



Birth of the Fifth Sun: And Other Mesoamerican Tales

Jo Harper

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Many of these seventeen short tales deriving from Mesoamerican mythology are traditional and have traveled through time among the indigenous peoples of Mexico and Central America. A few are contemporary and seem to originate with Nahuatl-speaking descendants of the Aztecs. All of them, however, grace the pages here in lively fashion for young readers nine and up. Many middle schools include Aztec and Mayan myths in their curricula, but the selection is narrow, the sources scattered, and the stories themselves usually undeveloped, even fragmentary. Most of the stories are found only in scholarly works far beyond the grasp of young readers. Now, enlarging upon the mythology that frames the decision making of her young adult hero and heroine in *Delfino's Journey* and *Teresa's Journey*, Jo Harper fleshes out tales of Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca for fourth through sixth graders. Young readers will also meet the Jaguar Sun, the Snake Woman, and the Pepper Man. To be as faithful as possible to the pre-Columbian, Mesoamerican worldview and humor of the original tales, Harper consulted closely with indigenous Nahuatl speakers and cultural anthropologists, yet her delivery has all the freshness and polish of a practiced storyteller who knows her audience. Here then for young readers and their teachers is an engaging introduction to Mesoamerican mythology and to an oral tradition worth preserving well beyond the classroom.

Part One: Quetzalcoatl and Tezca
Birth of the Fifth Sun
Who Will Be the People?
Corn Mountain
Who Can Teach the People?
Music Is Born
Quetzalcoatl Falls
Tezca Shows His Power
Master Log
The Pepper Man
Tezca's Music
Part Two: Tricks and Mistakes
The Thunder Spirits' New Cook
The Buzzard Husband
Rafael Outsmarts the Nahual
Lalito and the Nahual
The Devil's Cave
The Possum's Tale
Chioconejo Rabbit and Coyote

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