

Approved for use in 8<sup>th</sup> Grade English**Summary of the Work:**

From *Gale Cengage Learning*

Stolen from her parents when she was young, Tzunun, now called Rosa, can barely remember her early life, remembering only the time she has spent with Uncle. Told that Rosa will bring him a fortune, Uncle has kept her by his side as they travel from village to village begging; sometimes Uncle is blind and sometimes he's lame, but he's always a thief and a cheat. This bothers Rosa immensely as one memory from her childhood is her mother admonishing her to "be honest." Consulting the fortune teller Dona Celestina, Uncle decides to have Rosa help him steal a valuable statue, Holy Maria of the Lilies, from a church in San Sebastian. This dishonesty is beyond what Rosa can tolerate and she gathers her courage to tell the plan to the priest, though she's terrified of Uncle's possible retribution. Uncle is caught and jailed and Rosa travels to Dona Celestina's home where she's taken in; one final confrontation with Uncle reveals the secrets of her early life and offers Rosa the chance to be reunited with her family.

**Professional Reviews and/or Critical Essays:**

From *School Library Journal*

Grade 5-8-Contemporary Guatemala is the setting for this story of 12-year-old Tzunun Chumil (Mayan for "Hummingbird Star"), called Rosa Garcia by the man who supposedly rescued her from abandonment at age four. Rosa and "Uncle" Baltasar travel from place to place, begging for their livelihood as he pretends to be blind. But, despite her dependence on and devotion to him, Rosa is distressed by the dishonesty of their lifestyle and has memories of loving parents. Told by a seer, the Day-Keeper Do-a Celestina, that the child will bring him a treasure, Baltasar takes Rosa to the town of San Sebastian where he and a friend develop a plan to steal a valuable statue from the town's church. The plot backfires when Rosa's conscience forces her to seek out the priest and reveal their intentions, and the two men are jailed. Rosa runs back to the kindly Day-Keeper, who takes her in and gives her the courage to make a new life for herself. When Uncle escapes, Rosa must confront him and, in a dramatic scene in which he plunges off a cliff, she learns that she was kidnapped. With the help of the Day-Keeper and a scrap of paper found in his wallet, Tzunun is reunited with her parents. Cameron layers her compelling story with vivid descriptions of setting and weaves into the narrative the complexities inherent in the blending of Mayan and ladino cultures and religious practices. This is reflected in the book's title, which is the Spanish translation of Tzunun's name. A well-written and engrossing read.

\* Print resources are available from the library media center and libraries in the district. Contact any library media specialist to view the scholarly sources.

\* Scholarly reviews are also available online through Books in Print and Gale. Contact the library media specialist to obtain username and password information to access the subscription database of full-text reviews.

**Rationale:**

This text is to be used in a literature circle setting, where students will choose to read this text among others on and about Latin America. Students will research the history, culture, customs, music, art, architecture, etc. of the setting of this novel. They will discuss the text, its issues, and present on the book and their research to the rest of the class.

**Noted Distinction:****Awards:**

2004: [Riverbank Review Children's Books of Distinction Awards: Fiction](#)

**Expert Picks:**

[ALA's "Best" Lists: 2004](#)

[The Best, Notable & Recommended for 2004](#)

[Booklist Editors' Choice 2003](#)

[Kirkus Reviews' Editor's Choice Children's Books 2003](#)

[Notable Books for a Global Society 2004](#)

[School Library Journal's Best Books of 2003](#)

**Readability:**

- Lexile Score: 730L
- Readability Level:

**Learning Resources Guidelines:**

- The novel meets the Learning Resources Guidelines.

**Standard Alignment:****Literature:**

Content Standard 1—Students construct meaning as they comprehend, interpret, analyze and respond to literary works.

Content Standard 2—Students recognize and evaluate how language, literary devices, and elements contribute to the meaning and impact of literary works.

Content Standard 3—Students reflect upon their literary experiences and purposefully select from a range of works.

Content Standard 4—Students interact with print and nonprint literary works from various cultures, ethnic groups, traditional and contemporary viewpoints written by both genders.

Content Standard 5—Students use literary works to enrich personal experience and to connect to the broader world of ideas, concepts and issues.

**Writing:**

Content Standard 1—Students write clearly and effectively.

Content Standard 2—Students apply a range of skills and strategies in the writing process.

Content Standard 3—Students evaluate and reflect on their growth as writers.

Content Standard 4—Students write for a variety of purposes and audiences.

Content Standard 5—Students recognize the structures of various forms and apply these characteristics to their own writing.

Content Standard 6—Students use the inquiry process, problem-solving strategies, and resources to synthesize and communicate information.

**Reading:**

Content Standard 1—Students construct meaning as they comprehend, interpret, and respond to what they read.

	<p>Content Standard 2—Students apply a range of skills and strategies to read.</p> <p>Content Standard 3—Students set goals, monitor, and evaluate their progress in reading.</p> <p>Content Standard 4—Students select, read, and respond to print and nonprint material for a variety of purposes.</p> <p>Content Standard 5—Students gather, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information from a variety of sources, and communicate their findings in ways appropriate for their purposes and audiences.</p> <p><b>Speaking:</b></p> <p>Standard 1—Students demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the communication process.</p> <p>Content Standard 2—Students distinguish among and use appropriate types of speaking and listening for a variety of purposes.</p> <p>Content Standard 3—Students apply a range of skills and strategies to speaking and listening.</p> <p>Content Standard 4—Students identify, analyze, and evaluate the impacts of effective speaking and evaluative listening.</p> <p><b>Approval:</b> <b>Submitted to Committee:</b> <b>Approved for Adoption:</b></p>
<p><b>Notes on the Text:</b> <i>(The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)</i></p> <p>This story is excellent. It is deep within Guatemala, it's exciting, entertaining, horrifying, seemingly real, and gripping. It's hard to put down. It details life and culture, and it's just a great story of survival and finding one's place in the world. It's also an adventure story; she's searching for her family and what is written on a secret piece of paper. There's mystery and mysticism. Set within a historic time period, and referring to actual events, this work of fiction lends itself directly to speak about recent Central American history and tragedy. Definitely a book to keep on the shelf and use. I find nothing within this text that would raise any community questions.</p>	<p><b>Connection to the Curriculum:</b></p> <p>Please see rationale.</p>
<p><b>Additional Connections:</b> <i>(AP, Honors, Essential/Applied, Dramas, Films, etc.)</i></p>	