

Forgiving Mariela Camacho Book Club Questions

1. Throughout the book, each character struggles with questions of family, particularly: What makes a family and what are our obligations to these people? Pete, Chicho and Mariela are not related. Polito makes them family. Chicho and Mariela feel a strong loyalty to Polito, whereas Pete, the only one actually related to Polito feels conflicted toward his uncle. Should blood relation change our obligations to the people in our lives?
2. As the story unfolds, Polito Guzman's demons are unveiled. This book could easily have been called "Forgiving Tio Polito." By the end of the book, it seems Pete forgave him. How much were Pete's feelings a result of the guilt he felt for getting Polito wrapped up with Double X in the first place?
3. Did you find yourself forgiving Polito? If so, was it a result of learning his backstory, or did Polito redeem himself with his actions? If not, what, if anything, could Polito have done to earn forgiveness?
4. When Pete meets his daughter, Luz, he tells her to call him Tio. Was this the right thing to do, or should he have told Luz that he is her father?
5. When Pete finds himself sitting in the dark reading Mariela's letter, he asks himself, "Is this why I do the things I do?" referring to his infidelity. Does it explain his behavior? Might it shed light on it even if it doesn't excuse it? Do you think, having confronted it, he will now be faithful to Glynnis?
6. What's next for Luz? Do you think she will end up OK, or is she another generation lost to the madness?
7. Reconnecting in a restaurant in New York, Pete asks Mariela, "Did you love me?" She responds, "There is a price for everything. Each of us has our own destiny." What does she mean by "a price for everything"?
8. Nicholai Tserverin tormented Tolya as a boy, helped destroy his family, kidnapped his pregnant wife, murdered his best friend's love and countless other women. That said, Tolya has pledged to uphold the rule of law. Were you disappointed that Tolya killed him? Were you satisfied?
9. Mariela follows a path in life that leads ultimately to her destruction. She claims she didn't want to destroy Pete's family but instead destroyed herself. What do you believe drove her to this path? Was she sent down this path by the deaths of her parents? Or did she choose this path out of a desire to separate herself from her previous life?
10. Pete and Tolya are both immigrants. What role does that play in their unique friendship? They come from different places and circumstances. In what way are their immigrant experiences similar? In what way are they different?