

Discussion Guide for *The Slave Across the Street* by Theresa Flores

Caution: This book deals with subject matter that is disturbing and explicit. Please review the book beforehand to ensure you are comfortable with using it. I encourage you to use at least the introduction as a gateway to understanding what Theresa and other victims feel at the time of their abuse.

Overview (from Amazon.com)

While more and more people each day become aware of the dangerous world of human trafficking, most people in the U.S. still believe this is something that happens to foreign women, men and children--not something that happens to their own.

In this powerful true story, Theresa Flores shares how she, as an All-American, blue-eyed, blond-haired 15-year-old teenager who could have been your neighbor, was enslaved into the dangerous world of sex trafficking while living in an upper-middle class suburb of Detroit. Her story peels the cover off of this horrific criminal activity and gives dedicated activists as well as casual bystanders a glimpse into the underbelly of trafficking. And it all happened while living at home without her parents ever knowing about it. Involuntarily involved in a large underground criminal ring, Ms. Flores endured more as a child than most adults will ever face their entire lives.

In this book, Ms. Flores discusses how she healed the wounds of sexual servitude and offers advice to parents and professionals on preventing this from occurring again, educating and presenting significant facts on human trafficking in modern day American.

Discussion Questions

These are some questions to start discussion about the book in your class. They are just suggestions and can be used as a part of homework assignments or in class as small group or class discussions.

Introduction: Have students share their ideas on how Theresa began the process of writing the book. What symbolism did she use to represent the turning point of wanting to write the book?

Chapter 1&2: What it would feel like if you had no name?

Chapter 3&4: What kind of family did Theresa grow up in?

Chapter 5&6: What made life at the new school so different?

Chapter 7&8: How did things change from chapter 7 to chapter 8?

Chapter 9&10: What red flags did Theresa ignore and what mistakes did she make? How did Daniel manage to manipulate Theresa into thinking she had to earn the pictures back?

Chapter 11: How did racism affect Theresa's everyday life?

Chapter 12, 13, 14, & 15: What forms of control did the Chaldeans use against Theresa?

Chapters 16-19: Be prepared to talk with your students about these intense and explicit matters. These chapters would be a good way for you to talk about force, fraud, and coercion. This is also a good time to talk about rape and the effects it has on a person. Talk about how she had mixed feelings for Daniel and how she could have those feelings. (See *Stockholm Syndrome* in Chapter 25 below.)

Chapter 20: Would you have taken Jonathan's offer? Why? Why not?

Chapter 21: What do the dead animals mean? Are they examples of force, fraud, or coercion?

Chapter 22: Why didn't the teacher stop Nick? Why do you think that none of the teachers helped Theresa?

Chapter 23: Do you think Theresa finally understood that she would never receive the pictures? Does it really seem to matter to her anymore? Do you think she used getting the pictures as a way to deal with the abuse? Or do you think she really thought she would get them if she did what they wanted?

Chapter 24: Why do you think Janie did not believe Theresa's warnings?

Chapter 25: Talk about Stockholm syndrome and how that is probably what Theresa is going through in this chapter. Where else do you see signs of this happening?

Stockholm syndrome is a term used to describe a paradoxical psychological phenomenon wherein hostages express adulation and have positive feelings towards their captors that appear irrational in light of the danger or risk endured by the victims, essentially mistaking a lack of abuse from their captors as an act of kindness. (Wikipedia.com)

Chapter 26: What is Post Traumatic Stress disorder (PTSD)? What are the signs of PTSD that Theresa is showing?

Chapter 27: By moving, Theresa was physically freed from her bondage, but was she really free? How do you think a person moves on from something like this?