

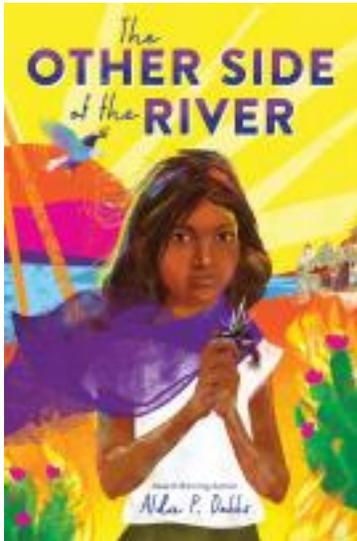
# The Other Side of the River

By Alda P. Dobbs

Discussion Guide created by

Lydia Glatt and Katy Murphy for CU Boulder's Children's Books Festival 2022, Open Education Resource, Creative Commons.

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Audience: Suggested for students in fourth grade to eighth grade

## Summary:

This sequel to Dobbs' first novel in the series, *Barefoot Dreams of Petra Luna*, follows the journey of Petra, a young Latina female, as she escapes the Mexican Revolution. Petra, while only 12 years old, is now in charge of helping her abuelita, sister and little brother in building their new life in America while her dad is away. They begin at a refugee camp, but when the opportunity for work arises, Petra is able to bring her family to San Antonio. During this time we see Petra take on a role helping her family in every way possible, including finding a job and bringing home money to pay for food, medicine and a safe place to live. While in San Antonio she is faced with many people who don't believe she belongs or is going to be successful being a young female. Petra also meets people in her American journey who teach her valuable lessons and strengthen her will to succeed in a new place. Will Petra be able to hold onto her Latina heritage and family values in a new place, or will leaving the comfort of her life leading up to this moment be too big a challenge for one young girl?

## Discussion questions:

1. If you had to move for any reason, what would something be that you would miss? This

could be a restaurant, something about your home, grocery store, best friend, a park, etc. Why would you miss this?

2. We see Petra loved this purple scarf because it meant a great deal to her and had a backstory. What is something that means a lot to you?
3. When given the day off from work at the chili stand for Dia de los Muertos, Petra contemplates going into work anyway. Why do you think she wants to work even though she is given the day off? Why does she ultimately decide to spend the holiday with her family?
4. When Petra is fired from her job at the chili stand she feels upset and rejected. This was her first opportunity for work after a long row of rejections from other employers. In a way, this hurt Petra more than any other rejection she had faced. Why do you think she feels this way? Have you ever felt rejected?
5. In this story, Petra is surprised to hear that Sister Nora also fled her home country to find a better life in America. How is Sister Nora's experience similar to or different from Petra's? Why is it important to be open to learning about other people's cultures and experiences?
6. Towards the end of the book, Petra decides to buy a train ticket back to Mexico so she can join the rebels. What do you think led Petra to make this decision? Why does she ultimately stay in America?

#### Extension activities:

- Research family and cultural heritage

Have students discuss where they and their ancestors are from. Many students will have multiple heritages and extended families. Have them share their different cultures or heritages. They may need to ask other family members for information.

- Different possibilities to complete this idea: Family trees, maps of family origins and journeys, information and media about culture in their heritage countries (e.g., food, culture, music, traditions, holidays).

- Learn about careers and money

We read about how Petra's search for a job was difficult and took some time. She originally began working at a restaurant in America, while her younger sister made money harvesting pecans. They learned about money and wages at an early age. Have students connect the sisters' experiences to their own experiences earning money (some may get an allowance or have small jobs, and some may not have had this experience yet). Then, have students discuss their dreams for future work and careers. Have them conduct Internet searches to learn more about potential careers. Consider making a graph showing average salaries and types of professions.

- Connect with Dia de los Muertos

Have students think about Dia de los Muertos traditions they have experienced or have a conversation with someone in your school or community who celebrates or knows about Dia de los Muertos. Have students create an Ofrenda for Dia De

Los Muertos for someone no longer living who has had an impact on their life. This could be someone they knew personally, or a celebrity or a historical figure. Students may include photos, objects, and/or decorations to show who this person was and why this person is important to them.