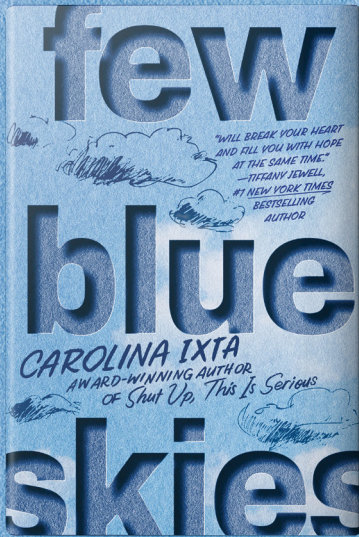


DISCUSSION GUIDE



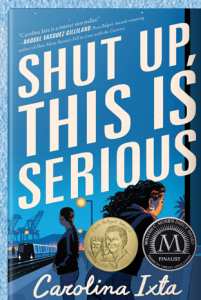
ABOUT THE BOOK

Paloma Vistamontes loves her community, the people, the land, and the memories it holds—but Selva, a powerful business conglomerate, is building warehouses, removing green spaces, and polluting the air, harming the health of those who live there. Paloma's pa is on strike fighting for better working conditions while her ma wants to leave and move to a cleaner, newer neighborhood. Paloma's ex-boyfriend Julio also pulled away from her after his father's death from health issues linked to Selva's practices and actions. But after a year of silence, Paloma reconnects with Julio, and they work together to raise awareness about the dangers and harm that Selva brings to their community. Paloma's story shows how the seeds of hope and love can be planted and grow even in the face of loss and injustice.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carolina Ixta is a writer from Oakland, California. A daughter of Mexican immigrants, she received her BA in creative writing and Spanish language and literature at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and obtained her master's degree in education at the University of California, Berkeley. Her debut novel, *Shut Up, This Is Serious*, was a Morris Award finalist, an *LA Times* Book Prize finalist, and the winner of the Pura Belpré Award. *Few Blue Skies* is her sophomore novel.



ALSO BY CAROLINA IXTA

Pura Belpré Award winner
Morris Award finalist
LA Times Book Prize finalist

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Paloma notices, “Despite the gray, he [Paloma’s father] still looks at the land remaining with so much pride. Julio and I used to joke that our love for the city was hereditary—given to us by our fathers, given to them by theirs” (p. 18). What promises and hopes does the land represent for Paloma and Julio? How does the land connect them to the legacy of their families and their futures?
2. Describe Paloma’s relationships with her best friend, Ale, and Julio’s sister, Yvette. How do they both support her? What does she learn from them?
3. At the end of the book, Paloma calls her ma to meet her at Tom’s to talk. During their conversation, Paloma’s ma tells her, “I lead with my head, but your pa leads with his heart” (p. 296). What do you think she means by this? What actions, silences, and lessons does Paloma carry with her from her ma and pa? How have they shaped her into who she is and who she is becoming?
4. Selva is changing the landscape and architecture of Paloma’s community by building warehouses, demolishing local businesses and green spaces, and polluting the air. How do these changes contribute to a loss of community and culture? Why do you think these types of harmful changes happen mostly in communities like Paloma’s? How are Selva’s actions connected to issues of power, money, racism, and environmental injustice?
5. What tactics do Mayor Warner and Selva use to try and gain community support for building more warehouses? How do they try to convince people that this development is a good investment for the community?
6. How do Paloma, Julio, Yvette, Paloma’s pa, and others in the community stand up against the changes Selva is making and the poor working conditions endured by employees? What kinds of activism and strategies of resistance do they draw on to bring awareness to these issues and create change?
7. Selva offers Ale’s dad a promotion and more money if he agrees not to strike. At first, he says no. But when Selva buys the apartment he lives in and evicts everyone, he signs the contract. Do you think he really had a choice?
8. What choices do Paloma and Julio make after winning the scholarship? How do their choices reflect their personal hopes, challenges, and realities? What are the consequences of their choices?
9. *Few Blue Skies* is written across an entire school year. The story follows Paloma and Julio from the fall semester to the spring semester and extends into the summer just after graduation. During this time, Paloma and Julio transition from high school to university. How does the passage of time highlight their journeys and growth?
10. What moments in the story show that hope is still alive in Paloma’s community? How do these moments help you understand the power of hope in the face of injustice? Review the Author’s Note for additional context behind *Few Blue Skies*.

Guide created by Dr. Tracey T. Flores, associate professor in Language and Literacy Studies at the University of Texas at Austin and founder of Somos Escritoras/We Are Writers.