



**Discussion Questions for
Summer of the Mariposas
by Guadalupe Garcia McCall**

Chapters 1–12

1. Think about each of the sisters in *Summer of the Mariposas* as they are introduced. What is a defining personality trait for each? How do you know? Use examples from the story to support your answer.
2. One of McCall's strengths as a writer lies in her use of descriptive language. What words and phrases does she use to set the scene in chapter 3? What mood is this description meant to evoke for the reader?
3. How is the element of disguise used in the story? By which characters, and to what end?
4. Research the legend of La Llorona. Which version of the story did McCall choose to use? Why do you think she chose that version?
5. The five sisters, or *cinco hermanitas*, have a special code that they respect when they are together. What are some of the rules of this code? Have you ever had some kind of code that you adhered to with siblings or close friends? What were some of the rules of your code?
6. The name Odilia means "fortunate or prosperous in battle." Why do you think McCall chose this name for the main character?
7. Odilia knows that the trip to Mexico will be dangerous, and she tries to stop her sisters from going at first. Do you think she made the right decision to go with them? What would you have done differently, if you were in her shoes?
8. What is Lotería? How do you play? What is the significance of the game in the story? To the way the book is structured? Pick three of the Lotería cards in the chapter headings and explain how they relate to what happens in the chapters.
9. After reading chapter 5, what was your opinion of Velia and Delia? Of Pita? How did your opinion evolve over the course of the story?

10. What is the reaction of Gabriel Pérdido's family when the sisters return his body? Do the girls expect this reaction? Did you? Why or why not?

12. What does Teresita foretell for the sisters? What is the Evil Trinity? What do the sisters have to do to protect themselves? What does Teresita mean when she says, "There are too many demons yet to be faced, too many tears yet to be shed"?

Chapters 12–22

1. How has Pita changed by the end of chapter 12? Use examples from the story to support your answer.

2. Who was Huitzilopochtli? Why does the *nagual* reference him?

3. How does McCall use foreshadowing to make readers question Chencho's true identity?

4. What important information do the sisters learn in chapter 15? How does this information change the way they view themselves?

5. What advice do the girls receive in chapter 16? How do they interpret this advice? How did you interpret this advice?

6. Where does the beginning of Chapter 17 take place? How do you know?

7. Who are the roses really for? Why? What effect do the roses have when they are delivered to the right recipient?

8. What are mariposas? What is the importance of mariposas in the story? What do they symbolize? Why does the Virgen call Odilia and her mother mariposas?

9. In the final scene, what does Odilia mean when she says that Papá has brought a present that the girls cannot see?

10. One recurring theme throughout the novel is forgiveness. Find three instances where forgiveness is asked for or granted. Do you think the girls' opinions about forgiveness change throughout the book? Why or why not?

11. *Summer of the Mariposas* is written in a style called magical realism. What do you think "magical realism" means? Do you think that is a good term to describe this story? What are some magical elements found throughout *Summer of the Mariposas*?

Additional Questions: Comparisons with Homer's *The Odyssey*

1. Compare the use of the element of disguise by characters in both *Summer of the Mariposas* and Homer's *The Odyssey*. How is disguise used in each? By whom, and to what end?

2. Think about La Llorona. Which character in *The Odyssey* do you think McCall used as inspiration? How are the two characters similar?

3. Which character from *The Odyssey* do you think inspired Cecilia? Why? Use evidence from both the text and the story of *The Odyssey* to support your answer.
4. How do the events at the end of chapter 16 and the beginning of chapter 17 mirror events in *The Odyssey*? How do they differ?
5. Which character from *The Odyssey* do you think inspired the character of Sarai? What makes you think so?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Guadalupe Garcia McCall was born in Mexico and moved to Texas as a young girl, keeping close ties with family on both sides of the border. Trained in Theater Arts and English, she now teaches English/Language Arts at a junior high school. Her poems for adults have appeared in more than twenty literary journals. McCall is an up-and-coming talent whose debut YA novel, *Under the Mesquite*, won the Pura Belpré Award and was named a Morris Award finalist. McCall lives with her husband and their three sons in the San Antonio, Texas area.

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