

## Discussion Guide

# DRUM DREAM GIRL

by Margarita Engle Illustrated by Rafael López



### About the Book

*Girls cannot be drummers.* Long ago on an island filled with music, no one questioned that rule—until the drum dream girl. In her city of drumbeats, she dreamed of pounding tall congas and tapping small *bongós*. She had to keep quiet. She had to practice in secret. But when at last her dream-bright music was heard, everyone sang and danced and decided that both girls and boys should be free to drum and dream.

Inspired by the childhood of Millo Castro Zaldarriaga, a Chinese-African-Cuban girl who broke Cuba's traditional taboo against female drummers, *Drum Dream Girl* tells an inspiring true story for dreamers everywhere.

### About the Author

Margarita Engle is a Cuban American poet and novelist who has won many awards, including a Newbery Honor and a Pura Belpré Honor. She lives in Northern California. Visit her website at [www.margaritaengle.com](http://www.margaritaengle.com).

### Discussion Questions

- What is a tradition? Why did people think only men and boys should play drums? Are there other traditions that have been changed through the efforts of brave people who dared to be the first to try something new?
- How would you feel if you were told that you could not play music, play sports, be a teacher, vote for president, or be the president, simply because you are female—or male? Would you want to make someone else feel that way?
- How could you change a rule if the rule is unfair?
- Would Millo have been able to change a tradition without help? Who helped her? Were they brave? Was she brave?
- How important was practice in Millo's effort to make her dream come true? How important were lessons?
- What kinds of natural sounds do you hear that remind you of drumbeats? Do you think people who compose music sometimes get their ideas from nature (e.g., woodpeckers, hoofbeats, your own footsteps, your heartbeat)?
- Can you name different kinds of drums? What other objects could you use to make rhythmic sounds, when you don't have a drum? Are any of them ever included in orchestras, bands, or folk music groups (e.g., spoons, cow bells, wash boards, gourd rattles)?
- What does this mean: "You and I travel to the beat of a different drummer." Could it be said that Millo heard her own rhythm?
- Do you think Millo was scared the first time she finally had a chance to play her drums in public? How did she overcome her fear?

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- When people heard Millo play drums, what did they notice? How did this realization help them change their mind about a rule they had always accepted as right?
- Have you seen girls playing drums in a band, parade, orchestra, or other musical group? Do you think they know about Millo? Would they like to know about a girl who was brave enough to try something that no one thought she could do?
- Are there things you would like to learn how to do someday, even though other people might tell you they're too hard? If you felt like giving up, who would you turn to for lessons, encouragement, and help?

This guide was written by Margarita Engle, author of *Drum Dream Girl*.