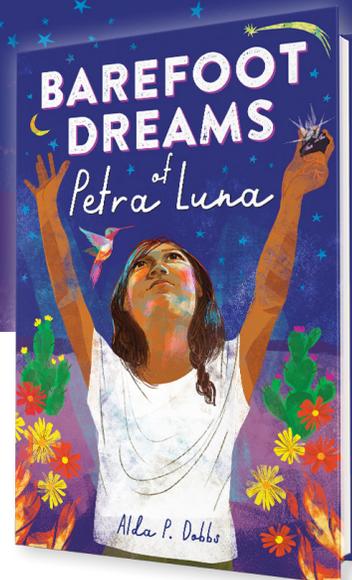


BAREFOOT DREAMS

Petra of Luna

DISCUSSION GUIDE



ABOUT THE BOOK

A tale of one family's perilous journey to cross the U.S. border during the Mexican Revolution that is every bit as relevant and heartbreaking today

It is 1913, and twelve-year-old Petra Luna's mama has died while the revolution rages in Mexico. Before her papa is dragged away by soldiers, Petra vows to him that she will care for the family she has left—her abuelita, little sister Amelia, and baby brother Luisito—until they can be reunited. They flee north through the unforgiving desert as their town burns, searching for safe harbor in a world that offers none.

Each night when Petra closes her eyes, she holds her dreams close, especially her long-held desire to learn to read. Abuelita calls these barefoot dreams: "They're like us barefoot peasants and indios—they're not meant to go far." But Petra refuses to listen. Through battlefields and deserts, hunger and fear, Petra will stop at nothing to keep her family safe and lead them to a better life across the U.S. border—a life where her barefoot dreams could finally become a reality.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alda P. Dobbs is as passionate about connecting children to their past, their communities, and to nature as she is about writing. Alda lives with her husband and two children outside Houston, Texas.

Praise for **BAREFOOT DREAMS OF PETRA LUNA**

"A *brilliant and authentic* historical novel about a young woman's struggle for freedom. Petra Luna's dream will fill your heart with courage." —**FRANCISCO X. STORK**, author of *Illegal*

"Alda P. Dobbs's stunning debut novel, set during the Mexican Revolution, recounts one girl's determination to save her family and follow her dreams. Inspired by the author's great-grandmother, *Barefoot Dreams of Petra Luna* is *as breathtaking as a shooting star*. Although the novel takes place over a century ago, this moving story has a profound resonance today. The lovable characters, swift pacing, and simple yet poetic prose make this a captivating read for middle-graders and their entire families. I adored this book and will be recommending it far and wide!" —**LAURA RESAU**, award-winning author of *TREE OF DREAMS* and *THE LIGHTNING QUEEN*

"*Barefoot Dreams of Petra Luna* will draw you in with its raw, evocative setting, and Petra herself will win your heart with her courage, resourcefulness, and unwavering love for her family. *Lyrical, heartfelt, and deeply authentic*, this book will stay on your mind long after you've read the last page." —**J. ANDERSON COATS**, award-winning author of *The Many Reflections of Miss Jane Deming*

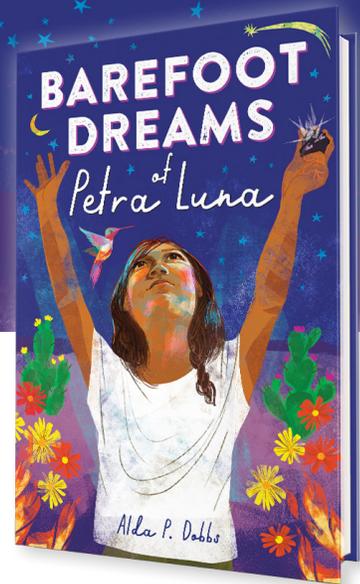


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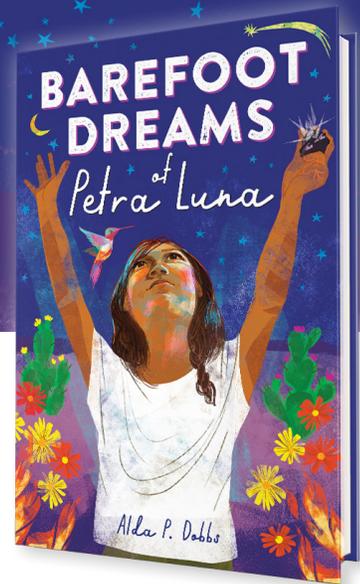


1. At the beginning of the book, Petra and her family observe a “smoking star” or a comet, which really did occur in 1910. What was this comet called? How often can we see it from earth? Will you be able to see it in your lifetime or do you know anyone who has?
2. What is an omen? What role do omens play in the story and how do they affect the actions of the characters? Do you believe in omens? Use examples from the text or personal experience or knowledge to support your belief.
3. After Petra learns that Amelia has named the donkey, the author states that “It was a strict rule: don’t name the animals. Names create bonds and bonds tend to break, especially during war.” What do you think this means and do you think this is a good rule for Amelia and Petra to live by?
4. When the soldiers enter Petra's house and Petra risks her life to retrieve her “black rock,” what do you infer about the rock? Was your inference confirmed when you found out that her father had given it to her as a special gift? Have you ever had something as special to you as Petra's “black rock” is to her? What was it, why was it special to you, and how did it make you feel?
5. The name Petra means “rock” in Greek. What are some qualities of a rock? How does this name relate to who Petra is as a person? How does Petra's father's description of how a diamond is formed relate to Petra's journey?
6. Why were the Revolucionarios fighting against the Federales? Were there “good guys” and “bad guys” or was the conflict more complicated? In the scene where Petra and Adeline are talking about the revolution, why does Petra not want to say which side her father is fighting on?
7. When Petra is begging for money while holding her baby brother, she is at a low point in her journey. Who enters the story to help her in her darkest moment? What does this person represent?
8. When Petra arrives at the military camp, the author describes it as a place full of food, music, and dancing. Do you think this was always the mood in the camp? Why does the author choose to portray the camp in this way and how does that make Petra's decision harder?

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9. Marietta offers to teach Petra to be a soldado, a soldier. Adeline offers to help her get to America and reach her dream of learning to read. Petra declines both offers of assistance. What does she want to do? Why does she decide not to accept their assistance? What would you have done in her situation? Have you ever decided not to do something you really wanted to do? Explain. Can you imagine an alternate storyline if Petra had decided to take either of these offers? How might the story have ended?
10. What is the importance of Petra's desire to learn to read? What does learning to read represent to Petra? To Abuelita? Why does Abuelita not want Petra to learn to read, or to climb trees?
11. While riding on the train, Abuelita tells Petra a story about her Papa when he was a boy on the hacienda. How did her flashback change the way you viewed Abuelita? Did it make you better understand why she was afraid of Petra's growing independence from her? Do you think your parents may have some of the same fears about you as Abuelita had about Petra?
12. What were your thoughts when you read about the people cooking and sleeping and riding on top of the train? Why do you think people traveled this way? Have you heard of people traveling in this manner?
13. As Petra is walking through the chaos after the train wreck, she finds Luz, holding her baby, Chenchu, who has died. Doña Amparo tells Petra that it is the family's sacrifice for the war. This causes Petra to ask herself the following, "A sacrifice? A sacrifice meant surrendering something valued, something cherished for the sake of a greater good. But who decided how much we sacrificed? Who decided when to stop? Who decided it'd been enough?" What does this passage mean to you? How would you advise Petra to think about this idea of a sacrifice for the greater good?
14. When Petra and her family get to the bridge to cross into the United States, she finds out that the price to cross the bridge has increased one hundred times what it usually costs. Why do you think the authorities increased the price during this chaotic time? How would the story be different if the price had not been increased?
15. This book highlights several issues which were relevant during Petra's time and still resonate today: immigration, inequality, war, revolution, prejudice, and poverty. Pick one of these issues or another of your choice and explain the similarities and differences between then and now.