Extension Activities

- 1. In Reality. Research the eviction laws in your state. Find demographic information about people who get evicted, and find out what they can do if they need help. Share your findings with your group, and propose something helpful you could do. Alternatively, consider Papa C's struggle with Social Security and the health care system. Research proposals that would make it easier for people to get medical coverage. Share what you learn with your reading group, and suggest ways that you can convey your views to politicians.
- 2. **Food for Thought.** How does food, especially Mexican food, play a significant role in *Soul Enchilada*? Find a recipe for one of the dishes featured in the book, such as *carne picada, empanadas, horchata,* or *huevos rancheros*. Prepare the dish and share it with your reading group.
- 3. Day of the Dead. Pesto makes a *papel picado* for Bug, and then he and his mother take her to a celebration for Día de los Muertos. What do people celebrate on the Day of the Dead? How do they remember their loved ones? Write about your findings, or make an *ofrenda* for someone you know who has passed away.
- 4. **Speak of the Devil.** Choose a novel, short story, poem, play, movie, song, or other work of art that's based on someone's deal with the devil. Compare and contrast the demons and devils you find there with David Macinnis Gill's portrayal of Beals and Scratch in *Soul Enchilada*. Possible selections include:
 - George Abbott, Douglass Wallop, Richard Adler, and Jerry Ross's musical *Damn Yankees* (or Stanley Donen's film)
 - Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale "The Little Mermaid" (or the Walt Disney film)
 - The Charlie Daniels Band's song "The Devil Went Down to Georgia"
 - Goethe's play Faust
 - Washington Irving's short story "The Devil and Tom Walker"
 - Christopher Marlowe's play *Doctor Faustus*
 - John Updike's novel *The Witches of Eastwick* (or George Miller's film)
 - Oscar Wilde's novel The Picture of Dorian Gray



About the Author

David Macinnis Gill is an associate professor of English education at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, specializing in young adult literature. He is a past president of ALAN, the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents affiliated with NCTE, and *Soul Enchilada* marks his debut as a novelist. He lives with his family in Wilmington, North Carolina. Visit him online at www.davidmacinnisgill.com.

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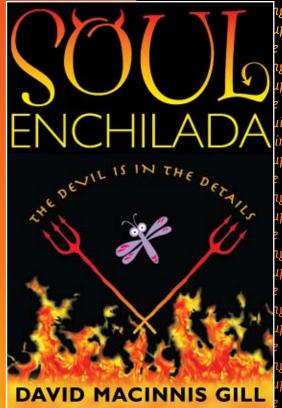
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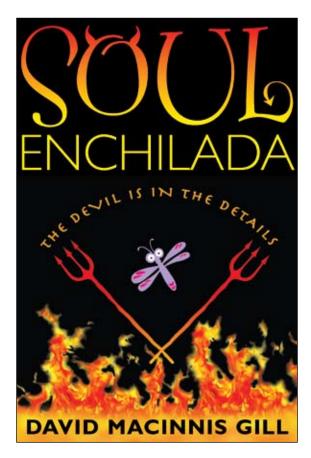


Group Guide Reading
Guide Reading Group



By David Macinnis Gill

Group Guide Reading G Guide Reading Group G Reading Group Guide Rea



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About the Book

Things don't look good for Bug: She's a high school dropout who's about to get fired from her pizza delivery job and evicted from her roach-infested apartment. She's been on her own since Papa C died, making her an orphan for the third time and leaving her with nothing but his classic 1958 Cadillac Biarritz. Speeding around El Paso in Papa C's car helps Bug forget her troubles—temporarily, at least. But everything changes when a demon named Beals comes to repo the Caddy and demand her soul as collateral. Now Bug's strong, smart-mouthed self-reliance might be just the ticket for getting out of hell. . . .

Discussion Questions

- 1. Bug is a complicated character who allows different sides of herself to show as the novel unfolds. Do you think you'd get along with Bug? How would you describe her if you were introducing her to one of your friends? How would Bug describe herself?
- 2. According to Beals, what makes Bug easy to manipulate? Do you think Bug is predictable, or that craving independence makes her vulnerable? What traits do you have that might make it easy for someone to take advantage of you?
- 3. Bug says, "The Tejanos didn't accept me because I was black. Black folks didn't accept me because I was a Tejana" (chapter 1). Are you someone who, like Bug, feels caught in the middle of two groups? Or do you know someone who feels this way? Do you think much about your own racial identity? How do you identify yourself, and what does it mean to you to be part of your group?
- 4. How is setting important in *Soul Enchilada*? How does the mix of cultures in El Paso influence the story? What would the story lose if it were set in another place?
- 5. Why does Bug think that going on public assistance would be admitting failure? If you were in Bug's position, would you take public money to help pay your rent?
- 6. Bug says she "got stuck with responsibility early in life" and "wanted the freedom that went with it" (chapter 3). What does she mean? How is freedom different from free will? What do you make of the fact that Bug doesn't lose her free will when she loses her soul to Beals?
- 7. Speeding on the roads above El Paso is an escape for Bug, and feeling the air in her face gives her a much-needed sense of release. What do you do when you need to escape?

- 8. Describe Papa C's relationship with Bug. Think about how he cleaned up and quit drinking for her, but also how he made her a cosigner on his deal with the devil. Can you justify Papa C's pawning of his granddaughter's soul? Does he redeem himself at all? Explain.
- 9. Do you love anything in the way that Papa C loved his 1958 Cadillac Biarritz? If Beals were trying to make you sell your soul, what would he tempt you with?
- 10. Soul Enchilada suggests that there's more to a person than his or her physical self. What do you think makes us human? What is a person's essence? What do you believe happens when someone dies?
- 11. How is humor important to the story? Which character, scene, or other part of the novel is especially funny to you? Why?
- 12. David Macinnis Gill writes dialogue in several dialects—think about how Bug speaks, and how different it is from the way Auntie Pearl or Vinnie does—and he mixes Spanish with English. Does the language the author uses make you more interested in the story? Choose a passage that you think would lose something if it was written in standard English instead of Bug's voice, and share it with the group.
- 13. Bug says in chapter 6 that "poor folks get used to being in danger," and she also says that it's hard to make it if you have to start at the bottom. Do you agree? Has *Soul Enchilada* gotten you thinking about specific social issues, such as what it means to overcome poverty? Why do you believe that some people are poor? Is it society's job to change that circumstance? If not, why? If so, how?
- 14. What do you believe about the devil? Is he real? If so, what is his relationship with mankind? What would you say is the cause of the evil that's in the world?
- 15. What does Soul Enchilada, the book's title, signify?

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