

DISCUSSION & PROJECT GUIDE

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SURVIVING SANTIAGO

by Lyn Miller-Lachmann

LEXILE INFO:

Lexile Measure: 690L

ABOUT THE BOOK

Returning to her homeland of Santiago, Chile, is the last thing that Tina Aguilar wants to do during the summer of her sixteenth birthday. It has taken eight years for her to feel comfort and security in America with her mother and her new husband. And it has been eight years since she has last seen her father.

Despite insisting on the visit, Tina's father spends all his time focused on politics and alcohol rather than connecting with Tina, making his betrayal from the past continue into the present. Tina attracts the attention of a mysterious stranger, but the hairpin turns he takes her on may push her over the edge of truth and discovery.

The tense, final months of the Pinochet regime in 1989 provide the backdrop for author Lyn Miller-Lachmann's suspenseful tale of the survival and redemption of the Aguilar family, first introduced in the critically acclaimed *Gringolandia*.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



LYN MILLER-LACHMANN is the author of *Gringolandia* (a 2010 ALA Best Book for Young Adults) and *Rogue*. She has an M.F.A. in Writing for Children and Young Adults from Vermont College of Fine Arts and an M.S. in Library and Information Science from the University of Wisconsin. She is the former editor of *MultiCultural Review* and has taught English, social studies, and Jewish studies. She is the assistant host of *Vientos del Pueblo*, a bilingual radio show featuring Latin American and Spanish music, poetry, and history. She grew up in Houston and currently lives in New York with her family. You can visit her online at lynmillerlachmann.com.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

On page 3, Tina states that “Papá loved me, and his love made me brave.” Consider her words. Describe the level of trust and security Papá provided for Tina at that time in her life.

Explain why stating that people shouldn’t have to live in the *poblaciones*, shantytowns, might cause someone to get beat up in the days before the plebiscite (pg. 23).

When gripping Frankie’s waist on his motorcycle, Tina comments that she likes “...holding on to something that’s solid and not broken” (pg. 54). List the people, relationships, and animals in her life that are broken, as well as ways that she is emotionally broken, too.

Consider the characters’ deepest desires. Describe what Tina, Frankie, and Papá want. List the characters’ thoughts, actions, and behaviors that reveal their innermost needs and desires. Predict how their relationships help or hinder their quest to get what they want.

On page 78, Ernesto describes a time when Papá was on the air for thirty-five hours straight during the plebiscite. Explore his motivation to do so. What does this action reveal about Papá’s character?

Ernesto tells Tina that her father is on a suicide watch (pg. 83). List possible reasons for Papá’s suicidal tendencies. Are they justifiable? Explain your answer.

Tina explains to Frankie that girls have “value for themselves” in America (pg. 93). Compare Tina and Frankie’s cultural experiences. List the similarities between the two. Contrast them by describing their cultural differences.

Explore Frankie’s physical response when Tina tells him that there are things that she likes about her father (pg. 129). Explain what his rapid blinking reveals about his emotional response to her words. Predict why he is feeling the way that he is in this scene. What is the message behind the behavior?

Examine Frankie’s angry mood swing on page 142. Identify the reasons for his reaction to Tina’s accusations regarding her suspicions about his relationship with Sofia. Is Tina’s behavior justifiable? Explain your answer.

After investigating Frankie’s involvement with Sofia, Papá suggests that, perhaps, “...he may not be who he says he is” (pg. 163). Consider the evidence that supports Papá’s assumption. List scenarios during which Frankie’s behavior conflicted with his apparent intent to be true to Tina. Explain the motivations behind the complexity of his character.

After essentially saying that killing Tina’s father can be arranged, Frankie laughs, as if his words were comical (pg. 174). Examine the action in this scene. Is Frankie gaining control of Tina’s better judgment? Or is his encouragement for her to be more light-hearted justified? Explain your answer.

Explain why Frankie tells Tina to “Forget about the demonstration” (pg. 193). Discuss why Tina seems willing to do so.

At the moment when Frankie seems compelled to leave Papá for dead, he responds to Tina’s questioning by saying, “I need you, Tina. I do love –” (pg. 213). Explain why Frankie seems conflicted. Define the difference between ‘need’ and ‘love.’ Which inspired Frankie’s willingness to transport Papá to the hospital – Frankie’s need for Tina or his love for her?

In the shadows of Santiago’s impressive high-rises, broken and alone, Tina is reduced to become a beggar (pg. 245-6). Juxtapose this act of desperation with her earlier explanation that an American girl has ‘value for themselves.’ Discuss the irony of her situation. Explore the difficulty of owning a sense of dignity and loving oneself when their basic needs are not being met.

On page 274, Papá is a battered and broken man, hardly a physical threat for a strong young man like Frankie. This being so, explain why, in this scene, Frankie is resistant to meet Papá eyes while saying, “Please don’t hurt me, sir.”

Explore the phrase, “Maybe love is stronger than all our strength” (pg. 292). Discuss the power of love as it is revealed in *Surviving Santiago* – love of country, family, of others, and for oneself.

In the end, did Tina, Frankie, and Papá get what they wanted? How so? Explore how their relationships brought out the best, or the worst, in one another.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS ALIGNMENT:

English Language Arts Standards » Reading: Literature – RL.7.1, RL.7.2, RL.7.6, RL.7.7, RL.7.10, RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.6, RL.8.10, RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.2, RL.9-10.3, RL.9-10.10, RL.11-12.1, RL.11-12.2

English Language Arts Standards » Speaking & Listening – SL.7.1, .SL.7.2, SL.7.4, SL.8.1, SL.8.2, SL.8.4, SL.9-10.1, SL.11-12.1

DEFINING TERMS:

Prior to reading *SURVIVING SANTIAGO*, state your previous understanding of the terms below. Define the words and phrases by describing them in political, social, and/or historical context. Explain how reading the novel enhanced your awareness of the social and political issues Chileans suffered during the Pinochet Dictatorship.

- Plebiscite
- Activists
- Dictatorship
- Democracy
- Subversive
- Blacklist
- Human rights violation
- Freedom

CREATE A SURVIVING SANTIAGO TIMELINE OF EVENTS:

Research the topics below, noting key dates, individuals and events by summarizing each in a two or three sentence paragraph. Using an online Timeline Creator, transfer information as directed. Upon completion, share and discuss your *SURVIVING SANTIAGO* Timeline of Events with classmates. Analyze the events as represented in history, as well as in the novel.

- The life and death of Jaime Jorge Guzman
- The Manuel Rodríguez Patriotic Front
- The 1986 Pinochet Assassination Attempt
- The Chilean Constitution of 1980
- The Chilean Economic Crisis of 1982-83
- The life and death of Rodrigo Rojas de Negri
- The Chicago Boys
- The Military Dictatorship of Pinochet – 1973 to 1990
- The 1988 Plebiscite
- The 1973 coup
- ‘Gorillas in the Mist’ (1988)
- ‘The Godfather’ (1972)
- Pink Floyd’s ‘The Wall’ (1982)
- Metallica’s ‘Master of Puppets’ (1986)

REFERENCE.:

Timeline. (n.d.). Retrieved May 12, 2015, from –
http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/timeline_2/

SURVIVING SANTIAGO AND THE ARTS:

Research each topic with the intent of discovering how they contribute to the thematic structure or characterization development occurring in the novel. Consider the themes of social issues, self-esteem, love, sex, and civil rights in your analysis. Write an informative essay in which thematic connections between a topic below and plot threads in *SURVIVING SANTIAGO* are defined.

- The film ‘Gorillas in the Mist’
- The film ‘The Godfather’
- *Romeo and Juliet*
- Metallica’s ‘Master of the Puppets’
- Pink Floyd’s ‘The Wall’
- “The ‘Minus World’ in the video game Super Mario Bros”

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS ALIGNMENT:

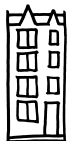
English Language Arts Standards » Reading: Literature – RL.7.1, RL.7.2, RL.7.4, RL.7.10, RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.2, RL.8.10, RL.9-10.1, L.9-10.2, RL.9-10.4, RL.11-12.1, RL.11-12.2, RL.11-12.4

English Language Arts Standards » Reading: Literature – W.7.2, W.8.2, W.9-10.2, W.11-12.2

English Language Arts Standards » History/Social Studies – RH.6-8.2, RH.6-8.4, RH.6-8.7, RH.6-8.10, RH.9-10.3, RH.9-10.2, RH.9-10.4, RH.9-10.10, RH.11-12.2, RH.11-12.4, RH.11-12.4



Guide written by author DEB GONZALES, a former classroom teacher, school administrator, and educational consultant. She earned her MFA in writing for children and young adults from the Vermont College of Fine Arts and has published several early-readers. To review the wide variety of guides she’s created, access her website at www.debbiegonzales.com.



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