



Colorado Book Club Resource

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR AFTERLIFE BY JULIA ALVAREZ

1. How is Antonia affected by both the death of her husband, grief of course, but also her retirement?
2. Antonia thinks that should she return to writing; she wants it "to come from that deeper, hurting place." What does she mean? Why must the creative endeavor come from a painful place? And where is "that" place located? In memory, in the psyche, in the soul? In other words, where does creativity come from?
3. Describe Antonia's relationship with her sisters. Their lives have been to some extent ensconced in privilege: they have never had to face the dehumanizing fear and oppression confronting Maria and Estela. Why have they been protected?
4. How does Antonia begin to realize the current life of young migrants and the daily anxieties they must cope with? Consider the sheriff and even Antonia's neighbors.
5. Does Antonia rise to the level of a savior, or does she hesitate, hemming and hawing, hoping to keep a distance between her new friends' problems. She reminds us that "just because she's Latina, doesn't automatically confer on her the... inclinations of a Mother Teresa." What do you think Antonia's moral obligations are? What would yours be in her shoes?
6. Trace the ways in which Antonia begins to define what it means to care for others—starting from the platitudes of self-care to eventually realizing her responsibility to those around her.
7. *Afterlife* asks us to consider what our obligations as humans are to one another. Does this leave you with a sense of hope for our fractured world... or not?
8. What role does Antonia's love for literature play in this novel? How does it offer her consolation and help her find her place in the larger world? What about you? Does literature provide you solace, does it reveal a vision of your better self and offer a path forward for living it?

Questions by LitLovers.



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