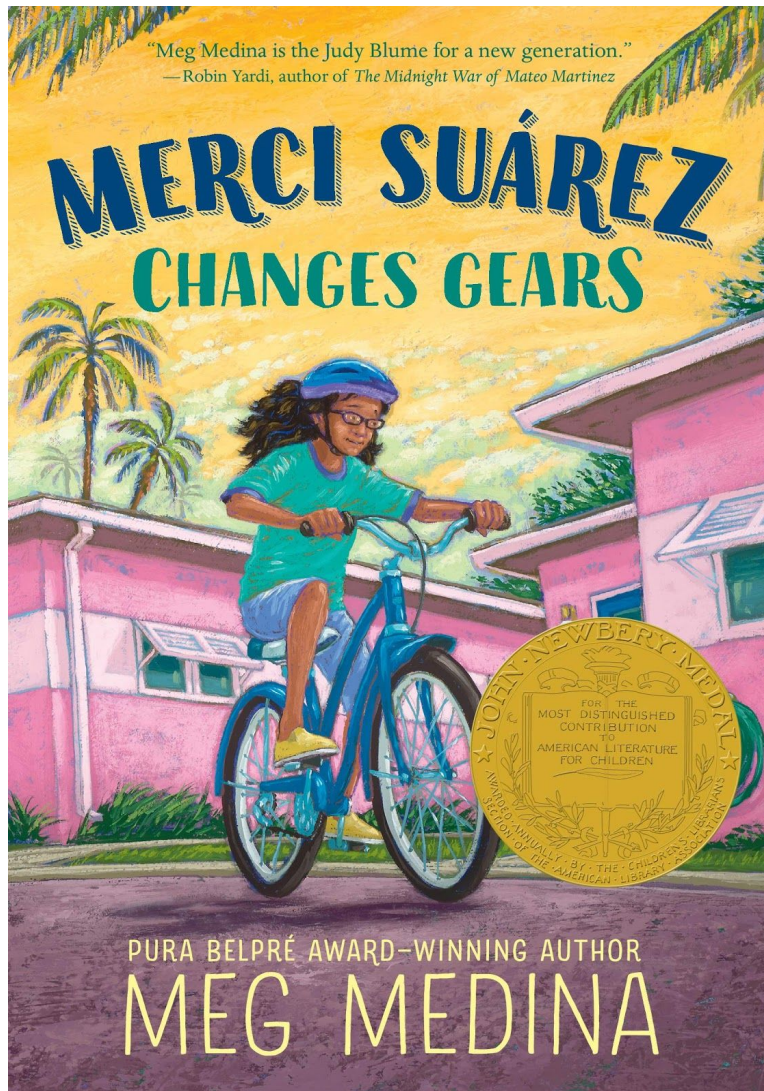


Merci Suárez Changes Gears

Summer Reading Guide



Name: _____

Chapter 1:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. hostile



Other words: midst, stickler, taxidermy, trudge

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“To think, only yesterday I was in chancletas (rubber sandals), sipping lemonade and watching my twin cousins run through the sprinkler in the yard. Now, I’m here in Mr. Patchett’s class, sweating in my polyester school blazer and waiting for this torture to be over” (Medina, pg.1)

Short Discussion Questions

What is the “Sunshine Buddies” program? Do you think this is a good program? Why or why not?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. Why doesn’t Merci want to be a part of this program? Explain your thinking.

Chapter 2:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. exasperated



Other words: abuela, barrel out, lurches

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“He motions with his chin at Abuela and a policeman, who are talking near our banyan tree. Abuela’s face is twisted in worry, although that’s not unusual on its own. She’s the manager of the Catastrophic Concerns Department in our family, after all, so it’s pretty much her resting face” (Medina, pg. 15).

Short Discussion Questions

Describe Las Casitas, where the family lives.

Why is Lolo in the police car?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. Why does Merci feel the need to pretend everything is okay at the end of chapter 2.

Chapter 3:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. gawking



Other words: contraband, grudges, honorable, regulation

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“Mami sighs. ‘You know, Merci, a good attitude goes a long way. Half my patients would never walk again if they didn’t think positive.’ She turns back around. ‘And this family could really use some upbeat thinking these days’ (Medina, pg. 29).

Short Discussion Questions

Why does Merci wonder if this “matching business is a scam”?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. What was the “fine print” written on the scholarship contract Mami signed for Roli and Merci to attend Seward Pines Academy? How do you think Merci feels about this?

Chapter 4:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. proposition



Other words: finishing school, negotiator, steely

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“I sigh. It’s no use fighting. When it comes to helping, the motto around here is family or bust”
(Medina, pg. 48)

Short Discussion Questions

Why does Merci want to earn money?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. Describe Merci’s relationship with Lolo. How does Merci feel about her grandfather? How can you tell?

Chapter 5:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. interconnected



Other words: decisive, measly, mull, unruly,

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“Ms. Tannenbaum is big on projects, which should be fun. But the trouble is that she’s even bigger on building group skills. ‘The world is interconnected. Collaboration is the key skill of the future,’ she claims” (Medina, pg. 57).

Short Discussion Questions

Explain Merci’s ideas for the map. What do you think of them?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. Why is collaborating with a person like Edna in the group difficult? Cite evidence from the text to support your thinking.

Chapter 6:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. sheepishly



Other words: rummages, sprawled,

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“I wonder for a minute about his fall and not telling Abuela. It doesn’t feel right. But then Lolo looks up and smiles at me, the same as always, and the thought vanishes. He waves and then turns back to arranging the prettiest cookies on top” (Medina, pg. 80).

Short Discussion Questions

What happens to Lolo at the beginning of the chapter?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. Why might Lolo want Merci to keep his fall a secret? How does Merci feel about this?

Chapter 7:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. poached



Other words: fierce, pivot, poached, trade school

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“He shrugs. ‘Nobody forced them to go to work for him. They wanted jobs where they could earn the most money. Who can blame them?’ He drains his water bottle and crushes it in his hand before tossing it to the back. ‘Cruz has never been my favorite person, I’ll give you that. But an enemy? There’s no sense in having those if we can help it’” (Medina, pg. 94).

Short Discussion Questions

What did Lolo say to the family about his eye?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. Explain why the other team is NOT really Papa’s enemy.

Chapter 8:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. menacing



Other words: compromise, launching, maneuvering, splice

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“Lolo listens for a while. Then he sighs and gives my shoulder a squeeze. ‘You went to the movies tonight?’ he asks again.

I stay very still, listening to the echo of his odd question. Abuela’s voice is low in the dark. ‘Shhh,’ she says. ‘Of course she did, viejo.’

And then, with a careful quiet wedged between us, Lolo and I stare up at the stars”
(Medina, pg. 119).

Short Discussion Questions

Describe Merci’s dilemma in this chapter. What is the compromise?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. At the end of the chapter, Merci is reflecting on Lolo’s off behavior. What do you think is happening? Why?

Chapter 9:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. amplified



Other words: scold

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“Edna flinches. And I won’t lie: It feels good, just this once, to know that my words have pinched her hard for a change” (Medina, pg. 127).

Short Discussion Questions

What does Edna give Merci at the beginning of the chapter? Who is it for?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. Are Merci and Edna friends? Explain.

Chapter 10:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. encryption



Other words: logophile

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“He rubs his eyes and sighs like when he’s trying to break down a physics formula for somebody he tutors. ‘What I mean is, it’s a puzzle’” (Medina, pg. 131).

Short Discussion Questions

Who is Roli’s prom date? Why is this surprising?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. Why is the “heart a mystery” for both Merci and Roli in this chapter?

Chapter 11:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. interim



Other words: chassis, empire

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“Tia Ines steps out through the sliding door...Boy, does she look like she needs some shut-eye. I think the problem might be the head full of rolos (rollers). I don’t know how she sleeps in those hard curlers. I don’t say so, of course. In a closed mouth, no fly will enter, as Lolo always says” (Medina, pg. 134).

Short Discussion Questions

How does the family help each other in this chapter?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. Why do you think Tia Ines looks disappointed when she finds out the Simon isn’t helping?

Chapter 12:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. proportions



Other words: angler, catamaran, colliding, veranda,

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“There’s something in Papi’s voice that seems to shift the ground underneath me” (Medina, pg. 146).

Short Discussion Questions

What happens with Lolo in this chapter?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. Why is what happens evidence that something is wrong with Lolo?

Chapter 13:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. brimming



Other words: guiltily, murmurs

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“But I don’t know for sure because every time they hear me leave my room, they all get quiet. Their eyes follow me when I go to the kitchen to see if my soccer permission slip is signed yet. They don’t start talking again until I’m gone” (Medina, pg. 153).

Short Discussion Questions

What is Mami’s reasoning for not allowing Merci to try out for the soccer team?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. At the end of the chapter, Merci says that she hates everyone in her family. Does she really? Explain.

Chapter 14:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. pleading



Other words: lumbars, ricochets, sporting, trots

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“Rules are rules, soldier,’ he says. ‘You broke them and now you pay. Go on’” (Medina, pg. 169).

Short Discussion Questions

At the chapter’s opening, Merci says, “The whole week feels like misery.” What miserable things happen in this chapter.

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. How would you describe Edna in this chapter? Cite evidence from the text to support your thinking.

Chapter 15:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. solemn



Other words: stiffed, strewn

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“I know you and Roli are smart enough to be here-- more than smart enough. But we don’t pay tuition like most of the other families. So the value you add to the school has to come from you, because it’s not coming from our wallets” (Medina, pg. 175).

Short Discussion Questions

Who comes to pick Merci up from school? Why?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. How do you know that Merci is upset about being a scholarship student? Cite evidence from the text to support your thinking.

Chapter 16:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. marveling



Other words: flit, moping, warden

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“ ‘Lolo needs to go to the doctor.’ Tia’s voice is suddenly a heavy stick. I can almost hear what she doesn’t say. *And that’s final* (Medina, pg. 181).”

Short Discussion Questions

What causes Merci to be upset with the twins?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. Who do you think put Lolo’s glasses in the fridge? Why?

Chapter 17:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. linger



Other words: papyrus, scribe, sincere, unravel

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“Abuela’s eyes linger on me as we play. ‘Too young? Time passes for all of us, viejo,’ she says quietly” (Medina, pg. 197).

Short Discussion Questions

What does Merci receive with her scroll?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. How would you describe Michael in this chapter? Cite evidence from the text to support your thinking.

Chapter 18:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. simmering



Other words: jumble, stalks, yelps

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“‘Things happen over time, Merci,’ Mami finally says. ‘We grow up and older. We need to respect how things change and adjust’” (Medina, pg. 202).

Short Discussion Questions

What was unusual about Lolo’s behavior in this chapter?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. Describe Merci’s reaction to Lolo’s behavior. Why is she angry with Mami?

Chapter 19:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. discontinued



Other words: terrain

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“Abuela or Lolo living here? I can’t imagine such a thing. Their house smells like garlic and onions and cinnamon. The sound of Abuela’s novelas drift across the yard at night. Lolo’s shoes are always by the kitchen door. Who would cook dinner when Mami’s late, or watch the twins? Who would tend the garden?” (Medina, pg. 210).

Short Discussion Questions

What is Mami trying to make up to Merci?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. Why couldn’t Merci focus on buying a bike?

Chapter 20:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. haggling



Other words: immortal, rooted, screeches

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“I get to Mr. Dixon’s class just as he’s closing the door. I’m the last one to slide into my seat. I’m flushed, like I’ve done something wrong again, but I realize helping Michael will get me some points with Miss McDaniels, especially after the baseball incident. I open my book and get cracking on the problems” (Medina, pg. 218).

Short Discussion Questions

What does Edna do to show she has a “crush” on Michael?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. Do you think it is a good idea for Abuela to make Michael’s costume? Explain why or why not.

Chapter 21:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. potent



Other words: algae, evaporated, glassy, jittery

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“My phone buzzes almost as soon as we pull out of the parking lot. It’s a snap. When I tap it open, I see a picture of Edna crossing her eyes at me and letting her tongue hang out. Is she making fun of my eye? If she weren’t mad at me, I’d say no. Everyone sends me dumb snaps all the time, right? It’s just something we do occasionally, like wearing 3D glasses for a movie, like eating ice cream too fast on purpose to see who gets a headache, maybe even like stealing each other’s lunches. But now it feels different, meaner” (Medina, pg. 227).

Short Discussion Questions

Describe the mask Abuela is making for Michael.

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. Why is Merci nervous about having Michael come over to her house?

Chapter 22:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. hesitates



Other words: perks

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

It's true. With Mami down with the flu, Abuela has been busy cooking dinner for us every night. And it's been hard for her to sew during the day like she used to because Lolo gets bored and wants to go for walks, which she insists on taking with him. So she's been staying up late to finish our costumes. Last night, I fell asleep to the whirl of her sewing machine through the yard" (Medina, pg. 238).

Short Discussion Questions

Who did Michael pick to be his partner in Ms. Tannenbaum's class? Did Michael and his partner work well together?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. Why did Merci think it was best if Michael hadn't chosen her?

Chapter 23:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. commotion



Other words: flustered, impediment

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“I drop into the chair and glare at the one person horrible enough to do such a thing. Edna is busy taking down the homework assignment, just like we’re supposed to at the start of class. All hour long, she doesn’t look my way” (Medina, pg. 246).

Short Discussion Questions

What happened to Michael’s costume?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. Who do you think ruined Michael’s costume? Explain your thinking.

Chapter 24:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. hunched



Other words: snitch

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“ ‘I’ll try, but it’s going to be tough,” he says, shaking his head. ‘It’s pretty wrecked. Now I don’t have a costume for Edna’s party either.’ I blink” (Medina, pg. 250).

Short Discussion Questions

What is Merci’s reaction to finding out that Michael is invited to Edna’s party?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. Based on the past few chapters, how would you describe Edna? Would you be friends with someone like her?

Chapter 25:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. interpretation



Other words: wander

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“I was so excited; I told Mami I needed a new mask and everything. Well, I waited, and I even hinted to Edna a couple of times, thinking she forgot. But the invitation never came. Mami told me I shouldn’t mention it anymore. ‘People say things to be polite sometimes,’ she told me” (Medina, pg. 252).

Short Discussion Questions

Describe Merci’s social studies presentation. Use examples from the text.

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. Was the festival fun for Merci? Why or why not? Cite examples from the text to support your thinking.

Chapter 26:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. glimpses



Other words: mirage

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“Maybe I can talk to Lolo about it in the morning. He’s the clearest then. *Don’t worry about Miss Santos, Merci*, he’ll probably say, and then he’ll make me forget all about dumb Edna. We’ll take a walk or share a tropical smoothie. He’ll tell me an old story or we’ll bat some balls across the yard” (Medina, pg. 261).

Short Discussion Questions

What causes Roli’s car accident?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. Why is Merci longing for Lolo’s company at the beginning of the chapter?

Chapter 27:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. Alzheimer's Disease



Other words: eerie

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

"I shove him again as everything starts to make sense. Lolo's falls. His questions. How he wanders. His confusion. The day he almost hit Abuela. All along there had been a big secret in the Suárez family, and no one told me" (Medina, pg. 267).

Short Discussion Questions

According to Roli, what is Alzheimer's disease?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. What is Merci's reaction to the news about her grandfather? Explain.

Chapter 28:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. seeped



Other words: gaping

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“Lolo stares into his hands and continues. ‘I wanted to enjoy our time the way it has always been for as long as possible. What’s coming is coming, mi cielo. Why think about drowning before we reach the river?’” (Medina, pg. 273)

Short Discussion Questions

What does Merci do to release her anger?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. Why is Merci so angry? Explain.

Chapter 29:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. perspectives



Other words: adoring, flinch

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“I look up at her blankly. I hadn’t thought about the ruined costume-- or Edna’s party -- since Friday at the fall festival. It seems like a million years ago now instead of four days. It’s the kind of thing that belongs with old toys that I’ve given away. In fact, if I were Miss McDaniels, I might file it in my Utter Nonsense folder” (Medina, pg. 278).

Short Discussion Questions

What surprising event happened at the end of this chapter?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. Put yourself in Merci’s shoes: How do you think Merci feels at the end of this chapter?

Chapter 30:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. immortalized



Other words: N/A

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“Hannah looks uncomfortable, too, but not because she doesn’t want to think about dead things, the way I don’t. I think it’s because she’s not working with Edna and Jamie, who’ve been assigned to the scribe committee. Hannah’s eyes keep sliding over to the cafeteria windows to gaze at our usual lunch table, which I suppose is where she really wants to be” (Medina, pg. 283).

Short Discussion Questions

At the end of the chapter, who does Hannah ask to volunteer as the mummy?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. How does this solve her feeling “uncomfortable” about working with Merci and Lena?

Chapter 31:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. scrimmage



Other words: dozing

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“I click and click and capture us the way we really are right now” (Medina, pg. 292).

Short Discussion Questions

What does Tía Inés tell Merci in this chapter? How is she feeling?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. Why is taking photographs of the family so important to Merci?

Chapter 32:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. gravely



Other words: bawl, contenders, peppered

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“I glance at the sections marked *Victim Statement* and *Estimated Value of Damaged Property*. ‘Oh, no, miss. That’s OK. It doesn’t really matter anymore,’ I say.

‘Incorrect,’ she says, holding my gaze. ‘What happened is called destruction of personal property. And it is unacceptable at Seward Pines’” (Medina, pg. 294).

Short Discussion Questions

What happened to Edna in this chapter?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. How do you feel about what happened to Edna? Explain.

Chapter 33:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. etiquette



Other words: colonizers, ruthless

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“But the weird thing is that I can’t write that. Even though Edna can be awful, I know I made a mistake. I didn’t have as much fun watching her get laughed at as I would have thought, either. She did agree to help us, and watching Michael and the other kids make fun of her felt all wrong. So, I decided to stick to the facts, which Roli says never fail anybody. I write her a letter that feels true” (Medina, pg. 311).

Short Discussion Questions

How do Merci’s family celebrate Thanksgiving?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. What do you think of Merci’s letter to Edna? Explain your thinking.

Chapter 34:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. charismatic



Other words: headmaster, maliciously, prim, relief

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“As soon as she asks, I feel as though an ice cube is dripping along my spine. Edna stares straight ahead. I feel completely trapped” (Medina, pg. 320).

Short Discussion Questions

What does the video tape footage reveal?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. How did you react to the end of this chapter? Explain.

Chapter 35:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. redirection



Other words: sacked

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“How does it work that the same kids who followed Edna around all the time really seemed to like seeing her in trouble? How can somebody popular have so many people glad to see her crash? *Maybe like* might be confusing, but *popular* is even weirder. Turns out, it’s not the same thing as having friends” (Medina, pg. 324).

Short Discussion Questions

What happened to Edna and Jamie at the start of this chapter?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. How does this chapter show that Merci has grown?

Chapter 36:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. pricklier



Other words: cautiously, hoists, wobbly

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“For once, I’m not tempted to lie to Edna” (Medina, pg. 342).

Short Discussion Questions

Is the Great Tomb Project a success?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. Do Edna and Merci make amends? Explain.

Chapter 37:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. Nochebuena



Other words: relentless

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“For a minute, I don’t know what to say. It’s good news, great news, in fact. But North Carolina is three states north, and it’s suddenly impossible to imagine that Roli won’t be here in the fall. Whats Las Casitas going to be without him? Who’ll be here when Lolo gets really bad?”
(Medina, pg. 345).

Short Discussion Questions

What news does Roli receive in this chapter?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. How does Merci feel about Roli’s news? Explain.

Chapter 38:

Vocabulary/Background Knowledge

Please write a definition in your own words & draw an illustration

1. crooning



Other words: N/A

Quote

Describe the who, where, and when for the quote. Why is the quote significant?

“I don’t know what is going to happen next year, no one does. But that’s OK. I can handle it, I decide. It’s just a harder gear, and I am ready. All I have to do is take a deep breath and ride” (Medina, pg. 355).

Short Discussion Questions

What did Merci give to Lolo for Nochebuena? Why is it special?

Response Question

Please respond with two/three sentences

1. Why do you think author, Meg Medina, chose *Merci Suarez Changes Gears* as the title of her novel?
