Discussion Guide



Solito
Javier Zamora

Hogarth Press
2022
416 pages
ISBN: 978-0593498088

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Summary

A memoir as gripping as it is moving, *Solito* provides an immediate and intimate account not only of a treacherous and near-impossible journey, but also of the miraculous kindness and love delivered at the most unexpected moments. *Solito* is Javier Zamora's story, but it's also the story of millions of others who had no choice but to leave home.

Questions

1. "Trip. My parents started using that word about a year ago— " 'one day, you'll take a trip to be with us. Like an adventure.' " The result is a harrowing migration story, a narrative that is immediate and intimate, in which the reader is essentially there, in the boy's shoes and inside his head. What did you learn through Javier Zamora's experience? What surprised or shocked you?
2. This memoir is told from the perspective of the author as a nine-year-old boy. How do you think that adds to the narrative? Would the book have a different effect if it was the story of an adult's journey?
3. From Don Dago to others who remain unnamed, Javier relies on a network of coyotes to get him to America. What was your initial opinion on these coyotes? Did it change over the course of the memoir?
4. There are many legs to this journey: boat, bus, on foot. Describe the ways each leg was uniquely challenging and dangerous.
5. The journey wasn't just physically taxing, but mentally, too. Discuss all that Javier—as a young child—must memorize throughout the ordeal, from Mexican cities to political facts. Why might he have to pretend he is Mexican?
6. Aside from Javier, which characters stayed with you, and why?
7. The author is a poet. How do you think this serves the story he tells, and how does it affect the interplay between intense circumstances and beautiful images and writing?
8. The natural world is a character itself in *Solito* — the animals, the plants, the landscape, the full moon, the sunrise — particularly in the scenes in the desert. Which natural elements stood out for you, and why?
9. How do you think Javier survived during the seven-week journey? How did you think he sustained himself mentally and emotionally?

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10. How does Javier change throughout the book?
11. How much did you know about America's immigration system before reading *Solito*? Did your view of the issue change? Why or why not?
12. Toward the beginning of the memoir, Javier lists all the ways he and his mother tried to immigrate legally. Discuss how these attempts are thwarted.
13. How did you feel at the end of *Solito*?

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