

***Few Blue Skies* by Carolina Ixta**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carolina Ixta is a writer from Oakland, California. A daughter of Mexican immigrants, she received her BA in creative writing and Spanish language and literature at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and obtained her master's degree in education at the University of California, Berkeley. Her debut novel, *Shut Up, This Is Serious*, was a Morris Award finalist, an *LA Times* Book Prize finalist, and the winner of the Pura Belpré Award. *Few Blue Skies* is her sophomore novel. Visit her online at carolinaixta.com

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

As you read and annotate the book, keep these three big questions in mind. Look for quotes or short passages that answer these questions – then mark those sections of the book!

- ★ In what ways do family expectations shape a person's identity and choices?
- ★ To what extent can friendship, love, and community help people survive experiences of hardship and uncertainty?
- ★ How much difference can one person make when taking a stand against injustice?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. At the start of the novel, Paloma feels emotionally disconnected after Julio ends their relationship following his father's death. How does grief shape both characters differently?
2. How does Selva function as more than just a company in the novel? In what ways does it symbolize larger systems of power and inequality?
3. How does the polluted environment of San Fermín affect the emotional atmosphere of the novel? Consider scenes involving school cancellations, coughing, and poor air quality.
4. How does the scholarship competition force Paloma and Julio to confront difficult ethical choices about activism, education, and compromise?
5. Throughout the novel, Paloma believes that exposing the truth about Selva will lead to justice. Does the novel ultimately support or challenge that belief?
6. Paloma often notices beauty in the mountains, sky, and landscape despite the pollution surrounding her. Why are these moments important to the novel's message?
7. In what ways does the novel portray environmental injustice as connected to race and class?

8. How does the mayor's support of Selva reveal the relationship between corporations and political power in San Fermín?
9. Several characters depend on Selva jobs despite knowing the company harms the town. What does the novel suggest about survival, compromise, and complicity?
10. How does the novel challenge the idea that hard work alone guarantees success or safety?
11. How does Ale's advice about relationships and survival reflect the pressures young people face in economically unstable communities?
12. The novel repeatedly contrasts leaving with staying. Which choice does the book present as more courageous, or does it refuse to choose between them?
13. By the end of the novel, Paloma understands that activism involves sacrifice and uncertainty. What specific events lead her to that realization?
14. The title *Few Blue Skies* suggests that moments of hope are rare but meaningful. Which scenes best represent those "blue skies," and why are they important to the novel's overall message?