

## Teacher Guide:

### The Color of My Words -- Discussion Questions

#### *Wash Day*

1. What does Ana Rosa want to do more than anything in the world and have you ever had that same feeling?
2. Ana Rosa faces obstacles in fulfilling her dream, what are they? What kind of obstacles do you face in fulfilling your dream?
3. How would you describe Ana Rosa's relationship with her mother? What kind of relationship do you think she has with her father?
4. Do you ever share a household chore with a parent, like cooking, doing dishes, laundry, or washing the car? How does working together bring Ana Rosa and her mother closer? What about in your life?
5. What does Mami mean when she says Ana Rosa is like the river on pages 6-7? What is the river a metaphor for?
6. If you could write a story or poem about whatever you wanted, what would you write about?

#### *Words*

1. Ana Rosa's family cannot afford to buy her a notebook to write in, and she steals her brother's notebook. Put yourself in Ana Rosa's shoes, what would you do? Would you admit it?
2. Why doesn't Mami tell everyone that Ana Rosa took the notebook?
3. Explain how Ana Rosa suddenly understands what Gaurio means about wanting a future on page 22?
4. How does the notepad represent Ana Rosa's future?
5. How and why does an adversity such as losing a notebook bring the entire family together?
6. What does Ana Rosa mean in her poem "Words" when she writes that words can "get lost in the crowd" or that they can "slip off the edge and drown?"

### *The Gri Gri Tree*

1. Do you have a special place that you like to go where no one can find you? Write a poem about it following the rhyme patterns and stanzas from *The Gri Gri Tree*.
2. Why is Ana Rosa so “different” just because she likes to hide out in her favorite tree?
3. Each member of Ana Rosa’s family reacts differently to her sitting in the tree? What do their different reactions tell you about each character-- Mami, Papi, Roberto, Angela and Guraio?
4. How would you describe Ana Rosa’s connection to nature—the trees, mountains, the sea, and the animals of the ocean? How does her feelings differ from her family’s and neighbors’ ideas about nature?
5. Why does Ana Rosa think no one would understand that she wants to be a writer? Is she ashamed? Afraid? Shy?
6. How does Ana Rosa’s family begin to support her dream of being a writer?

### *Merengue Dream*

1. How is Ana Rosa’s dream of dancing merengue similar to her dream of being a writer?
2. Ana Rosa has difficulties learning how to dance until Papi takes her to the beach to hear the “music” of the sea. Describe something that was difficult for you to learn how to do and how you overcame the challenge.
3. What does music and dancing represent to Ana Rosa? How does music and dancing connect her to her culture? To her father? To nature?
4. Describe the relationship between Ana Rosa and her father. Why does she refer to his drinking rum so often?
5. What does Ana Rosa mean when she describes her Papi on page 49 as “the blue moon shimmering in the night sky.”
6. What does Ana Rosa mean when she says on page 59, “At that moment, my Papi was everything I had always wanted him to be?”

### *My Brother's Friend*

1. What does Ana Rosa mean when she compares her crush on Angel to looking at books in a bookstore on page 62.
2. Have you ever had a crush on someone who didn't notice you at all? Compare your crush with something else that you also feel strongly about to show how your feelings for each is similar or different.
3. Ana Rosa describes her green party dress as "ripples in a river pool" and "delicate spiderwebs" and a "green mermaid dress." Describe a piece of clothing that you love or hate to wear by comparing it to something else. Make the outfit come alive for us.
4. What does Ana Rosa mean on page 73 when she says, "I must have dreamed wrong if I feel like this."
5. Roco Café's holiday party represents a turning point in Ana Rosa's life in several ways, describe how.
6. Ana Rosa mentions the "tourists girls" several times in this chapter, what do they represent to her? How does the tourism industry impact on her life in the Dominican Republic?

### *One Sunday*

1. Why is Sunday both Ana Rosa's favorite day and the one she fears the most?
2. What does Ana Rosa mean when she says that Mami was acting like a "star that had exploded on earth and was tearing up everything in her path?"
3. What secret does Ana Rosa find out about her life and how does it make her feel at first? Have you ever felt betrayed by family or friends, and how did you react to it?
4. How is the Sunday beach day significant to the rest of this story? What is the connection between what happens on Sundays to what Ana Rosa discovers about herself?
5. Ana Rosa dunks herself in the blue water with her arms outstretched in the shape of a cross and says, "I would never be the same Ana Rosa Hernandez again." What is significance of the cross symbol, the water and her words?

6. On page 92, Ana Rosa discovers her power over “words.” Describe what she means by that. How does she plan to use her power of words to make her family’s life better?

### *The Colors of Power*

1. On page 101, Ana Rosa writes down all that she has learned while she was 12, and her plans for her 13<sup>th</sup> year. Think about all that you want to learn to do in your next year and make a list of your goals.
2. Guario says on pages 101-102 that finding your future means finding “the something special you do with your life.” Do you know what your “something special” is that you want to do with your life? Are you doing anything now towards achieving it?
3. Ana Rosa compares Guario to Taino Chief Guarocuya who defied the Spanish conquistadors. How is Guario similar to Guarocuya for whom he was named?
4. How is the power of the Dominican government demonstrated against the villagers? What are the government’s reasons for wanting their land?
5. Why does Mami cry when she sees Ana Rosa’s article typed up and ready to be printed in the newspaper? Why does Ana Rosa remember the “rocks in the river” at this moment?
6. Time Magazine Person of the Year 2011 is “The Protester.” Would you consider Ana Rosa, Guario and the villagers to be protesters? What are they protesting? What does Guario mean on page 114 when he says “our words aren’t enough” and that, “It’s people who can do anything.”

### *The Color of My Words*

1. Tragedy affects people in different ways, how does it change each member of Ana Rosa’s family?
2. Why does Ana Rosa promise not to write another word?
3. Ana Rosa says, “But they didn’t realize it wasn’t theirs to take or to give back,” on page 130 referring to their land. Guarocuyo said the same thing about the Spanish conquistadores, but what was he referring to in the previous chapter?

4. Ana Rosa talks about the excitement of the tourists coming to fill up the beaches and hotels and restaurants, but she was still waiting for something special to come out of the sky, what do you think she means by that?
5. What does Mami mean when she tells Ana Rosa to look for the good that comes out of the bad?
6. On page 137, Ana Rosa says, "If ever you will be forgiven for something it is here at the beach under the sun, in the sea, beneath a wave, close to everything that makes you happy without even trying." What does Ana Rosa want to be forgiven for? How does she find that forgiveness at the beach?

Here are links for great teacher guides from some inspiring educators and notable reviewers, too. Good luck!

<http://www.lindakreft.com/americanaward.html> --The Américas Book Award for Children and Young Adult Literature has prepared a teaching guide and activities for using *The Color of My Words* to build critical literacy to help students see the world through someone else's eyes.

<http://www.lindakreft.com/Americas/color.html>

<http://shelfelf.wordpress.com/2008/05/25/the-color-of-my-words/>

<http://www.learner.org/libraries/engagingliterature/voices/lessonplan.html>