



**CCSS
READY!**

TEXT-BASED DISCUSSION GUIDE WITH COMMON CORE CORRELATIONS

Infinity Ring Book Four: Curse of the Ancients

by Matt de la Peña



Sera has a secret. She's seen the future, and it is terrifying. Unfortunately, she can't do anything to prevent the Cataclysm while stranded with Dak and Riq thousands of years in the past. Their only hope lies with the ancient Maya, a mysterious people who claim to know a great deal about the future. Is there more to these ancients than meets the eye?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Considering the ending of *The Trap Door*, what do you predict is in store for Sera, Dak, and Riq in *Curse of the Ancients*?
2. In the Prologue, Sera has an unusual time warp experience that takes her into the future and into the middle of the Cataclysm. What is it about "seeing" this event that has her so devastated? How does this experience continue to change her as a person? How does it change the way she interacts with others, like Dak?
3. When *Curse of the Ancients* opens, the trio find themselves with the Mayan people right as a "Great Storm" is coming. Consider how each of the Hystorians responds to this stressful and dangerous time. What do you learn about them from their actions and reactions?
4. At the beginning of the novel, Dak tells Sera and Riq, "You do know that the Maya are considered a violent and hedonistic civilization, right? They sacrificed people, and they were always at war..." Given his personal experiences with the Maya, in what ways does Dak's understanding and impression of the Maya change throughout the course of the book?
5. Upon arrival, Sera realizes that the Infinity Ring and SQuare haven't delivered them to the Maya in 1562; rather, it is hundreds of years prior. Why do you think it's important that the trio visit these people first before arriving at the intended time?
6. When Riq locks eyes on Kisa, he describes it as "almost like a Remnant but better, somehow. A good kind of queasiness." What does Riq's reaction to her indicate? Do you think she feels the same way? Why or why not?
7. Historically speaking, why is the Great Mayan Codex so important? What are some of the specific things Dak, Sera, and Riq do to preserve it?
8. As she creates her jewelry, Kisa tells Riq, "I hate that there are things girls aren't supposed to be good at. Who says?" Consider Kisa's frustration with her place as a girl in her society. Do you agree with her frustration? Why or why not?
9. The trio quickly realizes that they have encountered a time with no Hystorians; why do they find this so disconcerting? What does this reality force them to do?
10. What are some of the reasons the observatory is so important to the Maya? Why do you think it serves as a center of learning and preserving history? Can you think of modern facilities that function in a similar way?
11. Considering what you've learned about them from these first four novels in the Infinity Ring series, describe Dak, Sera, and Riq. What are three things that you find most (or least) appealing about each of them?
12. After they travel forward to visit the Mayas of 1562 and witness the murder of a Mayan man who was simply trying to follow his traditions, Sera tells Dak, "We're not actually fixing history at all. We're not making anything better for anyone." In what ways does this awful event cause Sera's attitude to change so drastically?

13. Using the phrase, "In this story, friendship means...", discuss the importance of family in *Curse of the Ancients*. Explain your choices.
14. Dak tells Sera, "We're just two kids. Two and a half, if you count Lover Boy. The point is, we're sent to each place to fix a Break, not humanity." Given what you've learned from all the events of the novel, what do you believe Dak means by that statement? Do you agree with him? Why or why not?
15. Besides the three main characters, *Curse of the Ancients* contains a number of secondary characters that exhibit a variety of strengths. Who most impresses you with their strength? Explain your choice.
16. Throughout the course of the novel, Riq learns that the world as he knows it will be forever changed because of his friendship with Kisa. In what ways will it be better or worse for him? Have you had an experience that reshaped your life? In what ways have you changed due to this incident?
17. What do you believe are the underlying themes or universal truths to be found in *Curse of the Ancients*?
18. In a letter left to the three Hystorians (and specifically Riq) Kisa states, "Tell him he made me believe I could be anything...because if it wasn't for our powerful friendship I never would have fulfilled my destiny as a Hystorian." How does learning that Kisa became Akna, an influential Hystorian and leader to her people, impact Riq? In what ways does this change how he sees his own work?
19. In your opinion, how does helping the Maya ultimately change how Sera feels about herself? In what ways do you predict she will be different in the future?
20. At the end of the novel, the trio discovers they are headed to China. What do you expect will be the Break they will need to correct?
21. Using the phrase, "This is a story about...", supply five words to describe *Curse of the Ancients*. Explain your choices.

USE THIS GUIDE TO TEACH THE FOLLOWING COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

Fourth Grade

Reading Literature

Key Ideas and Details – RL 4.1, 4.2, 4.3

Speaking and Listening

Comprehension and Collaboration – SL 4.1a, 4.1b, 4.1c, 4.1d

Fifth Grade

Reading Literature

Key Ideas and Details – RL 5.1, 5.2, 5.3

Speaking and Listening

Comprehension and Collaboration – SL 5.1a, 5.1b, 5.1c, 5.1d

Sixth Grade

Reading Literature

Key Ideas and Details – RL 6.1, 6.2, 6.3

Speaking and Listening

Comprehension and Collaboration – SL 6.1, 6.2, 6.3

Seventh Grade

Reading Literature

Key Ideas and Details – RL 7.1, 7.2, 7.3

Speaking and Listening

Comprehension and Collaboration – SL 7.1, 7.2, 7.3

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Matt de la Peña is the author of several acclaimed YA novels—*Ball Don't Lie*, *Mexican Whiteboy*, *We Were Here*, and *I Will Save You*—and one picture book, *A Nation's Hope*. He teaches creative writing at NYU.

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By Matt de la Peña

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This guide was prepared by Rose Brock, a teacher, school librarian, and doctoral candidate at Texas Woman's University, specializing in children's and young adult literature.



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