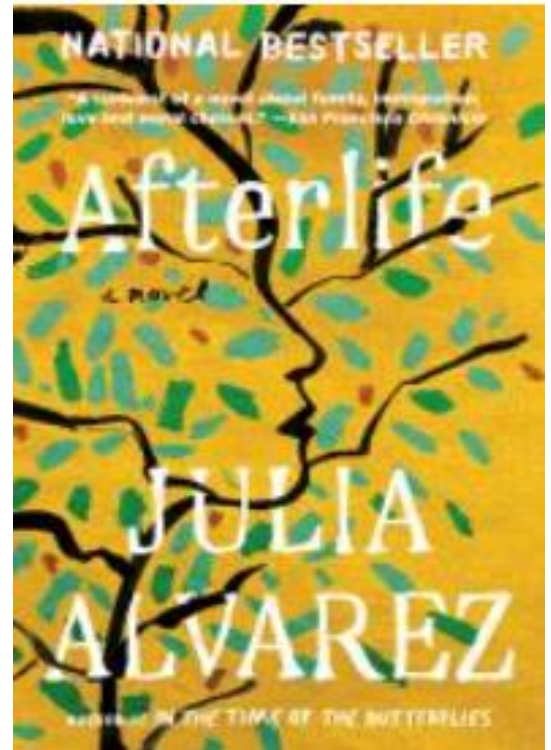


## Afterlife by Julia Alvarez



1. Antonia and her sisters are close and clearly love one another; at the same time, like many siblings, they argue, put each other in boxes, and are not always supportive. How are the sisters similar, and how are they different? Which parts of their relationships felt familiar to you, if you have siblings?

2. Antonia notes that in many ways, her husband, Sam, remains alive in her head: she often wonders what he would say or do, and she lets that guide her own actions. Do you think Antonia would have made different decisions about Mario, Estela and Izzy if Sam had still been alive?

3. How do you feel about the actions Antonia ultimately takes to help Mario and Estela? Does their story change your thinking about immigration in America? If so, how?

4. Discuss the sisters' plan to get help for Izzy and the ways that it backfired. What do you think about how they handled the situation?

5. The sisters all have distinct roles in the sisterhood, and Antonia also had a defined role in her relationship with Sam (bad cop to his good cop). How did Sam's death change the way Antonia viewed herself? How do you think Izzy's death will alter the roles of the sisterhood? What is your role in your own family? Is it accurate, fair?

6. Antonia is often viewed as the selfish sister. Despite this, she struggles with recognizing and asking for what she needs. In AFTERLIFE, she is frequently called on to assist others. How do you think this helps her better understand her own needs?

7. Antonia frequently recites lines from her favorite authors and poets, and their words provide comfort and wisdom. Do you think these literary references are always helpful? Do you have poems, songs, books or other stories that you return to when you need comfort? How have the arts helped you in a dark time?

8. When we have identified an injustice or problem in our world or in our family, do we have a responsibility to address it? Antonia remembers a Tolstoy story with three questions: What is the best time to do things? Who is the most important one? What is the right thing to do? How do you decide the balance between taking care of yourself and taking care of others?

9. Antonia observes that ethnicity and race are often used by the sisters as their personal loophole. How do ethnicity, race or culture qualify how we care and commit to community, self, family?

10. Why do you think this book is set in Vermont, a state with a relatively small Latino population? How might the demographics of her home influence Antonia's choices?

11. Does the Japanese repair technique described in the epilogue feel relevant to your own life?

12. Who in this book has an afterlife?