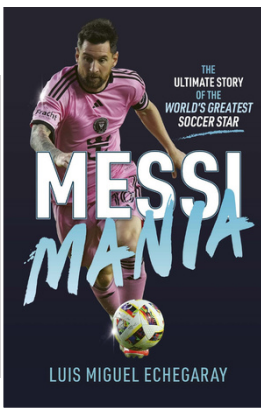


An Educator's Guide



Messi Mania

by Luis Miguel Echegaray

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Ages 12-18, 176 Pages, Hardcover

“Tasty fare for readers inclined to hail the coming of soccer’s ‘Messi-ah.’”
—*Kirkus Reviews*

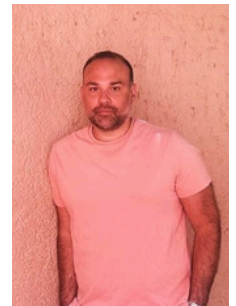
About the Book

Channel the grit, resilience, and positivity of soccer icon Lionel Messi as you trace his journey to become one of the greatest soccer players of all time.

Global superstar, FIFA Player of the Year, and TIME magazine’s Athlete of the Year Lionel Messi’s arrival in the States has brought inspiration, excitement, and star power to men’s soccer. In *Messi Mania*, discover the seismic effect Leo has had on MLS and global soccer, woven through with fascinating insights into his family background, childhood, teenage years, and career to date. Messi’s career has been built on hard work, determination, and teamwork, but his early years in Argentina were tough, including personal challenges that almost ruined his dreams of becoming a pro soccer player. Learn how Messi overcame these setbacks and went on to become one of the most successful, celebrated, and decorated soccer players ever. Following his inspiring journey from Barcelona’s youth academy to World Cup triumph with Argentina and then to MLS club Inter Miami, *Messi Mania* is the ultimate one-stop guide to a motivating and inspiring global soccer star

About the Author

Luis Miguel Echegaray is a host, analyst, and writer for ESPN, ESPN FC, and ESPN Deportes. Formerly, he was a presenter, host, and writer for CBS Sports and before that, he worked at *Sports Illustrated* as a writer, presenter, and head of Latino content. Previous places of employment include Telemundo, *The Guardian*, and Vice. He lives in New York City with his wife Jen, a public school teacher.



Learning Objectives

The goal of *Messi Mania* is to help young readers discover the incredible story of Lionel Messi and better understand the impact of his arrival to the US on soccer in America. There are many examples of Messi’s playing abilities and soccer techniques to keep soccer fans interested in *Messi Mania*, but Messi’s successes are also evident in the values he observes and practices beyond soccer. Traits like hard work, determination, humility, teamwork, respect, resiliency and friendship are exemplified throughout the book and show readers that they don’t need to be a World Cup champion to succeed in life. Rather, self-confidence and perseverance ultimately come from believing in yourself and celebrating your own identity.

Essential Discussion Topics

Messi Mania tells the illustrious story of Lionel Messi in a fast-paced, montage-style way, chronicling Messi's arrival to Miami and the wide impact he has had on the sport of soccer in the United States. Split students into groups of 5-6 and have them discuss the following:

1. Why do students think the author describes Leo Messi as an “underdog”? What examples can students provide of some obstacles and personal challenges Messi has had to overcome throughout his career? How did feelings of defeat and disappointment drive Messi forward in his career?
2. Define and provide some examples of the Messi Effect. Using examples from *Messi Mania*, why do students think Messi's arrival in Miami has made such a big impact on soccer in America?
3. On page 101 of *Messi Mania* the text says, “Nothing is achieved alone.” Citing examples from the book, how do students feel Messi exemplified this statement? And how has Messi proved this statement is true?
4. The author credits the power of focus and mental strength (page 48) as reasons why Messi is a champion. What are some other lessons from Messi's career that students think are valuable in life (whether they're athletes or not)? Examples can include eating healthy, using a “let the ball come to you” philosophy, knowing when to recuperate, and more.

Essential Activities

1. **For younger readers:** In Chapter Two of *Messi Mania*, the author begins with Messi's childhood and life in Rosario, Argentina and the country's relationship with soccer. Argentina's love for the game is an extremely important part of who they are. Have students choose a country known for its dedication to sports and create their own bulletin board by pinpointing eventful sporting moments that are relative to the chosen nation.
2. In Chapter Four of *Messi Mania* the author helps readers — especially those who may see journalism as an interesting career — learn how to interview a person, in this case Lionel Messi. Pair students and have them interview each other. This is meant to help them understand what it takes to listen to someone else talk about their experiences. Students can be responsible for coming up with 4-5 questions for their interviewees, or you can create a standard set of questions for students in advance. After both have had a chance to interview each other, have them come together in larger groups of 6-8 students and report on what they learned about their interviewee. Students should also discuss what skills they think make a good journalist. Answers can include active listening skills, empathy, improvisation, and more.
3. *Messi Mania* isn't told in chronological order, rather it goes backwards and forwards in time to capture certain storytelling moments. Have students pick a specific point in Messi's career and put together a presentation using the book on how Messi got to that specific moment. The presentation should be an analytical view on the key individuals and moments that led to that point in Messi's career — encourage students to cite *Messi Mania* and use their library to get more in-depth information as needed.
4. While *Messi Mania* highlights key moments in Messi's career, it also emphasizes key personality traits he demonstrates every day like determination, resilience, and humility. Have students pick one of the personality traits touched on in *Messi Mania* and connect that trait to their own lives in a short personal essay (~2000 words). Students should choose two separate moments in their lives that exemplify their chosen personality trait and analyze how these moments connect to each other and their chosen attribute. Then have students prepare and present a short talk (4-5 minutes) based on their personal essay, with a focus on how other students can hone the presenter's chosen personality trait from their own experiences.