

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

THESE SUGGESTED QUESTIONS ARE TO SPARK CON-
versation and enhance your reading of *The Villa, Once
Beloved*.

1. As a genre, the Gothic is about the past bearing down on the present. With this in mind, what role do the supernatural entities and phenomena play in the story, aside from providing chills and thrills?
2. Villa Sepulveda's long history is inextricably intertwined with the family who inhabits it. What similarities and differences do you see between the manor and the Sepulveda clan itself?
3. The book has several point-of-view characters as well as captivating secondary characters. Which one is your favorite? Whom do you most relate to and why?
4. One of the ways that the text develops the characters is through showing or describing their fear responses. How does

Sophie generally respond to fearful situations or characters? How does she differ from Javier, Adrian, Remedios, or Kai? How is her fear response similar, and how is it different, from your own?

5. Folklore and religion feature heavily in the book. What roles do local folklore, superstition, and Catholic rituals and traditions, play in the story? How do they affect the characters' view of events? Of themselves and the people around them? How do they impact the decisions they make?

6. At various points in the story, the characters become privy to, and complicit in, some form of cruelty or atrocity done by others. How do the characters react in those situations? How do they justify their choices to themselves? How do they justify it to others? Which of these choices do you think are defensible, if any?

7. The story is told from the point-of-view of a character who immigrated from his homeland (Javier), a character who was not born in and had never been to her homeland until the start of the book (Sophie), and a character who never left the homeland (Remedios). How does this part of their identity affect each of these characters' attitudes toward the country's dictatorial past?

8. The concept of legacy is something the characters grapple with throughout the novel and one of the Sepulveda family's legacies is toxic masculinity. How does it come up in the beliefs and actions of the male characters? How does it relate to the family's complicity to authoritarianism?

9. Although the story is set in the Philippines and features mostly Filipino characters, America is a looming presence in

the story. How does America as a physical place, as a state, as an idea, or as an ideal, affect the characters' lives? How does it affect their views of themselves and their choices?

10. The novel is bookended by plane rides. How are these two journeys different? In what ways did Sophie change from her outbound trip to her return?