

# Calling the Moon

16 PERIOD STORIES  
FROM BIPOC AUTHORS

edited by  
Aida Salazar & Yamile Saied Méndez

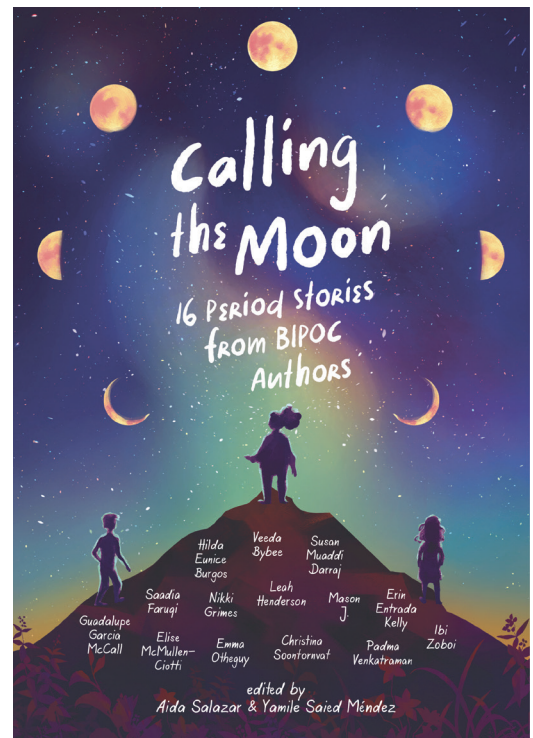
## About the Book

For Angela, it came on the basketball court—while playing on the boys’ team. For Penny, it came on a lakeside field trip, inspiring some cringeworthy moments of humor. And to Layla’s disappointment, it came at the start of her first fasting Ramadan, mandating that she take a “holiday.” Whether their period’s coming spurs silence or celebration, whether they are well prepared for it or totally in the dark, the young people in these sixteen stories find that getting a period brings not only changes to their bodies but also joy, sorrow, and self-discovery. Featuring BIPOC contributors who are some of today’s most talented authors in middle-grade fiction, *Calling the Moon* offers coming-of-age stories and poetry as varied as the phases of the moon, from funny to heartbreaking to powerful, all of them reassuring readers that they are not alone in their period journey.

## About the Editors

**Aida Salazar** is the Américas Award–winning author of the critically acclaimed middle-grade verse novels *The Moon Within*, *Land of the Cranes*, and *A Seed in the Sun*. Her picture books include *In the Spirit of a Dream: 13 Stories of American Immigrants of Color*, *Jovita Wore Pants: The Story of a Mexican Freedom Fighter*, and the forthcoming board book series *My Living World*. Aida Salazar lives with her family of artists in California.

**Yamile Saied Méndez** is the author of several children’s books, including the picture book *Where Are You From?*, illustrated by Jaime Kim, and the young adult novel *Furia*, winner of a Pura Belpré Author Award. Her writing is also featured in several anthologies, including *Take the Mic: Fictional Stories of Everyday Resistance*, *Come On In: 15 Stories About Immigration and Finding Home*, and *Rural Voices: 15 Authors Challenge Assumptions About Small-Town America*. She is a founding member of the Latinx kidlit author collective Las Musas. Yamile Saied Méndez lives with her family in Utah.



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### Common Core Connections

This discussion guide, which can be used with large or small groups, will help students meet several of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts. These include the reading literature standards for key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL), as well as the speaking and listening standards for comprehension and collaboration and for presentation of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL). Questions can also be used in writing prompts for independent work.



1. On pages 7–8, Penny says Amber told her “Asian girls don’t get their periods until they’re way older.” Why is this racist? Where do these misconceptions come from? How is it harmful to Asian girls?
2. In “Muñeca,” the mother has a way of healing period cramps that is not found in most books on periods. Why isn’t her knowledge in the books? How might it be helpful to all people who menstruate? What knowledge about caring for our bodies during our periods do we learn in some of the other stories?
3. Leah Henderson’s story is titled “Turning Point.” What is the significance of this title?
4. Menstruation has traditionally been assumed as a marker of womanhood. But what does that mean for people who menstruate who aren’t women? How can we as a society change how we think about periods to be more inclusive? How does “Shiloh: The Gender Creamsicle” help us think about what it means to have a period but not be a girl?
5. In “Holiday,” Aisha says, “We just can’t tell the menfolk about this period business. It’s embarrassing” (page 99). In “Ofrendas,” Lucia is embarrassed to ask her dad to buy pads for her and her sisters. Why do you think some find it embarrassing to talk about their period with people who don’t get a period, whether dads or brothers or others? Why is it important for everyone to know and talk about periods, whether they have one or not?
6. In “Mother Mary, Do You Bleed?,” Jessa’s mother tells her to never use tampons because she is “a good girl” (page 133). Penny in “The Rules of the Lake” is also afraid to use tampons. Why are tampons considered to be bad in these stories? What did you learn about using tampons? What are the pros and cons of using tampons?
7. In “The Arrival” and “Thicker than Water,” both narrators receive unwanted comments from boys about their changing bodies. What does this type of attention do to the girls’ sense of self and self-esteem? Why do some people think it is okay to say these things? Why is it important for adults to talk to kids about such behavior?
8. Periods are given different names throughout the anthology. For example, it is called “heavenly water” in the story “Heavenly Water.” How does calling your period heavenly water change your perception of it? What are some of the other names used in the anthology? How do they impact how you view periods?
9. In “Sometimes You Just Need Your Prima,” what role does extended family play in the lives of the girls? Why are aunts, cousins, and grandmothers so important to each character’s development?
10. In “Cannibal at the Door,” periods are seen as powerful, but in “Shakthi Means Strength,” they are seen as unclean. Why do you think there are such differing views on periods?
11. In “Bloodline,” Adjoa has a very special ceremony that has been practiced by her family for generations. Other characters in the anthology have special celebrations or rituals that have been passed down. Why are these ceremonies and rituals important? Did your family celebrate your first period? If so, how? If you haven’t gotten your first period, how would you like to celebrate it?



12. All the authors in *Calling the Moon* identify as BIPOC. Why is it important to have an anthology about periods from BIPOC authors? What do we learn about periods from each of them?
13. In “Part of the Team,” Angela is shamed by members of the other team for getting her period. How does having an anthology like this help to make periods less shameful?
14. In “The Hadiyyeh,” Anna’s mom is upset that Rana told Anna about periods because she wanted to talk to Anna herself at the right time. Since people get their periods at varying ages, when is the right time to talk to them about periods? Who should talk to people about their periods? Should it be their mother or other family members? Should it be a medical professional? Teachers at school? What are the pros and cons of learning from these different perspectives?
15. At the end of the anthology, there is a list of resources that includes books, films, podcasts, and other media. Why is this list important?
16. What is the significance of the title *Calling the Moon*?

These questions were prepared by Dr. Nicholl Montgomery, a former middle and high school English teacher for Boston Public Schools. She teaches children’s literature courses at Simmons University and education courses at Boston College.

