flowers in the sky by Lynn Joseph

ABOUT THE BOOK

THE DISCUSS, REPEND

BOOK CLUI

Fifteen-year-old Nina Perez is faced with a future she never expected. She must leave her lush home in the Dominican Republic when she's sent by her mother to seek out a better life with her brother in New York. As Nina searches for some glimpse of familiarity amid the jarring world of Washington Heights, she must uncover her own strength. She learns to plant roots within foreign soil and finds a way to grow, just like the orchids that blossom on her fire escape. And when she is confronted by ugly secrets, she comes to understand the realities of life in this new place. But then she meets him—that greeneyed boy—who she can't erase from her thoughts, the one who just might help her learn to see beauty in spite of tragedy.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. Why does Nina's mami want her to move to New York to live with her brother? What better opportunities await her there?
- 2. Why does Nina say, "I was leaving my country for all the wrong reasons" (p. 21)? Why does she think this way?
- 3. What kinds of culture shock does Nina experience when she arrives in New York? How are her mami's ideas of New York different from reality?
- 4. What can you infer from Darrio's silence when Nina asks him if he's happy in New York (p. 62)? Do you think Darrio wishes he could go back home?
- 5. How is Nina's family like the characters in *The Glass Menagerie*? What does Carlos mean when he tells Nina, "You are just like the glass unicorn in the menagerie" (p. 70)?
- 6. Why does Luis tell Nina they can't be friends when they first meet, even though they both obviously like each other?
- 7. Darrio says, "Orchids hate to be uprooted. . . . They're happy staying right where they are" (p. 87). What is the significance of the orchids in the novel? How is Nina like these unique flowers?
- 8. Nina is constantly referred to as the "little flower girl" throughout the novel. How is this nickname a metaphor for the challenge she faces in adjusting to her new life?
- 9. Nina says, "In this new world, people were not at all what they appeared to be" (p. 108). How is this true for the characters in the novel, including Nina herself?



- 10. How is Nina like the Prometheus statue she sees in Rockefeller Center? Why can't she ignore the harsh truths around her like everyone else in the story does?
- 11. How does being in New York and her relationship with Luis help Nina realize that her mother doesn't truly understand her?
- 12. Compare Nina's mami and Señora Rivera. How do their relationships with Nina differ?
- 13. What does Señora Rivera mean when she tells Nina, "You don't want to stay the same all your life" (p. 127)? Throughout the novel, how does Nina learn to balance her two very different worlds while staying true to herself?
- 14. Nina says that the Metropolitan Museum of Art was "a place that changed my life forever" (p. 196). How? What does she realize when she sees the Van Gogh painting?
- 15. What does Luis's revelation about his sister teach Nina about the importance of family (p. 205)?
- 16. Why does Nina feel that Darrio's arrest is her fault? What does she think is the true tragedy here?
- 17. What is "the most important thing of all" (p. 220–21) that Nina finally learns after her whirlwind first summer in New York?
- 18. How has Nina changed by the end of the novel? What does she mean when she says, "It was all about whom we chose to be. As for me, I was the flower girl" (p. 232)?



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