set of rules they follow that help them do their job. Come up with your own list for an activity you like to do. Make them fun, creative, and helpful.
- 3) The muses meet at a museum when they need to gather. In fact, the word "museum" is derived from "muses!" Describe the museum of your dreams! What would be in it? What would it be called? What kind of building might you design for it?
- 4) Callie and her best friend Raquel often communicate via text message. Write a story in dialogue using text messaging format! Don't forget emojis and emoticons :)
- 5) Epic poems written in ancient times often began with an "Invocation to the Muse." Basically, this was a request made by the writer to the muse for inspiration. Think about something you do in your life that could use some "muse help." Think about the muses in your life. Maybe it's one of the nine muses, or maybe it's a friend or family member. It could even be your favorite snack or video game. Write a poem to your muse, asking for help!



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