

Pedro's Theory: Reimagining the Promised Land

Reading Group Guide

1. White privilege and superiority play an early theme in *Pedro's Theory*, especially with regard to language. How have these themes shaped the author's experience? What can be learned from the interaction Marcos's teacher has with him ("Do not speak that language here. Am I making myself clear?") at a very young and impressionable age?
2. Much of Gonzalez's writing is an attempt to understand his younger selves and possible other selves he could have been. Does he succeed in portraying these various selves? Do you see his understanding of himself change over the course of the book? What does "identity" mean in *Pedro's Theory*?
3. How does the concept of "absence," physical or emotional, affect Marcos's upbringing and his relationship with his family?
4. How is language treated as a means of cultural eradication in *Pedro's Theory*? Are there ways in which acquiring a new language can be harmful? Alternatively, can language acquisition be a way to free oneself from one's past? What can we learn today about the way in which language and culture should be taught? How has Marcos been impacted by his ties to Spanish and English?
5. Photographs are important to Gonzalez and recur throughout *Pedro's Theory*. But they are not always an accurate depiction of life, as seen in moments such as when Gonzalez notices how there are no photographs of his mother and grandmother together. What does Gonzalez's writing reveal that the photographs do not?
6. Who does David symbolize? How does David's theory leave its subject in a never-ending cycle of "damned if you do, damned if you don't"? In a general sense, how does it unfairly stereotype and shame people of color?
7. Marcos writes, "The cultures we live in create the bully. Bullies are not some miraculous thing that emerges from the void. They are products of a greater evil." Where do bullies come from? Is there something to be learned about the art of parenting in *Pedro's Theory*? How could future generations benefit from this book?
8. When Marcos talks about how his town robbed him of a childhood, what does he mean? How do you define childhood? How does a physical location connect and shape a person's perspective of the world as they grow up?
9. Themes of appearance and queerness also play a role in *Pedro's Theory*. Marcos writes of his arrival in New York, "I don't have to be that everyday Pedro anymore." What does he mean by this? How has Marcos's metaphor of "Pedro" shaped his outlook on life, especially in regards to assimilation?

10. Is the idea of a “Promised Land” fluid? Can it change over time? Why or why not? Where do you believe Marcos’s Promised Land is, if it exists at all?
11. What is it that finally changes Marcos’s mind about giving up on and distancing himself from his father? By the end of *Pedro’s Theory*, what has Marcos come to believe is best in its place?
12. By the end of *Pedro’s Theory*, how has Marcos reconciled with his identity and his family?