**The Tequila Worm**, by Viola Canales

**Study Guide**

**Pre-Reading:**

1. What do some of the images on the cover bring to mind?
2. What do you think of when you hear/read “tequila worm”?
3. Authors put a lot of thought into choosing a title for their novels. Why would an author of young adult books choose a title about something most people associate with drunkenness?

“**The Storyteller’s Bag,”** (p. 1)

1. Now that you know the meaning of the tequila worm, why do you think Canales has chosen it as the title of her story?
2. Where do you think the story takes place?
3. What are your impressions of Clara? Although Clara’s appearance may be very different from members of your family, do you have a member of your family or community who tells stories about the past?
4. After Clara is no longer able to tell stories, the community still gathers around her and pulls the items, now imaginary, from the storyteller’s bag to remember the stories of the past. Does your family have objects or special possessions that are used as a reminder of stories of the past? Choose one and explain.
5. At age 6, Sofa is told by her mother that she wants her to grow up to be a comadre, a position of great honor and responsibility in the community. What do you think of these expectations on her?

**Reading reflection questions,** (p. 6-35)

1. At the end of the chapter, what does Sofia’s taking the smaller piece of chocolate reveal about her character?
2. What do these four chapters reveal about Sofia and Berta’s friendship?
3. What can you infer about the religious beliefs of Sofia’s community?
4. Write about Sofia's relationship with her sister, Lucy. What did the chapter, “Easter Cascarones” reveal about their relationship?
5. Why is it so important to Doña Virginia that she make the homemade sugar skulls for Halloween?
6. What are Mama and Papa trying to teach Sofia by taking her to Doña Virginia's house and the cemetery?
Reading reflection questions, (p. 36 - 71)

1. Paraphrase the advice that Coach Clarke gives Sofia. What can you infer about the influence Coach Clark has on her?

2. On page 45, Berta tells Sofia what Mexican women are expected to do. How do these expectations fit in with Sofia’s dream? What do they reveal about the values of Sofia’s community?

3. Explain the importance of the *quinceañera* and the *sobremesa* in Sofia’s world.

4. Why does Tia Petra have such an important say in whether Sofia may choose to go to Saint Luke’s or not? How does this compare to the way decisions are made in your family?

5. Berta and Sofia agree to be each other’s first *comadre*, despite their differences. What does this mean for the two girls?

6. Papa tells Sofia that she must learn to connect with Mama in a way she can feel and understand. “She needs to see and hear things; she can’t sense things in silence, like we can” (69). Explain what he means.

“The Drive-in,” “Berta’s Quinceañera,” and “Five ‘New’ Dresses” (p. 72 - 101)

“The Packing Shed,” “The Canicula,” and “Another Mundo” (p. 102 - 135)

**Assignment 1:** Write a summary of the events that happened in the chapters listed above.

“Saints at Saint Luke,” (p. 136 - 147)

**Assignment 2:** Write a minimum one-page journal entry on stereotypes you have encountered or noticed in school and in the text.


**Assignment 3:** Based on the three chapters above, develop six good questions of your own. Your questions should be open-ended questions that encourage critical thinking and discussion, not short, one or two-word answers.

“Tequila Worm,” and “The Plaza” (p. 182 - 199)

**Assignment 4:** Describe the importance of community in the story.
Personal History Object Project

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Due date: __________

If you were to choose or create an object that would tell a story about you to future generations, what would it be?

Objects play an important role in the novel The Tequila Worm:

- Papa sorts and cleans each individual bean, relaxing himself from the stresses of work and reconnecting to his heritage.
- Doña Clara’s storyteller bag is filled with unusual objects, each one representative of a story that connects the present generation to ancestors from Mexico.
- Doña Virginia’s sugar skulls are more than just a Halloween treat for the neighborhood kids; they embody the importance of the Day of the Dead to Doña Virginia, who lost her son Luis when he was a boy. To Doña Virginia, the candy skulls are personally important, giving the neighborhood children a link to their culture.

Your assignment: Create an original object/artistic work that tells a story of who you are and embodies a story of you. You must write a minimum one-paragraph explanation of how the object would define you for future generations. Accompanying paragraph must be typed, not written by hand.