

A Guide for Readers and Educators

DAYS OF THE DEAD: A Guide for Readers and Educators

ABOUT THE BOOK

Days of the Dead

By Kersten Hamilton

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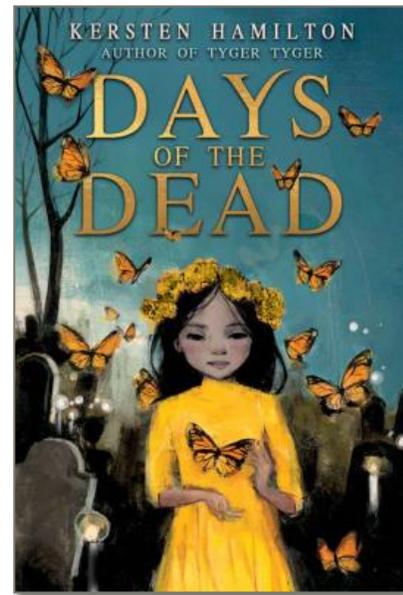
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Age Range: 8 - 12 Years

Glorieta Magdalena Davis Espinosa is happy that Papi married Alice. She's happy that he can smile again after years of mourning Mamá. But the urn containing Mamá's ashes disappeared into a drawer the day Alice moved in.

If everything about Glorieta's life is going to change, then she wants one thing to go her way: She wants to hear stories about her mamá when the family gathers on the last night of los Días de los Muertos. And that can only happen if Tía Diosonita will allow Mamá to be buried with the Espinosas in holy ground. If she will allow people to speak Mamá's name.

With the help of her best friend, River, and her cousin Mateo, Glorieta sets out to convince Diosonita that Mamá is not burning in Hell. To do so, she'll have to learn to let hate go—and to love the people who stand in her way.



PRASIE FOR THE BOOK

"Mexican-American Glorieta Magdalena Davis Espinosa takes her obligations to her family very seriously...the combination of magical realism, syncretism, and Catholicism is thoughtful and realistic, not preachy, and is accessible to believers and nonbelievers alike. Perhaps most important, Glorieta's desperation is affecting and wrenching. The complex, layered plot pulls no punches." —*Kirkus Reviews*

"Kersten Hamilton is a wonderful, dynamic writer. Glorieta's courage and faithful search for goodness will make your heart glow a little brighter."
—Francisco X. Stork, author of **Disappeared**

"Timely in its treatment of immigration injustices, and timeless in the exploration of the enduring spiritual and cultural traditions of the author's beloved home. An engaging story of strength, love, and redemption, complete with dazzling touches of laugh-out-loud humor."
—Laura Resau, author of **Estrella en el bosque**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kersten Hamilton was born in a trailer in High Rolls, New Mexico, and has worked as a ranch hand, a lumberjack, a census taker, and an archeological surveyor, and is now a full-time writer. She is the author of several picture books and many novels, including the middle grade Gadgets and Gears series and the critically acclaimed young adult trilogy *The Goblin Wars*. She splits her time between her home in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and her farm in Kentucky.

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This guide was written by Jennifer Ziegler, a writer and editor who has penned more than twenty novels for teens and tweens. She is very proud of her Hispanic heritage and years as a middle school English teacher. Jennifer currently lives in Austin, Texas, with her family. *Glossary provided by author Kersten Hamilton and Teaching Resources by Curious City.*

TEACHING RESOURCES

1) IMMIGRATION & MEXICAN AMERICANS

While Glorieta is not a Mexican immigrant, she is picked-up in an ICE raid and brought to a child detention center. This collection of resources from Teaching Tolerance 4 can support a conversation about immigration, the border, deportation, and child detention.

Supporting Students from Immigrant Families

Source: Teaching Tolerance

Link: <https://www.tolerance.org/moment/supporting-students-immigrant-families>

Educators who work with immigrant communities want to know how to best support students and their families. We created this web package to supply the types of resources educators have told us they need. We'll continue to make updates, knowing that immigration policies and practices in the United States—and the corresponding needs in schools—are changing swiftly.

Glorieta's family presence in her community pre-dates 1854, making her family Mexican American and not immigrants from Mexico. Before 1854 much of Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, Utah, and Wyoming were part of Mexico. Additionally, Mexican American families of indigenous heritage have been in the country for at least 15,000 years.

U.S.-Mexican War

Source: PBS

Link: <https://www.pbs.org/kera/usmexicanwar/educators/>

The purpose of PBS/KERA's bi-national education project, "The U.S.-Mexican War (1846-1848)," is to provide schools and other educational institutions with accurate, substantive, and editorially balanced materials that shed light on one of the most significant events in the history of the United States and Mexico.

2) BIRACIAL IDENTITY

Glorieta has deep Mexican American roots and is the niece of la Patrona, the community's most powerful member. Glorieta is also the daughter of a white father, giving her a biracial

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identity. Exploring Glorieta's identity can be an opening to your students exploring their own.

Social Justice Standards | Unpacking Identity

Source: Teaching Tolerance

Link: <https://www.tolerance.org/professional-development/social-justice-standards-unpacking-identity>



Discovering My Identity

Source: Teaching Tolerance

Link: <https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/tolerance-lessons/discovering-my-identity>

Although this lesson plan is African American focused, it is a great model of exploring identity through novels. In this lesson, students will describe aspects of their identities such as race, gender, ability, religion, and more. Then after exploring Marley Dias' Black Girls Books campaign, students will analyze books and write their own book review, noting how characters are similar and different from themselves.

My Multicultural Self

Source: Teaching Tolerance

Link: <https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/tolerance-lessons/my-multicultural-self>
Before endeavoring to develop cultural knowledge and awareness about others, we must first uncover and examine personal social and cultural identities. Guided self-reflection allows us to better understand how social group memberships inform who we are. This exercise is an important vehicle in any peer conflict mediation program to help students embrace the concept of being culturally responsive and culturally sensitive.

3) EL DIA DE LOS MUERTOS

El Dia de los Muertos is not the "Mexican Halloween," but a rich celebration that honors the dead. You can explore more with Teaching Tolerance, the MEXIC-ARTE MUSEUM, and the Smithsonian.

Let Día de los Muertos Stand on Its Own

Source: Teaching Tolerance

Link: <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/let-dia-de-los-muertos-stand-on-its-own>

Have you seen a lot of sugar skulls (calaveras de azúcar) as Halloween approaches—their colorful, floral designs on front porches, costumes, and masks? Have you heard anyone mention "Mexican Halloween"? If so, you've witnessed some common misunderstandings and appropriations of Día de los Muertos, which is distinctly different from Halloween in origin, celebration, and culture.

El Dia de los Muertos: Day of the Dead Educational Activity Guide

Source: MEXIC-ARTE MUSEUM

Link: http://www.mexic-artemuseum.org/images/uploads/education/Day_of_Dead_Guide.pdf

Día de los Muertos

Source: Smithsonian Latino Center

Link: <http://www.latino.si.edu/LVM/DayOfTheDead?slide=2>

Join us in celebrating and exploring Latino cultural heritage through this holiday for honoring the dead and the cycle of life and death. Learn different aspects of Día de los Muertos and how it is celebrated and practiced.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS & OTHER NOTES

Adobe: a type of clay. Adobe mud is formed into bricks, then dried in the sun. The bricks are used to build houses.

Anima Sola: an image of a person suffering in purgatory. Sometimes the Anima Sola is a man, or even the pope, but most often it is a woman. The Anima Sola always has chains on its wrists, but the chains are broken. The broken chains mean that they are being freed from their suffering and going to heaven.

Biscochitos: a traditional sugar and spice cookie

Camposanto: a cemetery

Catrina: a lady skeleton in a fancy dress. She is not yet 100 years old. But her roots are very old indeed. La Calavera Garbancera was the title of a zinc etching by José Guadalupe Posada, which was published in 1930. Posada often drew calaveras—skulls—because skulls and skeletons were used in ancient Aztec, Mayan, and Toltec paintings and pottery. In the ancient art, the skulls represented rebirth into the next stage of life. Posada’s etching showed a lady skull wearing a silly European-style hat. Posada was using a humorous picture to tell Mexican people it was foolish to imitate aristocratic European traditions when they had good traditions of their own. Later, another artist, Diego Rivera, used Posada’s image in a mural of famous Mexican people and events which he painted in 1946 and ’47. The mural was called Sueño de una tarde dominical en la Alameda Central, or Dream of a Sunday Afternoon in the Alameda Central. Rivera gave the skull-woman her name, Catrina; a skeleton body; and a fancy dress to match her hat. Catrina—made from a mixing of cultures and representing death as well as rebirth—has become part of many Day of the Dead celebrations.

Cempasúchil: Mexican or Aztec marigold

Charro: a Mexican cowboy

Chayote: Mexican Pear Squash. Chayote is a member of the gourd family, but its texture is like a mix between a potato and a cucumber.

Creosote: a medium sized shrub that thrives in hot, dry conditions. Its leaves are olive-green and its flowers are bright yellow.

Chupacabra: a mythological creature who is half vampire, half beast. Chupacabras suck the blood out of goats and chickens.

Curandero/Curandera: a healer who uses herbs and folk remedies

Doña: a term of respect for an older woman

Goatheads: a low-growing plant also known as “puncture vine” because the spiny seed with two sharp, hornlike thorns can puncture tires.

Malpaís: rough, dangerous land with uneroded lava flows.

Mantilla: a traditional lace scarf women wear over their head and shoulders.

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Manzanilla: common name for a family of bushes or trees that live in places with poor soil and little water. Manzanilla have smooth red or orange bark and stiff, twisty branches.

Monsoon: a seasonal shift in the wind direction that changes the weather, or the heavy rains the wind shift brings. New Mexico, Arizona, western Texas, southern Utah, Colorado, and southern Nevada get most of their precipitation during North American Monsoon season.

Mullein: a plant used to make medicine. It is also known as “velvet plant” because of its large, soft leaves.

Ocotillo: a desert plant with clumps of tall, thin, woody stems. Because the red flowers that bloom at their tips make the plant look like a cluster of lit candles, ocotillo is sometimes called “candlewood.”

Papel picado: “pecked paper” – thin paper cut into beautiful, lace-like designs

Patrona: a female leader or boss

Prairie Dog: a rodent that looks like a squirrel with no tail. Prairie dogs live in burrows they dig in the prairies and deserts of the Southwest.

Quinceañera: a girl's 15th birthday, or Quinceañera, is the day she steps from childhood into adulthood. The tradition of this special celebration has deep roots in Mexico and Central America, but it is celebrated in many places. A Quinceañera can be as elaborate as a wedding. Usually, the birthday girl wears a formal gown. She invites a special date who will be her escort, and a court of honor—7 to 14 boys to be chambelanes (chamberlain) and an equal number of girls to be damas (dames). Chambelanes and damas are like groomsmen and bridesmaids; they wear suits and gowns and practice special dances before the big day. A traditional Mexican Quinceañera begins at church, with a thanksgiving Mass. The birthday girl's Godparents might give her a rosary or necklaces or a locket with a picture of the Virgin of Guadalupe, Mexico's patron saint. She might carry a bouquet to leave on the altar for the Virgin Mary. After the thanksgiving Mass, there will be a reception with dancing, food, and birthday presents at the girl's home or a reception hall. The formal reception has six parts:

- La Entrada, a grand entrance
- El Brindis, a formal toast
- The First Dance, a waltz with her father
- The Family Dance, a waltz with her escort. They are joined in this dance by family, chambelanes, and damas
- Next is the Baile Sorpresa, the surprise dance, usually a modern dance to the birthday girl's favorite song. The court will have practiced this dance for weeks.
- And finally, the general dance, where all of the guests can join in

Some families have traditions like presenting the birthday girl with her first pair of high-heeled shoes, a crown, or a doll wearing a tiny replica of her Quinceañera gown.

Ristra: A string of dried chiles. You can see ristras hanging from fences and patios in New Mexico each fall.

Terciopelos: cockscomb flowers, sometimes called “velvets”

Tumbleweed: Russian thistle. Tumbleweeds grow big and round. In the fall, dry tumbleweeds break off at the base of their stem and “tumble” before the wind, leaving seeds everywhere they blow.

Vigas: heavy log rafters that support the roof in adobe houses

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DISCUSSION, EXTENSION, AND WRITING OPPORTUNITIES

Chapter One

Understanding and Analyzing

- The book opens with Glory, the main character, looking for something that is important to her. What is it and why is it special?
- What was your first impression of Lilith? How would you describe her? Use details from the text, her actions, and dialogue as evidence.
- We find out that Glory and Lilith are the same age and in the same grade at school. How are they different? Use details from the book to back up your claims.
- Lilith is trying to raise money. How is she trying to do this? What does Glory think the money is for?



Extending and Connecting

- Have you ever lost or misplaced something important to you? If so, describe it and explain what happened. If not, what is something that would cause you to panic if you misplaced it? Why would losing it be a terrible blow?
- Glory describes a magic that happens for her on the first day of school each year. Do you believe in magic? Is there an object or routine that you feel holds power – even if you can't explain it?

Creative Writing

Do you have a favorite brand of cereal or other breakfast food? What is it? Write about it using as many descriptive words as you can and try to convince us that it is the best. You might even design an advertisement or write a script for a commercial.

Chapter Two

Understanding and Analyzing

- What big changes have happened to Glory's household over the past six weeks?
- There is something very important that Glory needs to discuss with her aunt. What is it? Why is it so difficult for her to talk with her aunt about this topic? Use evidence from the text to back up your claim.
- We have not yet seen Tía Diosonita, but already she is described as an important person both in the community and in Glory's own personal life. How is she important? Use details from the text to illustrate your points.
- At the end of Chapter Two, Glory discovers that her nightlight has been unplugged. Why does this upset her? What does the nightlight mean to her?

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Extending and Connecting

- Glory mentions having seen a photo of Lilith and describes how she’s physically transformed since the photo was taken. Have you ever drastically changed your appearance, or do you know someone who has? Describe those changes. Did it affect the way people thought about or treated you/them?
- Tell us about an object or gift that is meaningful to you. What is it, how did you come by it, and why is it special?
- When Glory is looking for her father’s tie, she steps into a closet that holds a variety of smells from her past. She describes it as “one tiny space that was still mine.” If there existed “one tiny space” of your past, what various smells would it contain?

Creative Writing

Pretend you are Lilith at this point in the story. As Lilith, write a letter to a friend back home or create a text message exchange. Explain how you feel about your new home, new family, and new town.

Chapter Three

Understanding and Analyzing

- Describe River, using details from the text. What is your opinion of him?
- In Chapter Three, Glory realizes she has misplaced yet another meaningful item. What is it and why is it important to her?
- How are things going for Glory and her family on the first day of school? Use details from the text to explain your answer.
- Who is Edie? What do we know about her?

Extending and Connecting

- In Chapter Three, Glory’s aunts phone her because Tía Adora had a feeling that something was wrong. Have you ever had a premonition that something bad will happen – or might be going on elsewhere to loved ones? Explain. If not, do you wish you could have such perception? Why or why not?
- How would you describe your typical morning routine? Tell us about it. How does it compare to Glory’s morning?

Creative Writing

River is vividly described in this chapter, with information on how he looks, behaves, smells – even explanations about his family and home life. Create a profile of someone important to you, using specific details about their looks, mannerisms, and personal history.

Chapter Four

Understanding and Analyzing

- Define pacifism. How would being a pacifist affect the work of a landlord?
- What is “The Francis Effect” according to Glory’s father?

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- How did Puerta de la Luna become Epoch?

Extending and Connecting

- Have you ever forgotten to do something important? What was it? How did you handle the situation once you realized you forgot?
- Describe how you think Angus felt before Glory and River spotted him. Have you ever felt like that? What happened?

Creative Writing

Imagine visiting the “ghost town” part of Epoch – the section abandoned after the mine closed. What would you see? What might happen? Write a scene or a descriptive passage.

Chapter Five

Understanding and Analyzing

- What are your first impressions of Mateo?
- What is “La Migra”?
- Why is Mateo also running late for school?

Extending and Connecting

- “Mmmm. School smells good.” Angus says. Describe the mix of scents a visitor would get when walking into your school. Be specific.
- Glory’s family has been part of Epoch for generations – longer than the town has been named Epoch, longer even than the United States has been a country. Because of this, her aunts are very important to the community. Tía Diosonita, in particular, is an unofficial authority of the Puerta de la Luna families. In your opinion, what would be the advantages and disadvantages of being part of a powerful family? Explain your answers.

Creative Writing

Miss Perdue is the elderly hall monitor feared by all the students. Make up a tall tale about a scary hall monitor for your school – or crossing guard, or bus driver, or neighborhood watch person. Give them a name and describe them in detail. What makes them so frightening?

Chapters Six and Seven

Understanding and Analyzing

- Who is Betty and how did she come to be in the classroom?
- How are River and Abigail Epoch alike? (Consider what’s written about them in these two chapters, as well as Chapters Three and Four.)
- What does Glory almost do near the end of Chapter Seven? What stops her?

Extending and Connecting

- Do you think Mr. Ladezma is a good teacher? Why or why not? Use details from the book to back up your answer.
- Why do you think Angus wanted to sit with Glory instead of Lilith?
- What would have been your reaction if you’d met Betty the way Glory and Angus did?

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- In this chapter, Mr. Ladezma quotes the poet Rafael Jesus Gonzales: “If we do not hold precious our dead we may grow careless of our living.” What does he mean? Do you agree?

Creative Writing

What guesses might you make about Miss Perdue’s past? Make up a backstory for this character. Where did she come from? What did she do there? How and why did she come to Epoch?

Chapter Eight

Understanding and Analyzing

- Why is Glory nervous at the start of this chapter?
- What do we learn about Tía Diosonita that Tía Adora explains to Angus?
- List three ways Glory’s weekly ride to church is unusual.
- Why does Tía Diosonita feel it is her duty to prevent Magdalena from being buried in the camposanto?

Extending and Connecting

Compare and contrast Tía Adora and Tía Diosonita. How are they similar and how are they different? Use specific details, actions, and dialogue from the text to illustrate your points. Glory and her aunts have to drive through the malpais on their way to church. Describe the area, using specific details from the Chapter Eight. **BONUS:** Draw a map of their route, including the landmarks they pass.

Creative Writing

Like Glory, have you ever had to persuade someone – an individual or a system – to change their mind about something? Consider a rule or decision that you feel is unfair, then write a persuasive essay trying to convince the powers-that-be to change it. Be sure to include at least three reasons and use specific facts, details, or examples to back up your reasons.

Chapter Nine

Understanding and Analyzing

- What is the Fool’s Field?
- Why does Glory feel she can’t take the Eucharist?
- How does Mateo help Glory?
- In this chapter, a catastrophe is narrowly avoided. What almost happens? How is it prevented?

Extending and Connecting

- Consider the character of Mateo. Why might some people consider him a good person? Why might some people consider him not a good person? How do you feel about him?
- Father Tim refers to the “gift of tears” during the mass for the Feast of St. Francis. How can tears be a gift? How can crying or otherwise showing emotions be an act of kindness?

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Creative Writing

Write about the events in this chapter from the point of view of one of the animals. Explain who you are. What do you think is going on? What do you see, hear, and smell? How do you feel about what is happening?

Chapter Ten

Understanding and Analyzing

- Describe Hacienda Espinosa using sensory details from the book.
- Who were Los Salvajes? Why were they called that?

Extending and Connecting

- In this chapter, Glory makes cracker pudding – a traditional family recipe. Are there foods that you and your loved ones eat at special times? What are they?
- In the Latin American culture, a quinceañera is a rite of passage for fifteen-year-old girls, celebrating their transition from childhood into adulthood. Write about some special rites of passage, new privileges, or new responsibilities that you will experience as you head toward adulthood. What are you looking forward to the most?
- Tía Diosonita has a favorite singer, Frank Sinatra. She especially loves his song “Fly Me to the Moon.” Why else is that song special to her? Do you have a song that is special to you? What is it and why is it significant to you?

Creative Writing

Imagine you will spend the day with a grandparent or other special person in your life. Create a schedule listing what you will do and describe each one using specific details. What will you especially enjoy? Why?

Chapter Eleven

Understanding and Analyzing

- Describe River’s home, using specific details from the book.
- What job did Gee-Ma have when she was younger?
- Who was Tomas Espinosa?

Extending and Connecting

- Francis’s and Glory’s dads have two terms for the same people – “refugees” and “illegals.” Can you think of another example of two very distinct terms for the same concept or thing?
- What does Gee-Ma have in common with Tía Diosonita? BONUS: Name one or two additional things they have in common.
- River’s grandmother goes by “Gee-Ma” with loved ones. Do you – or does someone close to you – go by a nickname, at least with some people? How did you/they come by the name?

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Creative Writing

Glory is always uneasy when she has to walk through the Fool's Field. Recall a time when you had to walk someplace scary – or make up a scene where you do so. Describe the experience, using specific details about the location and your reactions. What makes the surroundings scary?

Chapter Twelve

Understanding and Analyzing

- Why does River stop on the way to school?
- “The magic of Puerta de la Luna was here.” Glory says. What happens that she believes is a message?
- What does Miss Holt do for the school?
- What does River find in a trash pile on the way home from school? Why is he excited to find it?

Extending and Connecting

- In this chapter, Glory believes she has seen a miracle. Have you ever felt that way? Describe a time when you saw or felt something miraculous or very unusual.
- What is the premise of the show Mind Games? Would you be willing to be a contestant? Why or why not?

Creative Writing

In your opinion, what are good reasons for being late to school? Pick one and write an excuse note for you (or someone else) who is tardy because of this reason.

Chapter Thirteen

Understanding and Analyzing

- “I’d never seen River so happy.” Glory says in this chapter. What is she referring to? Later she says about River “...it was the worst day of his life.” What does that refer to?
- What does Lilith do during lunch? Why does she do this?
- Why is Alice crying at the end of the chapter?

Extending and Connecting

- Write about a time when you made or repaired something by hand. What was it? How did you feel as you worked on it? How did you feel when you were finished?
- Have you ever had to keep a secret for someone that you didn't want to keep? How did you handle the situation?

Creative Writing

Pretend you are a TV critic. Write a review of Mind Games for a magazine or newspaper. Make up details as you imagine what the show is like. Is it a good show? Do you recommend it? Why or why not?

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Chapter Fourteen

Understanding and Analyzing

- What awful realization do Glory and two others have about the cheese sauce?
- What does Glory see when she's inside Francis's trailer? What does this tell us about Francis?
- Who bursts into Glory's home late at night needing help? What kind of help is needed?

Extending and Connecting

- What is Angus afraid of? What sorts of things were you afraid of, or didn't understand, when you were very young?
- Francis has the same thoughts about what might happen if Mr. Barnes eats the cheese sauce. What does this tell you about the community of Epoch? What are the pros and cons of living in a small town like this? Would you like to live there? Why or why not?
- Consider the characters of Francis and Greg. How are they similar? How are they different? In your opinion, are they more similar than different, or more different than similar? Explain your answer.

Creative Writing

The bumper stickers on Francis's trailer reflect what's important to him. Create a bumper sticker for Greg's car, Alice's car, the aunts' truck, or Glory's bicycle. Explain why it fits the character.

Chapter Fifteen

Understanding and Analyzing

- Why is Mateo worried at the start of this chapter? This worry makes him decide to do something. What is it? How does Glory feel about this decision?
- Glory gets an idea of how to stop Lilith without breaking her promise. What does she plan to do?
- Lilith says something that Glory and River consider a huge mistake – one that a local student would never make. What is it and why is it an error of judgment?

Extending and Connecting

- Glory says, "That had to be the worst idea I had ever heard." What is she referring to? Do you agree with her?
- At the beginning of the chapter, Glory imagines a name the other students might give her. Have you ever been called a name you didn't like? If so, what did you do about it? If not, do you know anyone who has been given a mocking nickname? Why were they called that? Did you call them that?

Creative Writing

How do you think Lilith convinced Benita to be her partner in all these schemes? Write a scene in which the two of them talk in private. What does Lilith say to Benita? What does Benita say?

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Chapter Sixteen

Understanding and Analyzing

- Why are La Migra at the trailer park?
- Compare and contrast the reactions of Angus and Lilith to the officers.
- What does Alice keep looking for? What does she find instead?

Extending and Connecting

- Why do you think Lilith stopped Glory from making her phone call? Glory feels her actions would only help Lilith achieve her objectives more quickly. If so, why would Lilith want her to keep quiet?
- Francis quotes Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., when he says, “I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust ... is in reality expressing the highest respect for the law.” Do you agree that some ethical or moral actions – such as helping someone get to the hospital – are more important than following a law? Explain why or why not. How might breaking a law you feel is wrong actually show respect for a country’s laws, as Dr. King said?

Creative Writing

Just like people, stories have moods that change throughout. What is the underlying emotion of this chapter? What actions, dialogue, details, and specific words does the author use to create this overall atmosphere? Choose an emotion and write a brief scene in that tone. Be sure to include particular words as well as sights, sounds, smells, dialogue, or actions that convey this feeling.

Chapter Seventeen

Understanding and Analyzing

- Where does Glory go in this chapter? Describe it. Who else is there – both on the outside and the inside?
- Who does she try to talk to? List the different people and their reactions.
- Using as much specific detail as you can, describe the building where Glory is taken.
- What does Tía Diosonita do to help Glory?

Extending and Connecting

- Glory says “... the hate was so big and so tangled up with the fear inside me, I couldn’t tell one from the other.” Do you feel people often confuse the two and hate the things they fear? Can you think of an example from your life or the news? Explain how you think the two feelings get “tangled up.”
- Why doesn’t Glory tell anyone about what Lilith did to her? Would you tell, if you were Glory? Why or why not?

Creative Writing

Imagine what Greg did overnight and write a brief scene about it. Who did he talk to? What did he think about? How did he pass the time?

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Chapter Eighteen

Understanding and Analyzing

- Describe Huerfano using specific details from the novel. Who do Glory and her aunts pray for there?
- What job does Tía Diosonita say that Glory will have one day?
- What idea does Glory get at the end of the chapter?

Extending and Connecting

- Tía Diosonita says, “Sometimes you need to cry. It doesn’t mean you are weak.” But in Chapter Nine, she went to great lengths to hide her tears from the others. Why do you think she has a hard time following this advice, even if she knows it to be true? Do you ever give guidance to others that you yourself find difficult to follow?
- How do you honor the people who mean the most to you? Describe them. Consider cultural or faith traditions, but also things you do on your own to pay tribute to loved ones.

Creative Writing

A symbol is a thing that represents something else – such as a concept or even a person. There are many symbols in the novel. For example, in this chapter alone there are flowers, stones, candles, and a butterfly, just to name a few. Choose an object that best symbolizes you. What is it? Why is it a fitting symbol? Does it play an important role in your life? Does it embody certain traits that you have? Explain.

Chapter Nineteen

Understanding and Analyzing

- Why is Lilith so upset at the start of the chapter? What deal does she suggest to Alice?
- Glory is afraid of hurting her father. What compromise does she come up with to ease her guilt?
- What unexpected thing happens just as Glory is trying to climb into the camposanto? How does this change her plan?

Extending and Connecting

- Who says to Glory, “You do not belong here”? Why does this person say this? What has changed? Do you agree with this person?
- There are many sensory details in this chapter – sights, sounds, smells, touches and temperatures. List three sensations that made an impact on you as you read. What feelings do you associate with them? What sensation is Glory missing at the very end of the chapter?

Creative Writing

Pretend you were there, near the church, and witnessed what happened to Glory from afar. Write a diary entry recording what you saw. Be sure to include your thoughts and guesses as to what happened, as well as a detailed description of what you observed.

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Chapter Twenty

Understanding and Analyzing

- Compare and contrast Mateo's and Angela's reactions when they see Glory. What does this tell us about each of them?
- What does Glory mean when she says, "I'd tripped and fallen into someone else's life"?
- Who put the butterfly on the school altar? Why? What does it symbolize for Glory? What does Mateo put on the altar? Why?
- What happened to all the students who took Lilith's test?

Extending and Connecting

- Consider what's revealed about Lilith in this chapter. What did Glory get wrong about Lilith? Do you think she might have misunderstood other things about her? Were there things you assumed about Lilith that ended up being wrong? If so, what were they?
- Write a brief essay explaining how you would spend \$100,000. Be sure to explain your choices.

Creative Writing

Imagine that Lilith's party had taken place and that you were one of the student contenders, then write a brief scene about it. What would happen? What sorts of things would Lilith have you and the others do? Would things go well for her? Would things go well for you?

Chapter Twenty-One

Understanding and Analyzing

- What is River dressed as?
- What happened with Lilith when Angus and Glory went on their walk?
- Why does Glory say that Papi and Alice are "broken"?
- What happens behind the Dumpster during lunch?

Extending and Connecting

- What is Lilith's "hidden weakness"? How does knowing this change Glory's view of her? Does it change your view? Explain why or why not.
- Who is "in hell" according to Glory at the end of the chapter? What do you think she means by this? Write a paragraph where you predict what Glory will do next, based on your knowledge of her.

Creative Writing

Choose a Halloween costume for Glory. What do you think she should dress up as? Why would it be the perfect costume? Now choose a costume for Mateo. What should he dress up as? Why?

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Chapter Twenty-Two

Understanding and Analyzing

- Why does Glory need Gee-Ma's help? Who helps Glory in this chapter and how?
- Who does Glory see on the stairs at school? What does this person say to her?
- Why has Mateo been home from school the past couple of days?

Extending and Connecting

- Glory says, "Lilith was wrong ... Alice would fight for the people she loved. She'd fight if she knew how." What did Lilith assume about Alice? Find evidence in the book that Lilith was wrong.
- Glory and River find Mateo giving his mother's cigarettes to his pet goat. Give an example from real life when you (or someone you know) did something wrong or against the rules in order to protect someone else.

Creative Writing

Chapter Twenty-two contains many passages that emphasize the strength of Glory's friendship with River. Using details from the novel, write three haikus about their relationship. (A haiku is a three-line poem where the first line contains five syllables, the second contains seven syllables, and the third contains five syllables.) OR: Write a poem at least nine lines long about Glory's friendship with River.

Chapters Twenty-Three and Twenty-Four

Understanding and Analyzing

- When Glory returns home after Gee-Ma dresses her up, her family is taken aback by the sight of her. Compare and contrast her father's reaction to Angus's.
- What makes Lilith laugh? What does this reveal about her character and how she's changed over the course of the novel?
- Describe the Día de los Muertos festivities in the town. How do the Puerta de la Luna families celebrate as compared to others?
- At the camposanto, who is sitting on the wall above the Espinosa family plot?
- What does Annette Okendo come to say to Glory?

Extending and Connecting

- Why do you think Glory started crying as soon as Tía Adora said her name?
- Glory goes to ask forgiveness from Tía Diosonita and the townsfolk. Choose another character in the novel who needed to be forgiven for something they did wrong – or was perceived as doing wrong. Who is it? Was he/she forgiven? Give evidence to back up your reasons.

Creative Writing

Think about a time when you needed to forgive someone or be forgiven. Write a brief scene in which one of you asks forgiveness from the other. Include at least one other approach or gesture, beyond words, that this person could use to demonstrate how sorry they are. Consider clothes,

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music, deeds, and other offerings. At the end, make it clear whether or not the person was forgiven and why.

Chapter Twenty-Five

Understanding and Analyzing

In the final chapter, what do we learn about the following characters? Write a brief answer for each, using specific details from the book:

- Francis
- Father Tim
- Miss Perdue
- Alice

Extending and Connecting

- Do you agree with Glory that Mateo is good? List evidence from the story to back up your claim.
- What, exactly, do you think Tía Diosonita sees in the sky that stops her mid-sentence? Write a description of it, using as many vivid details as you can.
- “Haga bueno,” is a common saying in the novel. “Do good things.” Tell us about something you plan to do to help others. Who do you hope to help? Do you know them? How will your actions benefit or comfort them?

Creative Writing

You are a fortune teller. Write about what the future holds for the characters of Glory, River, Lilith, and Mateo. Be as specific as possible.

OVERALL QUESTIONS

Understanding and Analyzing

- Throughout the novel, there is a motif of things that are broken, damaged, or incomplete. Give an example of something – or someone – in the story that is either broken or that becomes broken. How did it get damaged or defective? Is it fixed in the story? If so, how and who repairs it/them? If not, why? How do the affected people cope with the situation?
- There are many people, objects, and forces that protect Glory in the story. Name two and describe how they keep her safe. Use evidence from the text.
- What are some of the unique physical features about Epoch and its surrounding area? Describe the novel’s setting using specific details from the book.
- One underlying theme of the novel is that of home and the idea of belonging to a place. Name a character or event that ties into this theme.
- Names of places and people are very important in the story. Consider Epoch, Puerta de la Luna, Glory, River, Alice, Tía Diosonita, and Tía Adora. Choose one and explain, using evidence from the text, why the name is so suitable. You may want to use dictionaries or translation tools to research the names.



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- Similarly, there are many instances of name-calling in the story. (For example, River is called a “trash picker.”) List as many of these as you can find. In your opinion, which one is the most harmful or wrong? Why?
- Glorieta has deep Mexican American roots and is the niece of la Patrona, the community’s most powerful member. Glorieta is also the daughter of a white father, giving her a biracial identity. How do you think her father’s habit of calling border refugees “illegals” affects Glorieta? Do you think Glorieta cares more than her father about her mother being excluded from the Día de los Muertos celebration? Why? Are there other ways that her father is disconnected from Glorieta’s Mexican identity? Do you ever feel like a parent/caregiver does not connect with something that is deeply important to you?
- What clues can you find throughout the book about Edie’s identity?
- Another theme in the book is that of tradition – within families, towns, cultures, and religions. Give an example of how a tradition changes in the story. Do you feel it changes for the betterment of those involved? Why or why not? Use details from the book to back up your claim.
- Motherhood, or mothering, is a concept that is explored through several of the book’s characters. Consider how the following characters connect with this theme. Write a brief description for each: Glory, River, Lilith, Mateo, Tía Diosonita, and Annette Okendo.
- Another motif in the novel is that of costumes or “dressing the part.” Choose a character and write about how they use clothes or costumes to express themselves – or perhaps hide themselves. Be sure to use specific details from the book.
- Throughout the novel, several characters act as guardians or protectors for others. For example, Glory keeps trying to protect her classmates from Lilith’s schemes. Consider the characters of Tía Diosonita, Mateo, Francis, Miss Holt, Miss Perdue, and even Lilith. Who are they trying to protect? How?
- The concept of hate (odio) figures prominently in the novel. Give two examples of people who act or react out of hatred of other people. In your opinion, is one of your examples of hate more real or more destructive than the other? Find evidence in the book to back up your claim.

Extending and Connecting

- The author, Kersten Hamilton, uses lots of humor in her story. Describe your favorite humorous moment in the book. What made it so funny?
- Who do you wish would come visit you during Los Días de los Muertos? It could be someone you knew or someone from history. Why are they important to you? If they visit, what would you like to discuss with them?
- The book opens with a family tradition Glory follows at the start of school every year. Come up with your own back-to-school tradition that will predict something important about the year ahead. Describe how to do it in a series of steps. OR: Write a short scene of you using the tradition at start of this school year. What result did you get?
- In Chapter Twelve, Miss Holt says, “Good deeds should not be punished. But I suppose there are rules, and if you choose to break them, you choose to accept the consequences.” What are your thoughts on this? Give an example from the novel of people being punished for breaking a law or rule. Do you feel the punishment was deserved? Why or why not?

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- In Chapter Seventeen, Glory’s dad says, “This whole thing is bigger than I know how to fight.” Is there a problem in the world right now that you would like to solve, but don’t know how? What is it? What things can you do to help right now? What actions would you take if they could be made possible?

Creative Prompts

- If you were to make a movie out of this book, what kind of music would you have in the background? What songs would you choose for closing credits, titles, or key scenes? Explain your choices and why you feel they fit with the themes and overall tone of the novel.
- In Chapter Seventeen, Glory remembers something that Francis said about the refugees. “Their lives don’t matter to people who haven’t listened to their stories.” Write the story of the two young girls Glory sees. What are their names and ages? Where are they from? Are they related? What happened to them? OR: Write your story. Tell us where you are from and what you have been through. What might people misunderstand or even fear about you?
- By yourself, with a partner, or in a small group, write and design an issue of the *Epoch Rattler*. Include news stories, opinion pieces or letters to the editor, weather reports, advertisements, and perhaps fun features like reviews or profiles.

¡Haga bueno!