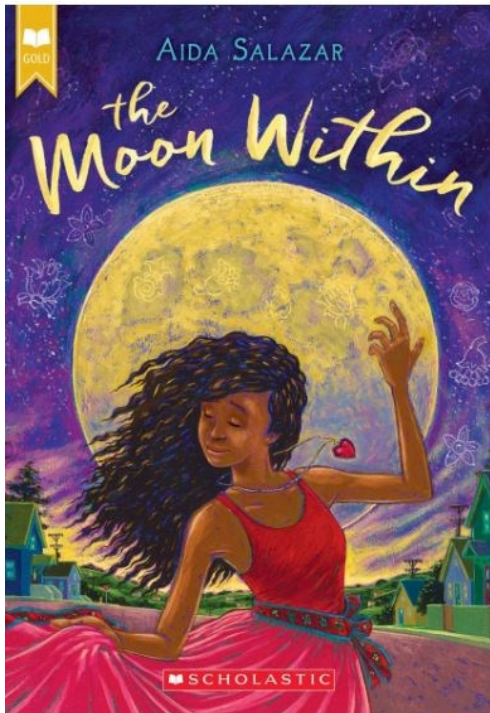


# THE MOON WITHIN



*Juvenile*

**By Aida Salazar**

ISBN:978-1-338-28339-6

## **Book Summary:**

A preteen girl's menstruation, or moon cycle, celebration coincides with her decision that she is both girl and boy.

## **Summary of Concerns:**

This book contains alternate gender ideologies and non-sexual nudity.

**1**  
**/5**

**Child Guidance**  
BookLooks Review Rating

Page	Content
19	<p>Quieta, there's nothing to be ashamed of, Celi—it's cause for celebration! What? What's a celebration? Papi asks. Breasts, our girl is growing breasts! Mima's high pitch sears my ears. Awesome! Juju chimes in. When I'm eleven, will I grow some too? Shut up! You little ... I strike. Celi, Papi warns, but then turns to Juju, It isn't likely, mijo. They're mammary glands designed to nurse young. Remember, like the mama goats we saw? You mean, like goat teats? Juju cracks up lets out his annoyingly loud goat bleat, Celi's got teats!</p>
30	<p>Before our last performance a couple of weeks ago Magda waited for one of the bathroom stalls to be free. Auburn-haired Aurora says, You can't really be in the girls' bathroom. Magda chuckles back. Course I can. I'm a girl. She knew what Aurora was hinting at because others often asked her about how much boyness she had versus girlness. Mima was in the bathroom too brushing my hair into a tight bun that stretched my eyes like rubber bands and we quietly looked on. Aurora raised her screechy voice and blurted, My mom says you hate yourself and that's why you want to be a boy.</p>
38	<p>Flor is the name Mima has called my down-there girl parts since I was very little when she taught me to wash myself. She held a mirror between my legs let me inspect between the petals and ask questions: Why does it look like that? Why is this button here and opening there? This little one here is for your pee—remember to wipe front to back to keep it healthy. This one here is your birth canal—the place where babies pass as they are born—which leads to the uterus where they grow.</p> <p>And this button here is only for you—it's your happy button. You get to choose when to push it.</p> <p>...I didn't think too much about it all back then and am only sometimes reminded when I feel a sparkly tickle in my flor when we go down a big hill or I'm on a carnival ride.</p> <p>Lately, the tingle happens when I think of Iván. Butterflies flutter first in my panza and then they make their way down in a trickle to my flor.</p> <p>I wonder if anyone can tell that my flor is sparkling?</p>
59	<p>She must have seen my face splatter on the ground.</p> <p>No, I mean, he's like a boy I want to be.</p> <p>Oh, not that you want to be with?</p> <p>No, nerd, not at all! If I could, I'd give up being a girl to be a boy like him right now. If I could, I'd jump right into his skin.</p> <p>...In a split second I realize no one ever stuck her in a dress and we never played dolls or spread pintura on our lips.</p> <p>We talk about funny things, outdoor things, bomba drums, and we laugh. A girl not interested in frilly dresses nor makeup messes but warm and kind and funny and smart.</p>
72	<p>I climb out of the tub and dry myself off. I catch my reflection in the mirror and I can't pretend anymore.</p> <p>There they are: the fuzzy hair, the tulip breasts, my growing thighs.</p> <p>Mima says I'm flowering early and it's true, my body is on the way to look like hers blooming like a flower I don't want to be.</p>

Page	Content
101	<p>His eyes shift from mine to Magda's. What kind of dude name is Magda? he blurts. It's short for Magdalena I defend. Magda holds my shoulder so she can speak. Everyone's always called me Magda and the dude clothes is just who I am. So you're a girl? You look straight-up like a boy!</p> <p>...Like I said, I dress like who I am. Iván snorts and continues to snicker. Oh snap, I thought only men could drum in bomba! Well at least that's what Aurora told me. That you're just faking it.</p>
119	<p>When Teresa speaks finally the words that come out of her are foreign.... Our child has arrived at a new truth. A real self, an authentic self, the reality always meant to be. Marco is his true name. Magda is part of his historia, the earlier chapters of girlhood. Also born a boy energy into the body of a girl it is the wisdom of the sacred masculine placed in the body of the divine feminine. We could not claim it for him until he was ready to understand on his own. In our ancestral Mexica tradition, Ometeotl is our Creator spirit that is neither female nor male but both—divine duality. Marco has Ometeotl energy a person who inhabits two beings the female and the male at once. Though we can't be certain how our ancestors felt about people of two energies because there is so much we don't know so much we are still learning as new Mexica, we regard it an honor to be a reflection of the Creator.</p> <p>I look over at Magda and fight confusion a boy in the body of a girl? I have always known that she was different a tomboy for sure, more free than anything else but simply Magda, Magdalena Teresa Sánchez. Not Marco Sánchez!</p> <p>...Mima taps me back to attention when Luis begins to speak. From what we do know people who danced between or to other energies than what they were assigned at birth were sometimes called xochihuah. Xochitl is the word for flower in Nahuatl and a xochihuah is the one who bears flowers. They were known to worship t the temple of Xochipilli, the flower prince god who protected people of all gender identities and queer folks. Marco, my son, carries the blossoms of his truth inside him as a sacred xochihuah.</p> <p>A sho-chee-wah? I stretch to pronounce unable to hide my unraveling thoughts. Yes, a xochihuah, my truth Magda assures.</p> <p>I look up to the light of hopeful you-understand-me eyes and all of a sudden I do somehow and it's easy. I pause only to find my own it's-all-right look to offer. I see Magda's hands shake a little when she says, Being Marco feels good even if I have two energies. My parents say that I don't have to decide yet. That's part of my road to figuring it all out. But I feel more boy than girl at the moment. And because I can be both I'm going with Marco for right now.</p> <p>Then Teresa turns to me, We need your help to make his transition as a xochihuah safe and loving within the community. And though we don't know how we will reveal it there will be those who will judge. We need everyone's support and no one more than yours, Celi.</p>
129	<p>Hey, Magda, can your hair get any butchier?</p> <p>...I'm Mar, not Magda, you idiot! And I can't be a butch when I'm ... He pauses as if wasting his breath, Can you be any stupider, Iván? Marco finishes.</p>
155	<p>My comadre, Chuyina, had a similar but different experience. Her family in Mexico never understood her ways, that she would leave being a man to be</p>

Page	Content
	herself, a woman. Her father threw her out of the house. So she had to come pa'l Norte where she thought no one would judge her but sometimes they still do.
178	<p>Will you come? I don't know. It's for women only right? She said it was okay because you're a xochihuah with boy and girl energies it's more sacred and stuff. I guess she's right. You know what my dad told me? He said that some Mexica priests were xochihuah too and were revered for it. That shreds, que no? See! It's perfect. My dad also said that if I wanted to we could do a Temazcal ceremonia for me. You mean, like do a sweat lodge and pray all night kinda thing. Yeah, but for xochihuah. 'Cept we haven't figured out how it will work. That's hecka cool. ...It sort of trips me out to think about when I'll get my moon. It's not as bad as it sounds. Don't get me wrong. Not because of what you said, but because for me, it'll be like going back against what I've gained. It will take me back to being only the girl I used to be. What if it erases my boyness? I just want to continue to be me, the Marco and Magda me, I mean.</p> <p>I hear ya.</p> <p>I nod but I feel the opposite about myself. I don't say it out loud. I'm done hurting his feelings. I do want to go back to the girl I used to be.</p>
181	Marco's a xochihuah and a reflection of the Creator, Ometeotl. That Aztec calendar on your board well, guess what? The Mexica's number one creator spirit is Ometeotl who's both male and female just like Marco. And if you are too stupid to see that he's supposed to be honored and respected because of this, then you have no business having that calendar on your board and no business talking to me!
184	Xochipilli / Xochiquetzal—Mexica flower prince and princess of the arts and all genders Ometeotl—Mexica creation spirit in divine balance
197	And we are also gathered in this circle to celebrate a sacred member of our community, Marco Magdalena Sánchez, who today we publicly honor for being a xochihuah, the one who bears flowers who is a reflection of our Creator, Ometeotl, and holds both the female energy and the male energy in harmony.
201	<p>As a reflection of Ometeotl you are fluidity in motion. You may bleed like a woman and you may move as a man in the world as you have chosen to do now. Wherever you decide to thrive remember that you are perfection in the crossroads.</p> <p>...Teresa then steps back and asks Marco to speak. Ever since I was little, I felt like there was more to me than what people saw. I didn't know how to explain it until I learned about the xochihuah and Ometeotl. Duality seems like me on some days but most days, I feel more boy than girl. To be honest, I'm still trying to figure out where I'll end up—a boy, a girl, or both—but I can say this: I feel lucky to have this spiritual path to guide me. I just want my family and friends to understand me to accept me for who I am and who I will be.</p>
211	Similarly, it was precolonial indigenous ideas that inspired me to write a genderfluid character like Marco. As a cisgender Xicana, disappointed with the often negative way that some in my community view and treat gender-expansive people, my intention was to offer an alternative. Mesoamericans had a broader understanding of gender and some evidence shows us that xochihuah (sho-chee-wah) were more often seen through a sacred lens, with respect. Though we can't

Page	Content
	<p>be certain if it was otherwise, my challenge to my community is to use some of this ancestral wisdom as a guide to embrace xochihuah, and to reject intolerance. To young gender-expansive readers, please know that within these pages you are seen, you have a place, and you are held in love.</p> <p>...And if those traditions do not honor you, then use that source as inspiration to correct a wrong and create something meaningful for you the girls, women, and gender-expansive people in your community.</p>
216	<p>Use this calendar to track the cycles of your body and heart with the cycle of the moon. This can be started at any time and used every month. Use this diagram to copy into your own monthly moon journal. Important: you do not need to menstruate to see how the moon affects you!</p> <p>To begin, find the phase of the moon in the sky and mark that as your first day. Quiet your mind and think about what is happening inside of you. Use the spaces (see sample) to fill in a word(s) or symbol(s) to show how your body and heart feel on that day. Be as creative as you'd like! Repeat the following day until you've filled the entire month. Then, repeat the next month.</p> <p>On the beautiful day your moon cycle arrives, make a new chart. Look to find where the moon is and mark that as your first day. Your moon might land on a waxing moon or a last quarter moon. This is okay! Start there and keep going throughout your cycle. The important thing is to find your connection to the celestial moon, to see what sort of dance you and Luna create!</p>