

Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe

by Benjamin Alire Sáenz

Access *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* **Topic Page** in **Gale In Context: Literature**. Use the **Topic Page** before, during, and after reading the novel to help answer the questions below.

BEFORE READING:

Use *Gale In Context* to answer the following:

1. How does Benjamin Alire Sáenz's personal background and experiences influence his writing? In what ways does he draw from his own Mexican-American heritage and LGBTQ+ identity in his storytelling?

2. How does Benjamin Alire Sáenz's writing contribute to the representation of LGBTQ+ characters and themes in literature? In what ways does he challenge stereotypes and provide nuanced portrayals of LGBTQ+ individuals?

3. What impact has Benjamin Alire Sáenz's writing had on the literary world and on discussions surrounding diversity, identity, and social issues?

4. Are there any controversies or debates surrounding Benjamin Alire Sáenz's work? What are some different perspectives on his writing and its portrayal of Mexican-American and LGBTQ+ experiences?

From Your Own Knowledge and Experiences:

1. Have you ever read a coming-of-age story? If so, what aspects of those stories do you find compelling or relatable?

2. What do you know about LGBTQ+ literature and the importance of representation in storytelling? Can you think of any examples of LGBTQ+ characters or themes in books, movies, or TV shows?

3. What do you think the title, *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*, suggests about the story? What are some possible secrets or discoveries that you anticipate?

4. How important do you think friendship is in shaping our lives? Can you think of any personal experiences or examples from other stories that highlight the impact of friendship on personal growth and self-discovery?

5. What do you know about Mexican-American culture and the experiences of Mexican-American individuals in the United States? What are specific aspects or challenges that you find interesting or important to learn more about?

6. How do you think family dynamics and relationships can influence an individual's journey of self-discovery and identity formation? Can you think of any examples from real life or other literature?

7. What are some social issues or themes that you hope this book will explore? Why are those topics important to you?

DURING READING:

As you read *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*, take notes on the developments of the characters in the novel, how do you meet each character, how does your understanding of them change as they go through the book, why does it change. Make sure to be specific with examples (include page numbers).

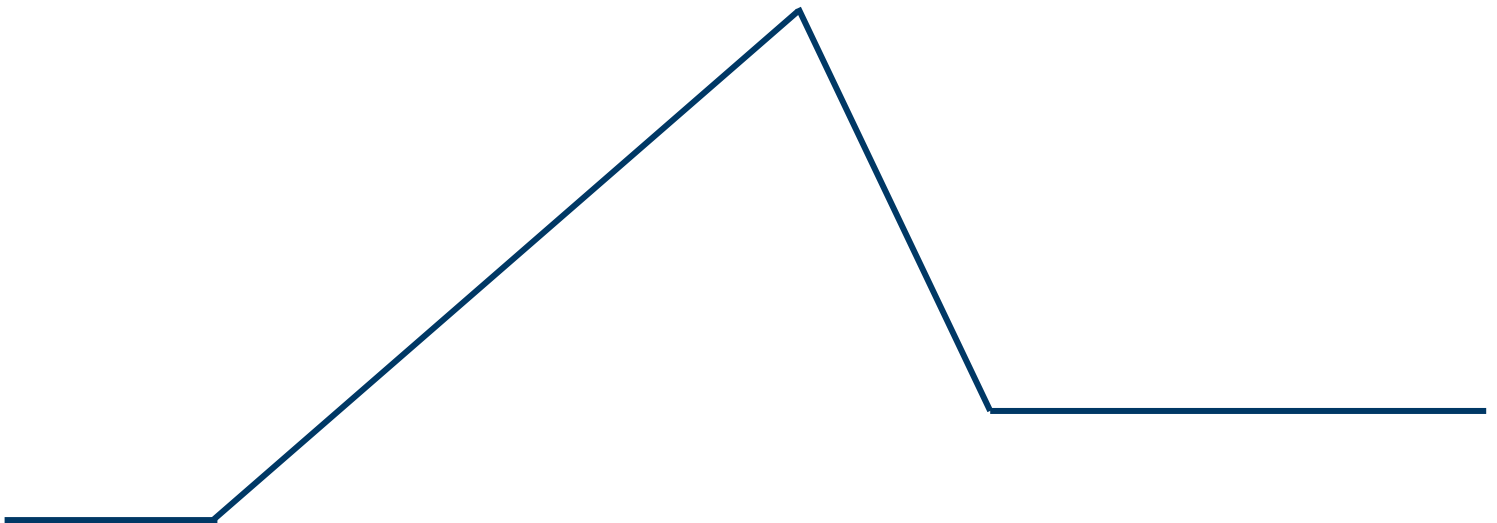
CHARACTERS	
Aristotle "Ari" Mendoza	
Dante Quintana	
Ari's Parents	
Dante's Parents	
Susie	
Ginny	

DURING READING:

The following are the themes depicted in *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*. As you read, take notes (including page numbers) of how you see these themes portrayed in the book.

THEMES	
Self-Discovery	
Family Dynamics	
Identity & Culture	
Acceptance & Self-Acceptance	

Complete the plot diagram below, filling in events for each element of the story including the exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.



AFTER READING:

1. Discuss the significance of the title "Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe." What do you think the "secrets of the universe" represent in the context of the story? How do Ari and Dante's experiences contribute to their understanding of these secrets?

2. How does the friendship between Ari and Dante evolve throughout the story? What qualities and experiences strengthen their bond, and how do they support each other's growth and self-acceptance?

3. How do Ari's relationship with his parents and sisters, as well as Dante's relationship with his parents, shape the characters' journeys? How do familial expectations and cultural influences impact their identities and choices?

4. How does the book shed light on the complexities of navigating multiple cultural identities? What insights or perspectives does it offer on the experiences of Mexican-American individuals and their sense of belonging?

5. How does Dante's passion for art and Ari's interest in writing contribute to their self-expression and personal growth? How do their artistic pursuits shape their understanding of themselves and the world around them?

6. How does the resolution of the story leave you feeling? What messages or lessons do you take away from the book, particularly regarding self-acceptance, friendship, and the search for meaning?
