

THE LOST DREAMER DISCUSSION GUIDE

ABOUT THE BOOK

With a detailed, supernaturally-charged setting and topical themes of patriarchal power and female strength, Lizz Huerta's *The Lost Dreamer* brings an ancient world to life, mirroring the challenges of our modern one.

Indir is a Dreamer, descended from a long line of seers; able to see beyond reality, she carries the rare gift of Dreaming truth. But when the beloved king dies, his son has no respect for this time-honored tradition. King Alcan wants an opportunity to bring the Dreamers to a permanent end—an opportunity Indir will give him if he discovers the two secrets she is struggling to keep. As violent change shakes Indir's world to its core, she is forced to make an impossible choice: fight for her home or fight to survive.

Saya is a seer, but not a Dreamer—she has never been formally trained. Her mother exploits her daughter's gift, passing it off as her own as they travel from village to village, never staying in one place too long. Almost as if they're running from something. Almost as if they're being hunted. When Saya loses the necklace she's worn since birth, she discovers that seeing isn't her only gift—and begins to suspect that everything she knows about her life has been a carefully-constructed lie. As she comes to distrust the only family she's ever known, Saya will do what she's never done before, go where she's never been, and risk it all in search of answers.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

LIZZ HUERTA is a widely-admired Mexi-Rican short story writer and essayist, published in *Lightspeed*, *The Cut*, *The Portland Review*, *The Rumpus*, *Miami Rail*, and more. Her short story “The Wall” is included in the anthology *A People's Future of the United States*. Huerta has also been a 2018 Bread Loaf Fellow, a five-time VONA Fellow, and the winner of the LUMINA fiction contest, selected by Roxane Gay, who called her writing “a menacing inescapable seduction.” She has appeared on CSPAN's BookTV to discuss the erasure of Mexican American Studies in Arizona, and has taught creative writing to homeless youth through San Diego nonprofit So Say We All.

CREATE A GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

The Lost Dreamer begins with the story of Indir and the sacred city of Alcanzeh—the city of Dreamers. We learn about kinships, the complex society, and the different roles people play in it. Create a graphic organizer to keep track of the characters. Note their relationship or kinship with one another, their roles in society or their gifts, their clan membership/origin, and anything else that stands out about them. You can also note the important places, their function, and the various deities. Then, as you think about this world, consider how it compares to the world or society you know. What do you notice about the societal organization of Alcanzeh and other notable places? What do you notice about gender roles? What traditions stand out?

The Lost Dreamer centers on the story of Indir and Saya, two Dreamers living in different worlds, yet connected in profound ways.

GRAPHIC ORGANIZER EXAMPLE

SOCIETAL ROLE OR CLAN	PEOPLE AND KINSHIP	CHARACTERISTICS AND OTHER INFORMATION
<i>Dreamers of Alcanzeh</i>	<i>Indir, Zeri, Delu (sisters)</i> <i>Safi (mother)</i> <i>Ixara (aunt, Safi's sister)</i> <i>Kupi (aunt, Safi's sister)</i>	<i>Indir Dreams truth.</i> <i>Zeri Dreams possibility.</i> <i>Ixara and Kupi are twins.</i>
<i>King of Alcanzeh</i>	<i>King Anz</i>	
<i>Warriors of Alcanzeh</i>	<i>Tavovis (leader of the Avex)</i> <i>Ovis (son of Tavovis and an Avex warrior, also has the gift of Song)</i> <i>Tixu (son of Tavovis)</i>	<i>Tixu has been away from Alcanzeh for some time.</i> <i>Ovis and Tixu's mother was a Sacred Singer of the Litéx.</i>
<i>Warriors of Alcanzeh</i>	<i>The Avex</i>	
<i>Ilkan</i>	<i>Naru</i>	<i>The Ilkan are descendants of the Great Jaguar.</i>
<i>Son of the late King Anz, raised among Fire Warriors</i>	<i>Alcan</i>	
<i>Adviser to Alcan</i>	<i>Inkop</i>	

	<i>Fire Warriors</i>	
<i>Travelers are non-sedentary (don't stay in one place for too long). Saya is a Dreamer and a Singer.</i>	<i>Saya</i> <i>Celay</i>	
	<i>Ruta (Saya's friend)</i> <i>Kinet (Ruta's chosen partner)</i> <i>Batuk (Kinet's father)</i>	<i>Ruta and Kinet wish to have a child but have trouble conceiving.</i>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. There are many changes happening in Alcanzeh, the land of the Dreamers. What are some things that Indir, the protagonist, grapples with? How do the people of Alcanzeh react to Alcan's arrival?
2. What is the significance of the Fire Warriors? What do we learn about them?
3. Indir Dreams for the dying King Anz. Describe what happens in the Dream. What does Indir see and why might King Anz want her to keep it a secret "until it is needed"?
4. In chapter 2, we meet Saya, a young person who can similarly Dream. Indir and Saya seemingly exist in two different worlds. What differences do you notice between Indir's life in Alcanzeh and Saya's non-sedentary lifestyle?
5. Describe the relationship between Saya and Celay. How does Saya feel about the way Celay uses her gift of Dreaming?
6. In chapter 3, we're back to Indir. Who is Inkop and why do you think he asks Indir to seek him in Dreaming? How does Indir feel about Inkop? How can you tell?
7. We learn that Indir carries more than one secret: She has stopped Dreaming. What might Dreaming mean for Indir's identity? How might that relate to her reasons for keeping it a secret from her family? Why else might she be keeping this secret? What does she reveal to her sister, Zeri?
8. Since his arrival in Alcanzeh, Alcan has been breaking societal norms. What else do we learn about Alcan? How do the Dreamers and city leaders react to his actions? How is Alcan's behavior compared to that of his late father, King Anz? What new ideas does Alcan bring to Alcanzeh?
9. Who are the Ilkan? What are some misconceptions that Alcan and others seem to have about the Ilkan?
10. What else do we learn about Saya and Celay's relationship in chapter 4?
11. What do you notice about how people in this story perceive their connection to the land, to their bodies, and to the Dream?
12. How does Saya compare her experience between the Dream and the Waking World? What is the significance of Saya seeing the elder in the Dream and what might be the consequence?
13. How does Saya balance her sense of duty toward Celay and the expectations that Celay has of her?
14. When Saya and Ruta meet in secret, a hummingbird appears and leads them to a hidden temple. What do you think this place might be and how might it be important to the story?

15. Chapter 5 reveals further details of this society. What more do we learn about the society's views on gender identities?
16. Who is Ovis? What might be his role in Indir's life?
17. Chapter 5 explores this world's creation story. What is it and what is the significance of the Twin Serpents?
18. What more do we learn about the Fire Warriors? What do you think it means to lose one's name in the context of this society?
19. Chapter 5 further explores different perceptions of power. What is power? How do different people perceive power?
20. The idea of abusing one's gift comes up several times throughout the story. What might be the consequences of abusing one's gift? What lessons can be learned from this?
21. Naru shares some important insight about the Ilkan with Indir. What do we learn about Naru and the Ilkan? Why does Naru share her story with Indir?
22. The Twin Serpents are sacred to the people of Alcanzeh. They represent the balance that Dreamers and others in Alcanzeh value. So why is the threat of chaos and imbalance so frightening for Indir and those around her?
23. Who is Raru and what more do we learn about the Ilkan?
24. How does Saya and Ruta's friendship grow? What doubts does Saya have about Celay, and how does Ruta help Saya imagine the possibilities for taking control of her own life?
25. In chapter 7, Indir finally reveals one of her secrets to Zeri. What did she withhold? How does revealing one secret make Indir feel?
26. Saya has finally taken off the protection necklace that she has worn since birth. What happens next? What does she discover when Dreaming without her necklace for the first time?
27. Saya confronts Celay after she discovers that Celay has been lying to her. What happens next and what do you think will become of their relationship?
28. How do Safi and the other Dreamers of Alcanzeh react to the arrival of the Pili?
29. How do the Pili tempt Indir? Describe the consequences of Indir giving in to this temptation.
30. How does Inkop help Indir? What else do we learn about Inkop?
31. In chapter 10, with the help of Ruta and Kinet, Saya is finally free from Celay. How do Saya's Dreams change? What new gifts does she discover? What might be the significance of the comet appearing in both the Dream and the Waking World?
32. How does Ovis and Indir's connection grow? What else do we learn about Ovis?
33. Indir is afraid to face her mother, Safi, after what she might have revealed to Alcan and the Pili. What other feelings emerge for Indir? What does Indir finally reveal to her family? Why?
34. What do we learn about the way that Saya navigates the different spirits she encounters in the Dream? Saya learns that Yecacu, a spirit in the Dream, chose to withhold certain information from her. What were the consequences of Yecacu's choice?
35. Saya accompanies Ruta, Kinet, and Batuk to the Night Bird ceremony. How does Batuk help Saya make sense of her Dream? What are Shadow Dreamers?
36. Indir is taken to the Water Temple to heal and rest. What is the significance of this place? What does Indir learn about those around her, like Eley and Dua?

37. What is the Game that Alcan proposes and what does the Dream have to do with it?
38. When Indir finally reveals the Dream that she'd promised King Anz not to speak of, what plans do Indir's family and the other witnesses make?
39. Nahi emerges seemingly out of nowhere and tells Saya that she is in danger and that she wants to keep her safe. Who is Nahi and what does Saya discover during her journey toward safety?
40. Tragedy strikes the Dreamers of Alcanzeh. Why do you think Kupi and Ixara chose to Dream at the Twin Serpent's altar? What do you think happened to the twin sisters?
41. Saya and Nahi reach Ahkal and Yixu, who are Singers like Saya. Together, they continue their journey by boat. What new discoveries does Saya make?
42. Dua and Raru argue about how to help Indir prepare for her journey. What are their different viewpoints?
43. What does Inkop reveal to Indir about his connection with King Anz and Alcan? What do we learn about the Twin Serpent's mark? How is this related to Indir's Dream?
44. Indir and Ovis choose each other. What does this mean and how does this change things for Indir?
45. In chapter 18, Saya makes a big discovery in Dreaming with the help of two serpent spirits. Describe what happens and the consequences of this revelation in the Waking World.
46. Just as Indir is getting ready to escape Alcanzeh during the Game, her sister Delu reveals a Dream that shocks Indir. What does this Dream mean for Indir? How is Indir later surprised?
47. Who is the Lost Dreamer? What turn of events surprised you the most?
48. What do you think about how the author chose to end the story? What more would you like to know?

THEMES, NARRATIVE, AND COVER ART

1. Discuss some of the themes that emerge from this story, such as identity, connections to the land, gender identity, gender roles, kinship, and perceptions of power. What themes do you want to explore further and why?
2. *The Lost Dreamer* is inspired by Mesoamerican mythology. Research the history, customs, and traditions of ancient Mesoamerica. What are some connections that you see between people and places in *The Lost Dreamer* and ancient Mesoamerican culture?
3. Consider how language is used in *The Lost Dreamer*. What stands out the most? How is the use of language similar to or different from other fantasy novels you have read?
4. *The Lost Dreamer* follows a nonlinear narrative. Describe how you felt when you discovered this and why you think the author chose to write the story in this way.
5. Who do you think is depicted in the cover art of *The Lost Dreamer*. What do you notice about it? How does the cover art compare to the image you might have created in your imagination?