



PILAR RAMIREZ

AND THE ESCAPE FROM ZAFa

Discussion Guide

The Land of Stories meets Dominican myths come to life in this blockbuster contemporary middle-grade fantasy duology.

“A breathtaking journey through a world teeming with fantasy and history—readers better hold on tight as Pilar swings into her next adventure.”

—**Kwame Mbalia**,
#1 *New York Times*
bestselling author of
the Tristan Strong series

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Julian Randall is a Living Queer Black poet from Chicago. His poetry and essays are published in *The New York Times Magazine*, *Poetry*, *The Atlantic*, and *Vibe*. He is the recipient of a Pushcart Prize. Julian holds an MFA in Poetry from Ole Miss. His first book, *Refuse*, won the Cave Canem Poetry Prize and was a finalist for an NAACP Image Award. He was also a contributor to the #1 *New York Times*-bestseller *Black Boy Joy*. Julian has previously worked as a youth mentor, teaching writing workshops to children on house arrest. *Pilar Ramirez and the Escape from Zafa* is his debut children's novel. Follow him on Twitter @JulianThePoet.



Discussion Questions

1. Pilar loves making movies and capturing memories. Why do you think she enjoys doing this? Do you have a hobby that is special to you?
2. Pilar's dream is to be a famous director, and she is inspired by famous directors like Mira Paredes. Do you have someone who inspires you and that you look up to?
3. In this book, there is emphasis on maintaining memories and keeping them close, especially with Pilar keeping memories through her videos and being passionate about keeping the memory alive of those who went missing. Why do you think this is emphasized? How do you keep track of memories?
4. When Pilar fell into the magical world of Zafa, all she had with her was her trusty camera. If you fell into a magic world, what's the one thing you would want to bring with you?
5. Before reading this book, did you know anything about Dominican mythology? What is your favorite part of mythology from this book?
6. Did you know anything about Dominican Republican history, such as the Trujillo dictatorship and the Mirabal sisters? What part from history interested you the most?
7. What was the Trujillo dictatorship? How did it impact Pilar's family and the world of Zafa? Why do you think this dictator made people like Natasha "disappear"?
8. Both Pilar and Natasha express frustration over secrets being kept from them by their families. How would you feel in this situation? Do you understand why their family did this?
9. Pilar describes Carmen as her sister from another world. What do you think of their relationship? What do they learn about themselves and each other by being friends? Do you have a similar friendship?
10. Carmen talks about how she takes too much initiative and has difficulty accepting help from others, especially during a "Capture the Flag" exercise. Why do you think this is not a great quality? How did she learn and grow from this?
11. Pilar struggles with having people pronouncing her name wrong all of the time, and instead tries to go by the nickname "Purp." In response to this, Carmen says, "It's fine to have a name you want to be called, pero make sure that it's for you, y'know? It doesn't make much sense to me that you changed your name to accommodate *other people's* ignorance." Do you agree with what Carmen said? What's the significance of this?
12. Pilar's determined to connect with her Dominican heritage through the stories of her Mami's and Abuela's roots in the Dominican Republic. Does your family have a story that connects you to somewhere else?