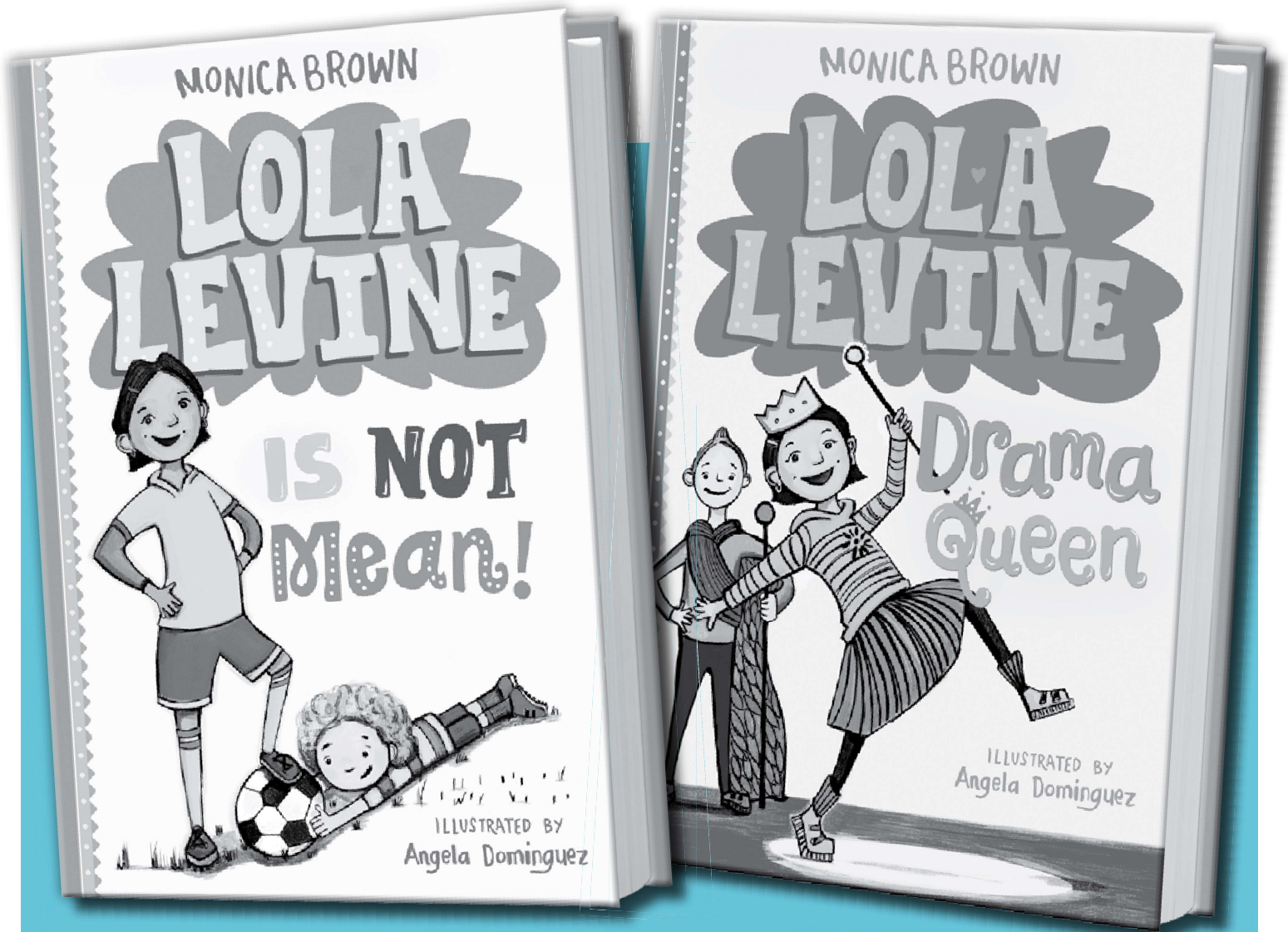


# LOLA LEVINE



## Curriculum connections

- ❖ Character Analysis
- ❖ Vocabulary
- ❖ Descriptive Writing
- ❖ Intertextual References

Ages 6 – 10

by  
**Monica Brown**  
illustrated by  
**Angela Dominguez**

## 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 night, play outside games together
- Owns a goldfish
- Wants a kitty
- Is loud like her grandmother
- An early riser
- Writes notes and letters to express herself, 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 mother

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



### Lola’s younger brother, Benjamin

- Kindergarten
- 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
- **Mrs. García:** Lola’s favorite teacher, teaches second grade, speaks Spanish

### Lola’s father

- Jewish
- Long hair worn in a pony tail
- Artist and paints/works at home



## 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 onto the white board. Then, introduce students to the book, telling them about the title, author, and character without giving away too much to the plot. Inform students that they are detectives and want to answer to the question: “What is Lola thinking?” Write this on the white board at the top of middle of 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. Record your thoughts by sketching an image or jotting down a few words representing your thoughts in Lola’s head. Do this multiple times throughout chapter 1, drawing students into the discussion as they seem ready.

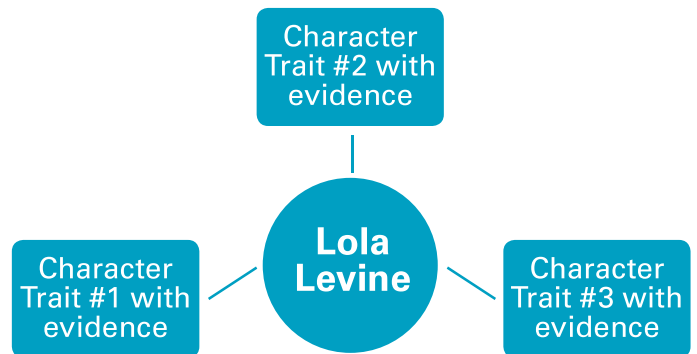
As you move into chapter 2, begin to ask students for ideas about Lola’s thoughts. By chapter 3, provide students with a sheet of paper containing an outline of Lola’s head (or you can have students draw the outline). Ask students to record ideas about Lola’s thoughts while you read through the book. Continue to read, stopping often at key points (end of chapter or every two chapters) in the story to allow students to write or draw Lola’s thoughts in their open mind portrait. 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), provide an explanation for your based on your initial work, and record the traits. Ask students for additional ideas and record all of this for future reference.

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 through the rest of the series. Review the list of Lola character traits recorded in the previous 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 2–4 more potential traits for Lola and record these on Post-Its to place in the other categories. 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.

## VOCABULARY

### Using Context To Determine Unknown Words

After reading through *Lola Levine is NOT Mean!*, project the following passage from p. 80-81 on a white board:

“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 p. 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 con-

text, 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 white board. 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(s) they cannot figure out.

From this list of words, create a word wall to include 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 this 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 both 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 she 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!"

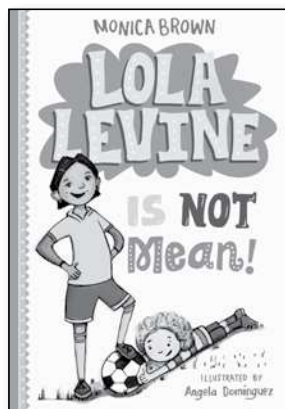
Conversation Prompt: Lola makes this statement when Ben reports that his friend Maya is teased for cutting her hair short following a scissor accident. Lola thinks about her own short hair and that both her father and brother wear their long hair in pony tails. What do you think about boys and long hair 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? If so 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 books



### LOLA LEVINE IS NOT MEAN

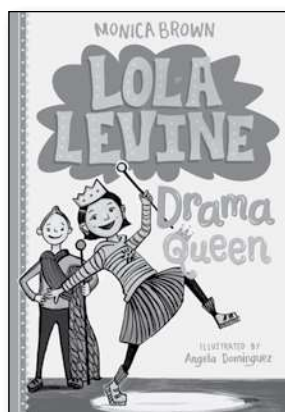
HC 978-0-316-25836-4

Also available in ebook

Lola loves writing in her *diario* and playing soccer with her team, the Orange Smoothies. But when a soccer game during recess gets “too competitive,” Lola accidentally hurts her classmate Juan Gomez. Now everyone is calling her Mean Lola Levine!

Lola feels horrible, but with the help of her family and her super best friend, Josh Blot, she learns how to navigate the second grade in true Lola fashion—with humor and the power of words.

★ “Brown introduces a smart, young protagonist with a multicultural background in this series opener for chapter-book readers....” —*Kirkus Reviews*



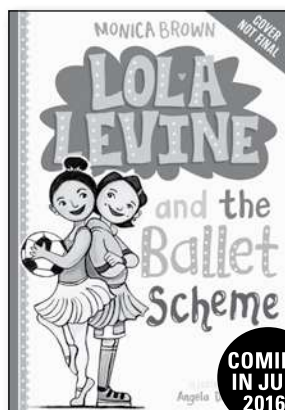
### LOLA LEVINE: DRAMA QUEEN

HC 978-0-316-25843-2

Also available in ebook

Seven-year-old Lola Levine is *fierce* on the soccer field. She can do a slide tackle (although she’s not supposed to) and even likes gooey worms. Nothing scares Lola! That is, until she is auditioning in front of EVERYONE for her class play. After Lola is overcome with stage fright, she’s cast as Squirrel #2, a non-speaking part!

Lola is more than a little disappointed, and she looks to her *bubbe* for advice and comfort. But on opening night, the curtain rises, and she finds herself smack in the middle of an exasperating turn of events.



### LOLA LEVINE AND THE BALLET SCHEME

HC 978-0-316-25844-9

When the new girl Bella, a ballet dancer, walks into Lola’s class at Northland Elementary, Lola sees pink! Bella has pink ribbons, pink sweatshirt, and pink tennis shoes! Pink is Lola’s least favorite color.

After Lola and Bella get into one argument after another, they are forced to try each other’s favorite interests. After a day on the soccer field and an attempt at pirouettes, it turns out that ballerinas and soccer players have more in common than Lola ever thought possible. Can Lola make a new friend?

## about the author



Monica Brown, Ph.D. 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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