

the GLOSS

A LONG PETAL OF THE SEA

BY ISABEL ALLENDE

1. Did you enjoy the book? Rate it from 1 - 5.
2. Each chapter begins with a quote from Chilean poet Pablo Neruda. How do those quotes frame the chapters? Was there a particular quote you liked best? Did your attention to these quotes change when Neruda became a character in the novel?
3. Discuss the significance of the title, A LONG PETAL OF THE SEA. What do you think it means?
4. Which character did you feel most drawn to, and why?
5. On page 41, Allende writes, "Despite this, the American officer still believed in the triumph of socialism. To him, equality was not only possible, but inevitable, and he practiced it like a religion." How are ideals like socialism and equality represented in this novel? What other big concepts are examined?
6. What were your first impressions of Victor Dalmau and Roser Bruguera? How did your impressions change as the characters themselves transformed throughout the course of the novel?
7. When first asking Roser to marry him in order to secure a spot on the ship ferrying refugees to Chile, Victor asks if affection and respect can be enough for her. Do you think those two feelings are enough for any relationship, whether platonic or romantic? In what circumstances?
8. In the beginning of A LONG PETAL OF THE SEA, Allende writes about the many thousands of terrified refugees escaping to France, where a campaign of fear and hatred awaited them, about how nobody wanted these "filthy fugitives" or "repugnant beings who were going to spread epidemics, commit robberies and rape, and stir up a communist revolution." Do you think those same sentiments towards refugees exist today? Why do you think refugees are so often stigmatized in history and in present day?
9. How did you feel about the ending of A LONG PETAL OF THE SEA? Was it what you expected, what you hoped would happen? If not, how would you have constructed the ending?
10. What did you learn from reading A LONG PETAL OF THE SEA --- about this period in history, about Chilean culture or about human nature?