



Loteria by Karla Arenas Valenti
Bada Yi, Frances Cohen, and Mia Signorelli

About the Book: Every year in Oaxaca City, Life and Lady Death come together for thirty-six hours to play Loteria, a card game of chance that decides the fate of one random human being without their knowledge or consent. Life and Death let their magic loose which finds its target in an eleven-year-old artist, Clara. The consequences of the game and grief drive Clara's eight-year-old cousin, Esteban, to enter the dangerous Asrean through a cactus. Clara must face dangerous obstacles, awakened by the Loteria cards, to save him in order to keep a promise.

About the Author:

Karla Arenas Valenti is the author of Loteria. She is a children's book writer, and has written a number of diverse, multicultural novels over the years. Karla was born in Mexico City, Mexico and has moved throughout the world. She has stated that the places she has visited have shaped her into the woman she is today. She currently resides in Chicago along with the rest of her immediate family.

Grade Level:

Grade level 4, 5 and up should read this book

Discussion Questions:

- What are some of the major themes in Loteria?
- What are some of the symbols or any ways that these themes are represented in the book? (Ex. birds flying)
 - What are some of the ways that characters have a lack of freedom? (Ex. Clara's insecurities, grief, etc)
 - How do the characters in the story free themselves from their barriers?
 - How has courage and hope helped them overcome their obstacles?
 - If you feel comfortable sharing, how has courage and hope helped you overcome your obstacles?
- How do Clara's choices lead to the different events that she experiences in her life?
 - How do those events change the character's stories?
 - How have your own choices led to certain experiences?
 - How have those choices affected the people around you?
- When Clara hits her lowest moment, what keeps her going and how does her decision lead to success?
 - If you feel comfortable, please share if you have ever felt or faced similar experiences to Clara.

Extension Ideas:

If we were to create an activity for our future students that correlates to the book we read, Loteria, it would be to cut out our own Loteria game cards. We as teachers can find these cards and have the children cut along the dotted line. Once that is complete, we can explain the rules of the game and the importance of the Loteria cards to the children. The game is similar to Bingo. If the cards match the board the player will place a bean on that image. If you get 4 in a row you call out "Loteria". The goal of this activity would be to encourage these children to draw connections between this game and the novel. "Loteria has been played as a game of chance, as a pastime, and for educational purposes. Because the Loteria cards include the name of the pictured character, they are used to teach reading, writing, history, and social values..." (History)

Here are a few examples of Loteria game cards



Cites:

“History of La Loteria.” *Teresa Villegas*, teresavillegas.com/history-of-la-loteria/#:~:text=Loteria%20has%20been%20played%20as,tool%20in%20the%20United%20States.

Valenti, Arenas Karla. *Lotería*. Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2021.