

# BOOKNOTES

READERS GUIDE

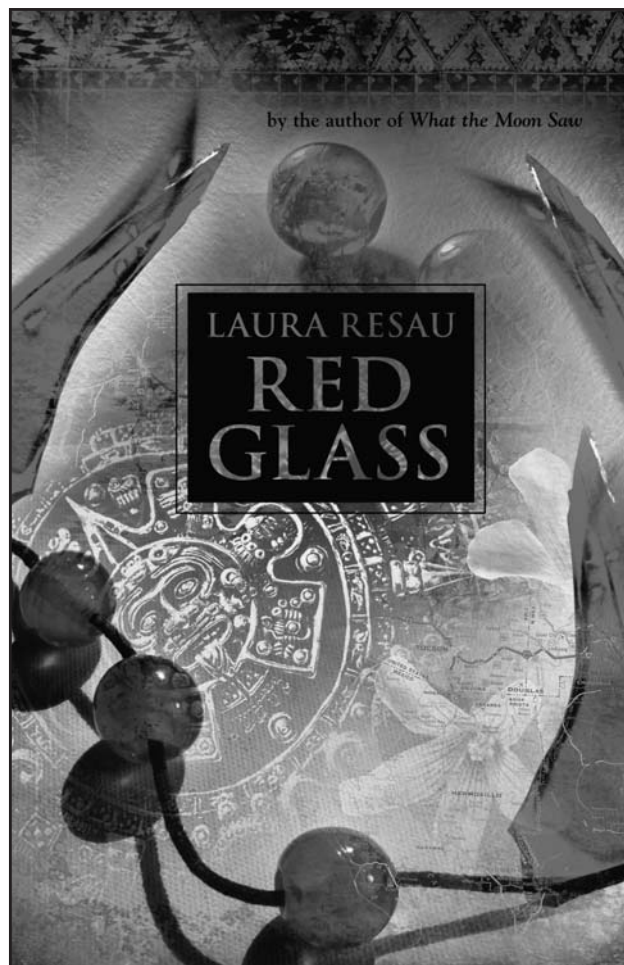
## thematic connections

**Adopted & Orphaned Children**  
**Courage & Honor**  
**Contemporary Issues &**  
**Social Problems**  
**Hispanic Interest • Hope**  
**Grades 5 up**

## about the book

**The journey to return a young orphaned boy to his village in Mexico forces 16-year-old Sophie far out of her comfort zone. She suddenly finds herself alone in a foreign land, facing real danger, and falling in love for the first time.**

When Sophie's mother and stepfather assume the role of foster parents to Pablo, an orphan from Mexico, Sophie's life takes a fresh turn. An only child and self-proclaimed loner, Sophie latches on to Pablo instantly as part of her family. When Pablo opens up and tells them about his village, Sophie's Aunt Dika and her friend, Mr. Lorenzo, offer to take Pablo back to his grandmother in Mexico. Soon, the unlikely group—Sophie, Pablo, Dika, Mr. Lorenzo, and his son, Angel—are off on a one-of-a-kind road trip. But after Mr. Lorenzo and Angel make a side trip to Guatemala and don't return as planned, Sophie sets out on her own to retrieve them. Along the way she finds her inherent strength, casting her old fears by the wayside.



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GLB: 978-0-385-90464-3 (0-385-90464-9)

**“It is only with the heart  
that one can see rightly;  
what is essential is  
invisible to the eye.”**

—Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*

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## pre-reading activity

The 21st century could be considered a dangerous time for teenagers, who may encounter school violence, Internet predators, STDs, or drugs. Some teenagers are fearful, worried, and even depressed to the point of being unable to function on a daily basis; others believe they are invincible, that nothing bad can happen to them. Discuss the role fear and worry play in students' lives and how they can live a balanced life without fear and worry, but with healthy caution. Have each student select a present day danger and write about how they can address their fear and the danger itself.

# questions for

- Willing to risk his freedom and the safety of his family, Sophie's stepfather, Juan, helps the Mexicans who cross the border into the United States. What role do Sophie and her mother play in assisting the Mexicans crossing the border? What effect does this have on Sophie? How does Juan's assistance help the Mexicans?
- Sophie sees herself as a loner, "a free-floating, one-celled amoeba." (p. 9) How does Sophie's image of herself change as she travels to Mexico and meets new people? What experiences there allow her to become part of an organism?
- Sophie whispers to Pablo in English, "Maybe we are two amoebas together." (p. 12) What does she mean by this? How does Sophie's need to help Pablo end up helping them both?
- Sophie's first memory of Mexican immigrants coming to her home in the middle of the night is a man eating a raw egg and throwing the empty shell on the ground. She kept the shell to remind her of what mattered most in life. At that time in her life, what mattered most to Sophie? How do her priorities change after her trip to Mexico?
- How do the immigration laws affect Pablo, Mr. Lorenzo, and Dika? How are Sophie and her family, United States citizens, affected by the laws?
- When Dika and Mr. Lorenzo begin talking about taking Pablo home to his village, Sophie's fear and worry immobilize her. Of what is she so afraid? On what are her fears based? Does she have legitimate reasons to be afraid? Why or why not?
- On her trip to Guatemala to find Angel and Mr. Lorenzo, several people help Sophie. How does the kindness of strangers allow her to reach her destination? What does she learn about trust from the people who help her?
- The relationship between Dika and Mr. Lorenzo changes during the course of their trip to Mexico. How does the change in their relationship help each of them overcome a part of their past? How will releasing their past enable them to have a more fulfilling future?
- When Sophie arrives at the hospital and sees Angel and Mr. Lorenzo, she hopes they notice "that a layer of heavy, thick stuff that used to separate her from the world was disappearing." (p. 218) What was the "stuff"? How does she let go of her angst?

# group discussion

- Despite almost being killed, Angel is determined to recover his mother's jewels before he returns to Tucson. Why are the jewels so important to Angel? How does Sophie help Angel achieve his goal?
- Sophie learns that "it is in the harshest places where you appreciate beauty the most." (p. 274) How could each of the characters in *Red Glass* relate to this lesson?



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## writing activities

- Pablo enjoys listening to Sophie read poetry even though he doesn't understand the poems. Ask students to read poetry by E. E. Cummings, Pablo Neruda, or other poets and select one that Sophie could have read to Pablo. Have students select a format (letter, journal, or poem) and write in Sophie or Pablo's voice revealing why the words of the poem relate to their lives or situations. Post poems and responses in the room for all students to enjoy.
- Changed by her experiences in Mexico, Sophie learns many lessons she can apply to her own life. Ask students to make a time line charting Sophie's experiences and, adjacent to each experience, stating the lesson she learned and how it motivates her to change. Students should be creative with their time lines, using drawings, computer graphics, or pictures to illustrate the time line. Display the time lines in the classroom.

## post-reading activity

The recent challenges to United States immigration laws have produced heated discussion in political rings as well as classrooms, with students walking out of school in protest of proposed changes. Ask students to research the current conflict over the Bush administration's proposed changes in the laws that affect immigrants to the United States. Divide the class into three large groups. One group will report on the facts of the law and the proposed changes, another group will argue in support of the changes, and the final group will argue against the changes.

## related titles

### by theme

#### **Prizefighter in Mi Casa**

**e. E. Charlton-Trujillo**

Acceptance & Belonging • Self-Esteem • Perseverance  
Hispanic Interest • Disabilities & Illness

Grades 5–7

Yearling PB: 978-0-440-42117-7 (0-440-42117-9)

Delacorte Press HC: 978-0-385-73325-0 (0-385-73325-9)

GLB: 978-0-385-90344-8 (0-385-90344-8)

#### **Devil on My Heels**

**Joyce McDonald**

Historical Fiction: 20th Century • Mystery & Suspense  
Racism & Prejudice • Cultural Diversity

Grades 7 up

Laurel-Leaf PB: 978-0-440-23829-4 (0-440-23829-3)

#### **A Single Shard**

**Linda Sue Park**

Historical Fiction: 20th Century • Asian Interest • Adopted  
& Orphaned Children • Courage & Honor • Determination  
Grades 5 up

Yearling PB: 978-0-440-41851-1 (0-440-41851-8)

#### **Trouble Don't Last**

**Shelley Pearsall**

Adventure • African American Interest • Friendship  
Historical Fiction: Civil War • Racism & Prejudice

Grades 4–8

Yearling PB: 978-0-440-41811-5 (0-440-41811-9)

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## about the author

**Laura Resau** grew up in and around Baltimore, Maryland. She spent two years as an anthropologist and English teacher in the Mixtec region of Oaxaca, Mexico. Her first novel, *What the Moon Saw*, received starred reviews from *School Library Journal*, *Kirkus Reviews*, and *Booklist*. She currently lives in Colorado with her husband and their dog, where she teaches cultural anthropology and English as a second language. Visit **[www.lauraresau.com](http://www.lauraresau.com)** for more information.

## internet resources

### **Illegal Immigration Explained**

**[usliberals.about.com/od/immigration/a/IllegalImmi.htm](http://usliberals.about.com/od/immigration/a/IllegalImmi.htm)**

An explanation of illegal immigration

### **Third World Traveler**

**[www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Mexico/Mexico\\_VirtualTruthComm.html](http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Mexico/Mexico_VirtualTruthComm.html)**

History of human rights in Mexico

### **TeensHealth**

**[www.kidshealth.org/teen/your\\_mind/mental\\_health/anxiety.html](http://www.kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/mental_health/anxiety.html)**

Information about anxiety disorders in teens

### **Catholic Online**

**[www.catholic.org/national/national\\_story.php?id=21938](http://www.catholic.org/national/national_story.php?id=21938)**

Article about young children crossing the border