



Teacher Companion Guide

I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter

By Erika L. Sánchez

Note about this guide

This book club teacher guide is centered around Erica L. Sánchez's book, *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*. This guide offers a short summary of each chapter and suggested discussion questions to accompany the student journal prompts. In addition, we have provided extension activities for potential deeper learning.

Note about the book

This book tells the story of Julia Reyes, a smart, brash, and rebellious teen who discovers that her sister who recently died may not have been as saintly as everyone believed. As Julia tries to uncover her sister's secrets, she also discovers secrets about her parents that help explain their strict treatment of her. The book includes discussion of sensitive topics that may be triggering for some students, including violence (a gun battle between drug dealers in Mexico, the slaughter of a pig and mention that a woman was raped), people dying while illegally crossing the U.S.-Mexico border, a teen beaten for being gay, and a character attempting suicide. We suggest teachers provide time and space for students to reflect on these topics.

Materials:

- Teacher Guide (this document)
 - [Before Reading](#): Author Bio
 - Chapter summaries, discussion questions, & extension activities
 - [Chapters 1-3](#)
 - [Chapters 4-6](#)
 - [Chapters 7-9](#)
 - [Chapters 10-12](#)
 - [Chapters 13-15](#)
 - [Chapters 16-18](#)
 - [Chapters 19-21](#)
 - [Chapters 22-24](#)
 - [Chapters 25-27](#)
 - [Chapters 28-29](#)

- [Student Journal](#)
 - Student journal prompts for each chapter grouping (sections include 3 chapters each)
 - Each entry contains an analysis prompt, creative/reflective prompt, vocabulary tracker, and additional prompts.

Before Reading

Questions to begin the book club

- What do you think of the cover of the book? What do you think this story will be about?

Brief Bio of Erika L. Sánchez

Erika L. Sánchez is the daughter of Mexican immigrants. A poet, novelist, and essayist, her debut poetry collection, *Lessons on Expulsion*, was published by Graywolf in July 2017, and was a finalist for the PEN America Open Book Award. Her debut young adult novel, *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*, published in October 2017 by Knopf Books for Young Readers, is a New York Times Bestseller and a National Book Awards finalist. Her memoir *Crying in the Bathroom* is forthcoming from Viking. (Sold to Georgia Bodnar at auction in a major deal.)

Erika was a 2017-2019 Princeton Arts Fellow, and a recent recipient of the 21st Century Award from the Chicago Public Library Foundation and a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in Poetry. She has recently been appointed the Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz Chair in the Latin American and Latino Studies Department at DePaul University and is part of the inaugural core faculty of the Randolph College Low Residency MFA Program.

Erika grew up in the Mexican working class town of Cicero, Illinois, which borders the city's southwest side. In fact, her childhood apartment was so close to Chicago that she could hit it with her shoe if she flung it out the window. (Maybe she tried this, maybe she didn't.)

As a daughter of undocumented Mexican immigrants, Erika has always been determined to defy borders of any kind. And, not surprisingly, her clothes perpetually smelled of fried tortillas when she was a child. Her role model was—and continues to be—Lisa Simpson. As a result, she was a young and sometimes overbearing (but in a cute way?) feminist and overachiever. Ever since she was a 12-year-old nerd in giant bifocals, she's dreamt of becoming a successful writer.

Erika graduated Phi Beta Kappa and Magna Cum Laude from the University of Illinois at Chicago, then went onto Madrid, Spain on a Fulbright Scholarship. There, she wrote poems late into the night, taught English at a secondary school, and ate a medley of delicious cured meats. After her scholarship, Erika moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico where she received an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of New Mexico. She did not love Albuquerque but was pleased with the clear skies and ample parking. She graduated with distinction.

Chapters 1-3

Summary	The book opens with Julia at her sister Olga's funeral. We learn that Olga was killed after being struck by a semi-truck on her way home from work. We're introduced to Julia's family-- she lives with her mother and father who are illegal immigrants from Mexico, they live in a small apartment. After the funeral, Julia and her parents are struggling to cope with the loss of her sister. We learn about the strained relationship between Julia and her mother, that her father and her don't speak often, and that Julia feels most of her family doesn't like her. Julia often compares herself to her sister and notes how her sister was a perfect Mexican daughter (living at home still, working, cleaning and cooking around the house, etc.) whereas Julia is not perfect (she gets in trouble at school, her parents don't like her friends, and all she wants is to get away from her current life after she graduates high school). When Julia is in her sister's room one night, she discovers a prescription slip with "I love you" written on the back, along with a hotel key card, and lingerie. This sparks Julia's interest and she's determined to learn more about her sister's life.
Discussion Questions	● Chapter 1 ○ What does Julia think of her sister? How do you think they got along? ○ Why do you think she says it's easier to be angry at her sister than feel sad? ○ Julia mentions that her moods shift all the time, what do you think could cause that? ○ How did Olga die? Why might Julia feel some sort of responsibility in her sister's death? ● Chapter 2 ○ How is Julia's family-- her mom, dad, and herself-- coping after the funeral? ○ What do Julia's parent's do for work? Why do you think they have these jobs? Why can't her parents visit their family in Mexico? ○ What type of party does Julia's mom decide to throw for her? Why do you think she's throwing this party? How does Julia react? ○ What does Julia find in her sister's room that surprises her? ● Chapter 3 ○ Julia's English teacher says he is going to teach them "standard English... the language of power." What does he mean by this? What does he say about other forms of English? Do you agree that standard English is a language of power? Why or why not? ○ Why do you think Julia and her mom have such a strained relationship? Do you think they understand each other? Why or why not? ○ Do you think Julia hopes for a better relationship with her mom? Why or why not? ○ Do you think it's right for Julia to blame herself for her strained relationship with her parents? ○ Why do you think Julia told the waitress at the diner that her sister died? What do you think of the man who paid for Julia's diner bill... Do you think that was a good thing for him to do? How does Julia pay it forward? ○ What does Julia want for her future?
Possible Extension Activity	Look at the different literature and art references Julia mentions in the chapters ● Literature

	○ The Awakening, by Kate Chopin (p. 19) ○ Like Water for Chocolate, by Laura Esquivel (p. 20) ○ The House of Bernada Alba, by Federico García Lorca (p. 26) ● Art ○ The Last Supper (p. 17) ■ There are many versions of the last supper. This link takes you to several ones that are at the Art Institute of Chicago ○ Nighthawks, by Edward Hopper (p. 38) ○ Judith Slaying Holofernes, by Artemisia Gentileschi (p. 43) ○ Anna Maria Dashwood, later Marchioness of Ely, by Sir Thomas Lawrence (p. 45) ○ The Old Guitarist by Pablso Picasso (p. 45) ○ Cybertenetic Lobster Telephone by Salvador Dali (p. 45)
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Chapters 4-6

Summary	In these chapters Julia tries to learn more about her sister. First she goes to her sister's best friend, Angie, and asks her questions. But Angie, who has been distraught since Olga's death, doesn't help Julia with any information, instead she asks Julia why she cares so much about Olga all of the sudden, and only after her death. Julia also visits with her best friend Lorena who tries to help her search for some more information on Olga. In Julia's interactions with Lorena, we learn about Lorena's father who died when crossing the border back into the U.S. and Lorena's step-father who has sexually assaulted her. In chapter six, Julia attends a family party and we learn more about the cultural traditions of her family and different family members.
Discussion Questions	● Chapter 4 ○ Who is Angie and why does Julia go to visit her? Does she learn anything from Angie? What do you think about Angie? ○ How does Julia compare her family and family's apartment to Angie and Angie's family? ○ Why do people call Julia "sensitive" (p. 49-50)? Is this meant as an attack at her? Why or why not? ● Chapter 5 ○ How is Lorena's family different from Julias? Which family can you identify with more? ○ What happened to Lorena's dad? How does Lorena talk about her dad? Do you think Lorena blames her dad for dying? Do you agree with her? ○ What do we learn about Lorena's mom's boyfriend, Jose Luis? ○ At the end of the chapter, Julia has her first kiss. Afterwards, the boy she kisses fist-bumps his friend and is told a congratulatory "good job." Why does this bother Julia? Do you think the boys should have done that? ● Chapter 6 ○ Julia attends a family party in this chapter and we learn about her extended family. What did you learn? Who is Tio Bigotes? Paloma? Tio Cayetano? Freddy and Alicia? How does Julia feel around her family members? Why do you think she feels this way? ○ Why do you think Julia isn't confident in her Spanish speaking? How does this affect her relationship with her family? ○ What do you think Freddy and Alicia meant when they said "we need more people like you in college"? ○ Do you think Julia is struggling to be accepted by her family? Or is she struggling against her family's traditions/culture? ○ Julia shares about her strange dream at the end of the chapter? Can you make any sense of it?
Possible Extension Activity	Explore illegal immigration and the coyote experience Use the below resources and others that you can find, to inform your students on the experience of crossing the US-Mexico border with a Coyote like Julia's parents did. ● Article about coyotes working the border during coronavirus ○ In this article a man in Honduras who acts as a coyote smuggling people to the U.S. is interviewed ● A day in the life of a coyote ○ This interview has a short video explaining a typical day for a coyote

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How much it costs to cross the border<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ This article looks into the increasing prices individuals are paying smugglers to help them cross the border and the consequences those immigrants experience for having to pay so much |
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Chapters 7-9

Summary	In these chapters, Julia is introduced to Lorena's new friend who invites them to a party. Julia met one of her sister's old friends at this party who gave her some information that confirmed her suspicion that something just wasn't adding up. In chapter 8, Julia also went to work with her mother and spent all day with her cleaning houses. She left there tired and in pain from the work. In Chapter 9, Julia decided to go to the school dance so she could go to the afterparty. She wanted to see if one of Olga's friends would be there. She went shopping for a dress with her mother that didn't go well. At the school dance and afterparty, Julia didn't come any closer to finding any more information because she didn't see her sister's friend. Julia gets in trouble for being out, and on top of that she hasn't been able to sleep. Julia's favorite teacher questions her about how she is doing, because she doesn't look well. Her mother does the same.
Discussion Questions	● Chapter 7 ○ Who is Lorena's new friend in school and what nickname does he go by? ○ Lorena told Julia to lie to her mother so they could attend a masquerade party. What did she tell Julia to tell her mother? ○ What do you think about the way Julia and her friends get to and from the party? ○ Who is Jazmyn and how might she be significant? ● Chapter 8 ○ Amá asked Julia to come with her to clean houses. What was Julia's experience when cleaning? ○ Julia's mom asked her how things were going in school and she lied and said things were okay. Why do you think she lied? What are Julia's true feelings about school— what does she like and dislike about it? ○ By the time Julia got on the bus she was tired and in pain. What exactly did she say bothered her? ● Chapter 9 ○ Why does Julia decide to go to the school dance? ○ After trying on 20 dresses, Julia finally finds one she likes. Did her mother like it? What did her mother say? ○ Julia is tired of people telling her how she should act and look. She said in a year and a half that that will change. What is supposed to happen in a year and a half? ○ Julia fell asleep on the couch at the afterparty. What time does she wake up? What does she say this means? ○ Julia asked Mr. Ingman, her favorite teacher, if the feeling of losing his mom ever went away. What was his response?
Possible Extension Activity	Listen to a short interview with Erika Sanchez ● 9-minute interview on NPR ○ In this interview Erika explains a little about her own life and why she is not a perfect Mexican daughter. She explores how her own experience as a daughter of an immigrant mother inspired Julia's story ● Questions after listening ○ Erika mentions that growing up she butted heads with her mother a lot. What did she say the reason for that? ○ She says in the interview that her book was rejected by a lot of agents.

	Why? ○ Erika speaks about the mental illness she suffers from. What is it?
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Chapters 10-12

Summary	After spending the holidays with her family, Julia went on an outdoor field trip with her class. Julia gets into an argument with her best friend and has a serious discussion with Mr. Ingman. In Chapter 11, Julia decides to go to her sister's college to try to get her transcripts. In Chapter 12, Julia and her mom are getting ready for quinceanera. Meanwhile, Lorena and she go get something to eat. She also asks Lorena to get Maribel's number. After she leaves Lorena's, she is harassed by some guys in a car, when an old man comes to her rescue. When she finally gets Maribel's number, she calls her to get Jazmyn's number. She gets another clue in her search from Jazmyn.
Discussion Questions	● Chapter 10 ○ Julia is feisty and clever, but she can also be difficult and judgmental (as Lorena points out). What do you think about Julia? Is it hard to like her? ○ Where did Julia spend the holidays? What did they eat? ○ What did Pasqual say to Julia about how she looks? What did you think of this? ○ Mr. Ingman told Julia that he thinks she needs to talk to a "professional". What was her response? ● Chapter 11 ○ Julia believes that Angie isn't going to tell her anything about her sister. What does she think is the reason? ○ What did the middle-aged woman at Olga's college tell Julia when she tried to get sister's transcripts? Do you think the woman was being fair? ● Chapter 12 ○ Julia said that she had been to many quinceaneras, and they all were the same. What were the similarities? ○ How are Julia's parents going to pay for her quinceanera? Why does this make Julia feel guilty? ○ Lorena showed up at Julia's house and told her something about her Juanga. What did she tell her? ○ Julia tells Lorena that she hates her life and sometimes wishes she were dead. Why did Julia say that? How did Lorena respond? Do you think she should have responded this way? ○ The old man told Julia that she looked like she had seen 'El Cucuy'. How did she describe what that was?
Possible Extension Activity	Watch an Interview with Erika L. Sanchez ● 10-Minute interview with Erika Sanchez ○ In this interview, Erika explains her inspiration for writing the book and her love of writing ● Questions for discussion ○ In high school, Erika found a book she felt was written about people like her. What was the name of the book? ○ Erika said a quote by her favorite writer of all time. Who was the quote from? What do you think of this quote? ○ Erika said that writing literally saved her life. Why did she say that?

Chapters 13-15

Summary	In chapter 13, Julia has her Quinceanera party, which turns out to be disastrous: she hates her dress and the silly traditions of the party, she loses her control and yells at her aunt, and she is entirely frustrated by the event. Julia's guilt, anxiety, and depression are really starting to unravel her. After her party, her parents confront her about yelling at her aunt, and her mother finally expresses what Julia has known she was thinking: her mom asks Julia if she ever considered whether her sister would still be alive if Julia behaved better. In Chapter 14, Julia starts to work with Mr. Ingman on her college applications. She also meets a boy, Connor, at a bookshop and starts a relationship with him. Connor is White and comes from a wealthy family, but the two of them have fun with each other, trying new things and visiting different parts of the city. In Chapter 15, Julia and Connor continue their relationship and she decides to lose her virginity to him. She also discovers the key her mother was hiding in the freezer and goes into Olga's room to take the lingerie, hotel key, and laptop. Amá finds the lingerie in Julia's closet and they have an argument. Julia and Connor don't see each other for several weeks and he tells her that although he wants to be her boyfriend, he doesn't know how to help her. Julia feels that nobody cares about her or understands her.
Discussion Questions	● Chapter 13 ○ What upsets Julia so much about the quincineanera? Do you think she feels guilty? Do you think she's angry at her parents for throwing the party? ○ What are some of the traditional practices that take place during the party? Why does Julia feel like they are all insincere and silly? How do her parents react to the different traditions? ○ During their argument, Julia's mom refers to her as "her father's daughter," do you think this bothers Julia? Why? ● Chapter 14 ○ Chapter fourteen starts after the summer break. Do you think there is a change in Julia's tone? Does she seem any different from where we last saw her after her quinceanera? ○ Mr. Ingram prefers the word "undocumented" to "illegal." Do you think there is a difference in those terms? Why or why not? Do you have a preference? ○ Who is Connor and how does Julia meet him? Why do you think she seems to like him so much? How do you think their relationship will evolve? ○ Julia tells Connor that she didn't know her sister that well when she was alive but wants to get to know her now. She says it's probably "a little too late." Do you agree with her? Why or why not? ● Chapter 15 ○ Do you think the way Julia and her family are coping with Olga's death almost a year later is healthy? Do you think they could be doing anything else that would help them? ○ Julia says that happiness is something she can't grasp, even though she tries to move towards it. Why do you think this is? ○ What are some ways Connor and Julia are similar? How are they different? Do you think their differences matter? Do you think Connor

	understands Julia and vice-versa? ○ Julia becomes interested in having sex with Connor, but has to seek out advice from Lorena because she doesn't know anything about sex. How has culture and religion contributed to Julia's sexual ignorance? ○ How did you respond when Amá finds Olga's items in Julia's closet? How do you think Julia felt? What about Amá? Why do you think Julia didn't tell her mom the truth (was it because she didn't think her mom would believe her or do you think she was protecting her sister's perfect image?)?
Possible Extension Activity	Explore life in the 1920's compared to now Julia and Connor discuss the Great Gatsby and how life back in the 1920's was difficult for most people. Julia says she probably wouldn't have been enjoying parties and instead would have been in the kitchen or cleaning back then. Explore how much or how little life has changed since the 1920's. What barriers do immigrants face today? Is the American dream possible? ● History Channel ○ This webpage gives a good overview of the biggest cultural aspects of the 1920's. Read through it as a class and ask students to compare the changes/progress that happened then to what is happening currently in American culture ● Immigration in the 1920's ○ This website goes takes a look at immigration policies during the 1920's and life for immigrants then

Chapters 16-18

Summary	In chapter 16, Julia's life is spiraling. She has been locked up in her room for weeks, she no longer talks to Connor, is no longer meeting with Mr. Ingman, and doesn't see any friends. She talks about feeling like she is suffocating and decides to take the bus downtown after school without a destination in mind. She finds herself at a park and while she's sitting there, she can't bring herself to stand up and leave. In chapter 17, Julia wakes up in the hospital after cutting her wrists in an attempt at suicide. Amá and Apá are at the hospital and show concern over Julia. Julia stays over night and meets with Dr. Cooke who talks to her about her depression. She starts taking medication and agrees to an out-patient program for a week. In Chapter 18, Julia completes her outpatient therapy program where she meets some other teens struggling with other challenges. Julia returns to school and takes a more positive approach to building a friendship with Juanga. Julia's parents decide they are going to send her to Mexico for a week to be with her grandma but she worries about missing more school given her college apps. At the end of the chapter, Julia gets into her sister's computer and finds emails between Olga and a married man she had a relationship with.
Discussion Questions	● Chapter 16 ○ Do you think Amá has a right to go through Julia's room? Why or why not? If not, is there ever a time when a parent or someone should be able to look through another person's things? What about Julia looking through her sister's room? ○ Do you think Amá's treatment of Julia is having the opposite effect than she hopes for? How so? ○ Julia feels like her life is spiraling and wonders whether she's really living life. She says it feels like never-ending punishment. Do you think there is anything she could do to help her situation? What can someone do if they're feeling this low? ● Chapter 17 ○ Julia attempts suicide because she feels like life can't get better. Do you think her life can get better? Why and how? ○ Were you expecting Julia to attempt suicide? Explain. Do you think she actually thinks what she did was stupid, like she tells Dr. Cooke? ○ Julia says she feels stupid and weak when she cries. Why might Julia feel that way? Do you think crying is a sign of either of those things? ○ Dr. Cooke points out that maybe Julia's parents have some trauma of their own as a result of leaving Mexico (and likely not being able to go back because of their undocumented status). Do you think that's possible? Do you think that explains any of their actions or behavior? ● Chapter 18 ○ Why do you think Amá and Apá think it's a good idea to send Julia to Mexico for a stay with her grandma? Do you think this would help her? ○ When Julia returns to school, she seems to start to get along with Juanga. Why do you think she's able to see him as a friend now? ○ Julia says that she didn't let Connor actually break up with her because she already knew it was coming... because she's too much to handle. Do you think that's true? Do you think Connor wanted to break up with her or do you think Julia got in her own way?

	○ Julia discovers emails between her sister and a married man and gets angry at her sister's secret life. Do you think she has a right to be angry? Did Olga's secret life affect Julia's life?
Possible Extension Activity	Explore mental health resources After reading about Julia's suicide attempt, it may be a good idea to use some time to identify and discuss mental health resources available for teens. There are resources included at the end of the book, but there are additional ones below. ● JED Foundation ○ Great resources on "what to do if" and improving emotional well-being ● National Suicide Prevention Lifeline ● Press Pause ○ Press Pause is a campaign that features a series of PSAs and resources focused on simple mindfulness techniques to help manage common stresses and emotional challenges. There are some great short videos on how to manage depression that can be shown to your class ● National Institute on Mental Health ○ Great information on what depression is, signs and symptoms, and how to get help

Chapters 19-21

Summary	In these chapters, Julia is visiting her family in Mexico. She learns some surprising things about her parents that she didn't know before-- her father was an artist and her mother was rebellious. She cooks with her grandma, tours the town, and goes on a horseback ride with her cousin. Julia starts to see what life in Mexico is like for her family and realizes that though her family is poor in Chicago, being poor means something different in Mexico. Julia also learns that Narcos threaten the town in Mexico and that people fear them. A group of masked men with guns come to her cousin's birthday celebration and her uncle has to pay them off to leave. Julia also feels like she is treated differently by her family in Mexico. Whereas she feels like she is the pariah in Chicago, in Mexico she feels like she's treated like a celebrity.
Discussion Questions	● Chapter 19 ○ When Julia tells Tio Chucho she wants to be a writer, how does he react? Why do you think the adults in her family all seem to have the same response ("don't be a donkey", "get paid more," "make sure you have air conditioning," etc.)? ○ When Julia visits her family in Mexico they treat her very differently than her family in Chicago treats her. Why do you think that is? Do you think they actually treat her differently or is it possible it's just how Julia perceives their treatment as compared to how she perceives the treatment of her family in Chicago? ○ Why do you think Julia joins Mamá Jacinto in cooking when she doesn't cook with her mom? Do you think she liked cooking in Mexico? Why or why not? ○ What does Julia learn about her mother when talking with Mamá Jacinto? Did this surprise Julia? Did it surprise you? ● Chapter 20 ○ What does Julia learn about her father? Julia says that if she couldn't write, she'd feel like she was going to die. How might this statement help us to understand her father? ○ How does life in Mexico compare to Julia's life in Chicago? How is the neighborhood of Los Ojos similar or different from her neighborhood in Chicago? What about her family's homes? ● Chapter 21 ○ What did you think about the tradition of killing and cooking the pig at the birthday celebration? How does Julia respond to the activity? Are you familiar with any other types of celebrations from different cultures? ○ What do you think happens at the end of the birthday celebration? Why does her cousin tell Julia that she needs to stop asking so many questions? ○ Julia comes across an <i>india</i> begging for money in Los Ojos. How does she respond? What does this tell you about race and class in Mexico? Are there levels of class even within poor communities?
Possible Extension Activity	Explore Chihuahua Mexico In these chapters Julia visits family in Los Ojos, Chihuahua Mexico. Take some time to search about information and pictures of the desert of Chihuahua to paint a better picture of the book in students' minds.

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wikipedia of Chihuahua desert• Watch a short video of people visiting the Los Ojos park in Chihuahua<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Video link• At one point Julia comments that tree trunks are painted white in Los Ojos. Here's an answer as to why<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Why are trees painted white.• Mexican Culture |
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Chapters 22-24

Summary	In chapter 22, Julia is still visiting her family in Mexico. Julia meets a boy, Esteban, who she talks with and flirts with. Her grandma and aunt keep telling her that she is similar to her mother and that her mother has had a difficult life. Later, Julia learns that when her parents crossed the border, one of the coyotes raped her mother while another held her father at gunpoint. There is a shooting by the narcos in Los Ojos, so she travels back to Chicago. Her grandma sends her home with her father's drawing. In Chapter 23, Julia and her mother go out to lunch when she returns from Mexico. They have a significant conversation where her mother tells her she spoke with Mr. Ingman about how good of a student Julia is. Her mother apologizes to her and tells Julia that she loves her and just wants to protect her. Julia apologizes to her too and they start working towards a better relationship-- Amá allowing her to meet up with friends and Julia attending a church group with Amá. At the end of the chapter, Julia looks on her sister's computer again and learns that Olga was pregnant when she died. In Chapter 24, Julia visits Angie and confronts Angie about not telling her about Olga. Angie tells her that Olga just wanted to be a good daughter and didn't want to hurt her parents. Angie tells Julia she shouldn't tell her parents about Olga, but Julia says she feels like she'll explode if she keeps it to herself her whole life. Julia is tired of secrets and lies in her family. Julia later meets up with Connor and she tells him about everything that's happened, including Olga, but she isn't ready to tell him about her hospital visit.
Discussion Questions	● Chapter 22 ○ Earlier Julia mentions that since taking her medication she hasn't had an appetite or been interested in guys. Has that changed? Do you think the medication is helping her at all? ○ Do you think Julia's visit to Mexico was good for her? Do you think her parents were right in sending her? ○ What does Julia learn from her aunt about what happened to her mom and dad when they crossed the border? How does this change things for Julia? Does this information change your views on Amá or Apá? ○ Julia realizes that she doesn't really know her parents. And from the beginning of the book, she's learned that she didn't really know her sister. How can people who live in the same house not know each other? ○ After reading about Julia's visit to Los Ojos, can you relate at all to life in Mexico? How is life or culture the same or different in Mexico? What can you relate to? ● Chapter 23 ○ How has Amá's treatment of Julia changed since her return from Mexico? Do you think her new approach is better? Has Julia changed the way she treats her mom? ○ Julia learns that Olga was pregnant when she died, how does this change things for Julia? How did you react when reading that? ○ What did you think of Julia's response to the man at the church group that spoke about his gay son? ● Chapter 24 ○ Julia says that she's tired of living in all the lies of her family. How do you think that would feel? Do you think things would be better if people only spoke the truth? Do you think she should tell her parents what she

	knows about Olga? ○ Julia wonders why her sister lives the way she did (keeping secrets and hiding her relationship, school, etc. from her family). Why do you think she did? ○ Angie tells Julia that some things should never be said out loud. Do you agree? ○ Julia connects with Connor again. Do you think he's a good influence on her life?
Possible Extension Activity	Read a short 3-question interview with Erika Sanchez Here, students can get a better picture of why Sánchez included the themes of secrecy and guilt in her books, along with the reason she wanted to throw her readers into the heart of Julia's grief. ● Los Angeles Review of Books Article

Chapters 25-27

Summary	In chapter 25, Julia and Lorena go downtown to a clinic because Lorena had a pregnancy scare. Later they use money Lorena stole from her mom's boyfriend to go to a fancy seafood restaurant. Lorena tells Julia to invite Connor to meet up with them, but when he does, Lorena isn't very nice to him despite him trying to ease the tension. Later, Lorena tells Julia that Connor is rich and he probably looks down on them for being "ghetto" because "they all do." Julia feels that Lorena is wrong about Connor. In Chapter 26, Julia finds the man that her sister was seeing, Dr. Castillo, and confronts him. He takes her to a diner to talk to her. He explains that he loved Olga and that even though it took him too long to leave his wife, when he found out about the pregnancy he was going to, and that he is now divorced. Julia gives him a hard time and questions him further on why he strung along her sister for so long. Julia eventually gets up and leaves the diner. In Chapter 27, Julia gets accepted into NYU and DePaul, and decides to go to NYU. Her parents tell her they are happy for her, but they look like they are sad, especially because she is leaving for NY. She visits Dr. Cooke and explains more about her growing relationship with her mom and how she knows her mom is trying. She also expresses her concerns about whether or not she should keep Olga's secret and not tell her mom that she knows about her border crossing experience. She accepts that she doesn't have to make the decision at this point and can still think about it. She visits with Connor and gets sad about their future together and its uncertainty, but she understands it's okay for things to be uncertain.
Discussion Questions	● Chapter 25 ○ What happens outside the clinic as Lorena and Julia enter? What do you think of the protestors and Julia's response to them? ○ What do you think of Lorena's response to Connor? Do you agree with her assessment that all rich people would look down on Julia and Lorena as "ghetto?" Do you think Connor does? ○ Do you think Julia and Lorena should have used the money Lorena stole? Why or why not? ● Chapter 26 ○ What did you think about the conversation Julia has with Dr. Castillo? Do you think she was too hard on him? Too soft? ○ Did you believe what Dr. Castillo said to Julia? Do you feel empathy for him? ○ Do you think Dr. Castillo was right when he said that "sometimes it's not best to tell the truth?" Do you think he was sincere when he said this or just trying to keep Olga's pregnancy a secret? ● Chapter 27 ○ What reason does Apá give for having stopped drawing? Do you agree with his reasoning? Have you ever felt like you had to stop doing something that made you happy? ○ Julia says she is learning to be proud of herself. What do you think that means? How can someone be proud of themselves? Why is it a good thing to be proud of yourself? ○ How do Amá and Apá react to Julia's college acceptance? What do you think of their reactions? ○ Julia says that she hates the feeling of not knowing, that "those in

	between places” are scary. What do you think she means by this? Do you agree?
Possible Extension Activity	Mini Lesson on Roe v. Wade Julia takes Lorena to a clinic to see about a possible abortion and they are met with protestors outside the clinic. Use this as an opportunity to discuss reproductive rights established in Roe v Wade. • PBS lesson on Roe v. Wade ○ This lesson can be adapted to best meet your students needs, but there is a great short video and discussion questions about the case.

Chapters 28-29

Summary	In Chapter 28, Julia recognizes that her medications and therapy have really been helping her. She visits Dr. Cooke one last time and reads her a poem that she wrote. Amá asks Julia to sit at the table with her and have tea. Amá starts talking to her about boys and sex for the first time. Julia tells her she knows how to be smart and safe, but still listens to Amá. In Chapter 29, Julia goes to the airport and says goodbye to her parents. Her parents cry and Julia feels guilty about leaving them. She gives Apá the drawing as a present. Julia explains that after she told Mr. Ingman how she feels responsible for her family—that she feels a responsibility to live and take advantage of opportunities because their lives and hard work have afforded her those opportunities—he made her sit and write about those feelings. She wrote for two hours and that's what became her college essay. The book ends with her plane getting ready to land in NY and her holding her sister's ultrasound in her hand. She realizes that in her journey to learn about her sister, she actually learned a lot about herself.
Discussion Questions	● Chapter 28 ○ What did you think of Julia's poem on page 330? What do you think it means? Is there any line that you feel like you know exactly what she's talking about? ○ Why is the conversation Amá has with Julia at the end of this chapter significant? ● Chapter 29 ○ What differences do you see in Julia between now and the beginning of the book? ○ What did we learn about the night Julia tried to commit suicide? Who saved her? Why do you think Julia says she had never loved her dad like she did in that moment? ○ How is an airport an "in-between" place? Why is an in-between place significant for Julia? ○ How do you think Apá feels when Julia gives him his drawing at the airport? ○ Why do you think Julia felt guilty when leaving her parents? How is this feeling of guilt different than the times she's felt it before? (are other people making her feel guilty or is it something completely internal?) ○ Why do you think Julia feels responsible for her family? ○ Do you think Julia learned more about her sister or herself? ● Overall ○ What did you think about the ending of the book? ○ What's your overall view of the book? Why? ○ Did you like Julia at the beginning? What about at the end? ○ If Julia's story continued, what do you think would happen? ○ How do you see yourself in this text? Or how can you connect to this text?
Possible Extension Activity	Fan Fiction Writing Give your students an opportunity to practice their writing skills and explore this text deeper by writing a scene, an epilogue, or any type of continuation of the story. ● Lesson ○ When you're a fan of a particular book or series of books, it can be hard

to reach that last page and know it will all soon be over. With fanfiction, it doesn't have to be! Fanfiction is fiction written by admirers of a certain work or genre, anything from fantasy to comedy to romance. While keeping close to the spirit of the original, fanfiction allows children to explore their favorite stories by borrowing characters, plot elements, and settings and using them in their own creative writing process.

- Start a conversation about fanfiction. You might open by talking about the expression "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery." Ask the student if he or she has ever heard of fanfiction and, if so, how this expression relates to it. Your goal is to make sure the student understands that fanfiction is a story based on a book or type of book that the student really loves. In fanfiction, the student can take any part of the story that he or she likes, from the characters to the setting, and use it to write a new story.
- Explain that true fanfiction should have the same general feel of the original work. Characters should act and talk like they did in the book, and the original author's style and mood should be preserved as much as possible. Try reading aloud some passages of dialogue to get a feel for the characters' voices.
- Now encourage the student to think about ways to extend the story of their choice. Here are some ideas to consider:
 - Envision a prequel—events that might have taken place before the start of the original work
 - Imagine "missing" or deleted scenes—incidents that might have changed the course of the plot
 - Picture a sequel—events that might happen after the book ends
- Have students begin by writing an outline of their story and then begin drafting!