



Reader's Guide



Karla

ARENAS VALENTI

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C o m m o n C o r e C o n n e c t i o n s

This reader's guide can be used with large or small groups and 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.



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- This book has many elements of magical realism. Can you identify some of those instances? What are your favorite examples of magical realism?
- Why did La Vica tell Lola that, to save her brother, Lola had to get the Quetzal flowers to bloom? Did the solution have anything to do with the flowers themselves or was it about something else?
- In the book, the Stillness is an ailment that is affecting Floresta and Alex, but it is also a metaphor for something else. What do you think the Stillness represents in real life?
- Both Madre Luci and Lola must grow and change over the course of this story. In what way are Madre Luci and Lola's stories similar? How are they different?



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- At the end of the book you realize that Lola's story is not quite what you expected. At what point did you realize what was actually going on? How did the author lead you to believe that things were different than they were?
- Why did *The Thing That Happened* affect Alex the way it did? What do you think were the emotions he was struggling to accept?
- What is the significance of Alex refusing to cry until the very end? How did crying help Alex begin his healing process?
- The central idea of this book is about the lies we tell ourselves in order to avoid the pain of facing a difficult truth. What lie did Alex tell himself? How was Alex suffering as a result of believing the lie? How was he liberated in the end, once he accepted the truth?



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- What lie did Lola tell herself? What was the truth she had to accept? How was she liberated in the end?
- Another central theme of the book is trees, both as a source of life but also as individual units connected to a larger system, affected or supported by what's happening elsewhere in that system. How might this concept play out in a family or other community? How might it help to know that you are connected to a larger group in times when you are suffering or struggling?