

Next Stop
Discussion Guide
Grades 3 - 7

Before Reading: to activate schema, build background knowledge, and set a purpose.

- Can you think of a time when you were really excited about doing something with someone, but plans changed, and you had to go alone? How did you feel, and what did you do to make the best of the situation?
- Sensitive Topic Warning: Before using this book with your class or recommending it to students, we suggest reading the book closely to ensure it is a good fit for your students. The book addresses topics such as mental health challenges and death, which may be sensitive or emotional for some readers. Consider saying to your students: “This book deals with important but sometimes difficult topics, including mental health and loss. Not all books fit all readers, and it’s okay if you feel this book isn’t right for you. If you feel uncomfortable while reading, you have the right to stop, but please let me know and choose another book that feels better for you.”

During Reading: to engage students, check for understanding, and make connections.

Part I

- Describe the World's Smallest Corn Maze. What made it special or unique?
- How did Pia end up on a tour? What do her changing plans say about her ability to adapt or her sense of adventure?
- Where has Pia gone on her tour? Describe each destination and experience.

Part II

- Why does Pia feel guilty? What happened?
- Why do you think Pia's mom broke the plate? What might this action symbolize about her mom’s emotions or the family’s struggles?
- Infer what happened to Pia's brother Ben.
- Why do you think Pia reacted the way she did when Sam came to her room.
- Infer why Pia cut her hair. What might this symbolize about her feelings or her desire to change something in her life?

Part III

- What did Pia do? What did this allow her to do?
- How did Pia change after her trip? What lessons did she learn, and how is she different now compared to when the story began?

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After Reading: to summarize, question, and reflect.

- What challenges did Pia overcome, and how did they help her see herself or her family differently?
- Utilize RIF's Influences on a Character to determine the influences on Pia.
- **Writing Activity:** Imagine Pia is writing a letter to her brother Ben at the end of her journey. In her letter, she reflects on:
 - What she experienced and learned on her trip.
 - How she has changed as a person.
 - What she wishes she could share with Ben about her feelings and memories.
 - How she plans to move forward and keep Ben's memory alive in her life.

If your students enjoyed this book...

- Encourage them to continue to discuss it and refer to it in other lessons and conversations.
- Let them explore more about the topic by reading other books with similar themes, structure, characters, or content.