DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR ARISTOTLE AND DANTE DISCOVER THE SECRETS OF THE UNIVERSE BY BENJAMIN ALIRE SAENZ

1. Aristotle (Ari) Mendoza is one of four children. His two older sisters and his older brother no longer live at home. Describe his relationship with his siblings. Why does he feel like the family mascot?
2. How does Ari meet Dante? Compare and contrast their personalities.
3. Why do Ari and Dante become friends? What personality traits does Ari most admire in Dante and why?
4. Does Ari have a close relationship with his parents? How does his relationship with his mother differ from his relationship with his father?
5. Where is Ari's older brother Bernardo, and how is the family impacted by Bernardo's absence?
6. Why is Ari's father distant and how does he manage to deal with his emotional state? How does his wife justify his emotional distance?
7. How does Ari save Dante's life and at what personal cost? Why does Ari feel angry after the accident? How does Ari's relationship with his parents change after the accident?
8. Tragedy sometimes sets the stage for families to discuss topics that are long overdue. In what way does the accident help Ari better understand his parents? How does it help his parents come to know him better?
9. Why does Ari feel angry after the accident? By what rules does he insist that he and Dante play in regards to the accident? Why does he insist on these rules?
10. Dante is an artist and shares his sketchbook with Ari shortly after the accident. Why does Ari not look at the drawings? Why does he eventually do so?
11. Why do Ari's parents buy him a pickup? Would they have done so prior to the accident? Why or why not?
12. How does Ari feel about Dante's family moving to Chicago for one school year? How do the two stay connected during this time?
13. During their year apart, how do both Ari and Dante grow? Explain.

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14. Who are Gina Naverro and Susie Byrd? How does Ari develop a friendship with them?

15. Ari becomes obsessed with kissing a classmate named Ileana. What role does Ileana play in the story? Is Ari in love with her?

16. Ari's and Dante's parents become good friends. Are they good parents? Support your response with evidence from the text.

17. In what way is a sparrow a symbol in the story?

18. Is Ari a responsible teen? Support your response with examples.

19. Ari is curious about his brother; however, he refuses to open an envelope that contains information about his brother that he finds tucked away in a drawer. Why does he not open the folder?

20. Ari's mother leaves for a few days to care for an ailing aunt. How does his aunt's death impact Ari's parents? What does Ari learn about her, and his own family, after her death? How does this information impact him?

21. When Dante is beaten up for kissing a boy, Ari seeks revenge on Dante's tormentors. Why does his revenge scare his parents? Is their fear justified? Why or why not?

22. How does Ari resolve his feelings for Dante? How does he resolve his feelings about his own self worth?

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