



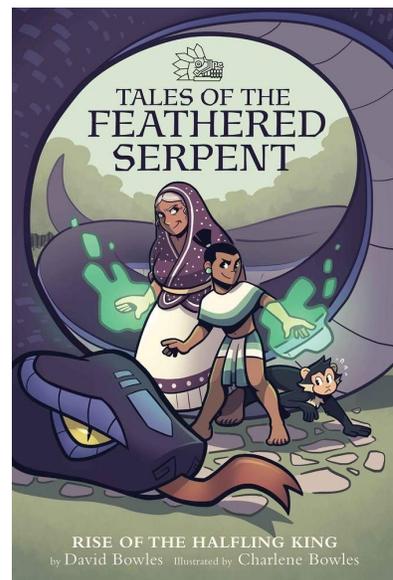
***Rise of the Halfling King (Tales of the Feathered Serpent #1):***  
**by David Bowles**



David Bowles is a Mexican-American author from south Texas, where he teaches at the University of Texas Río Grande Valley. He has written several titles, most notably *The Smoking Mirror* (Pura Belpré Honor Book) and *They Call Me Güero* (Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children's Book Award, Claudia Lewis Award for Excellence in Poetry, Pura Belpré Honor Book, Walter Dean Myers Honor Book). His work has also been published in multiple anthologies, plus venues such as *The New York Times*, *Strange Horizons*, *Apex Magazine*, *School Library Journal*, *Rattle*, *Translation Review*, and the *Journal of Children's Literature*. In 2017, David was inducted into the Texas Institute of Letters.

Sayam has always been different from other kids: he was born from an egg! His grandmother, a witch, teaches him the ancient magic she uses to help her people. So when a giant snake starts terrorizing a nearby city, Sayam steps into action. But the ruthless King Kinich Kak Ek sees Sayam as a threat to his throne. Prophecy declares that whoever succeeds at three impossible tests will be king. Monstrous snakes and impossible tests are a lot for a boy to handle, but Sayam is brave and has a loyal monkey, a wise grandmother, and magical knowledge on his side.

This is a middle-grade graphic novel adaptation of the Maya myth -"The Dwarf King of Uxmal."



**RRS connection to TEKS: Please refer to TEKS for English Language Arts and Reading**

- *Comprehension skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts.*
- *Response skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts.*
- *Author's purpose and craft: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts.*
- *Composition I: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts--writing process.*
- *Composition II: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts—genres.*
- *Inquiry and research: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts.*

**Relevant Vocabulary:**

- Graphic novel
- Ancient mayan mythology
- Mesoamerican culture
- Natives
- Hieroglyphs
- Prophecy
- Witchcraft / sorcery / wizardry / healer
- Halfling
- Underworld
- Dark arts
- Generational knowledge
- Wisdom
- Humility
- Treaty
- Justice
- Community Cultural Wealth

**Pre-reading engagement:**

- What does an author do?
- What does an editor do?
- Think about the title of this book and its cover illustration. How does it make you feel? What does it make you think about?
- Read the synopsis on the back cover. Does this information confirm your predictions about the book?
- What genre might this book be?
- Ask your librarian about where to find more graphic novels about mesoamerica.
- Look for information about mayan mythology.

**While/post reading engagement:**

- What differences do you notice between the Aluxes and the citizens of Uxmal? Why could that be?
- Inference question: why do the Aluxes seem distrustful of human visitors?

- Make a prediction! What do you think Almah will do to fix things in her community?
- What powers do you think Sayam will have as a halfling (part Alux and part Human)?
- Why is it important to honor and protect the dead?
- How do you feel about the way Sayam used his problem solving skills to defeat the snake?
- Who is spying on Sayam? What do you think they are up to?
- Words like “BOOOOM!!!” (pg 36 and 37) and “klunk” “thunk” (pg 47) are called onomatopoeias because they imitate the actual sounds being made. Why is this an effective writing technique? Find other examples of this in the novel.
- As you read, pay attention to the different clothes the illustrator gave different groups of people. What does it say about them?
- Create an anchor chart outlining the elements of this story: Setting, characters, plot, conflict, theme, and point of view.
- Read the afterword by David Bowles. What’s the purpose of an afterword in books?
- Why did the creators use the graphic novel form to tell the story about an indigenous culture?
- Write a question that you would like to ask David during his virtual campus visit.

**Useful links:**

- Author’s website: <https://davidbowles.us/>
- Illustrator’s website: <https://www.charlenebowles.com/>
- Comic Con 2020 panel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQ99DkMBhTg>
- Author interview: <https://themillions.com/2019/02/he-is-all-of-us-the-millions-interviews-david-bowles.html>
- Kirkus Reviews: <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/david-bowles/rise-halfling-king/>