

THE SAFE PLACE

ANNA DOWNES



1. In the prologue, Emily compares herself to both Cinderella and Dorothy, and Querencia to “wonderland” and a “fairy kingdom.” Are there dark sides to those comparisons? For example: think about the Brothers Grimm telling of Cinderella rather than Disney’s, or about *Wicked* rather than *The Wizard of Oz*. How do these different angles shade your understanding of Querencia?
2. It takes until the end of Chapter 10 for Scott to notice what seems so familiar about Emily: “She reminded him of Nina.” How does Emily’s resemblance to Nina make her even more perfect for the job Scott has in mind? How does this fact affect your opinion of Scott? How do their similarities ultimately up the ante?
3. When did you first realize that the first-person, unnamed sections were from Nina’s point of view? How did they—if at all—help deepen your understanding of Nina?
4. In Chapter 26, Emily tells Aurelia that, “hundreds of years ago, if I wanted to sail home from here, I would’ve followed the pattern of the stars.” What do stars represent in this story? Are there times when that meaning changes?
5. Whose point of view—Scott’s or Emily’s—did you trust the most in the beginning? Had your initial reaction shifted by the end? If so, why?
6. Do you agree with Emily’s decision not to ask her parents where she came from? Do you think you would have made the same choice in her shoes?

Discussion Questions



MINOTAUR
BOOKS

7. Aurelia is the only one of the four main characters without a point-of-view chapter, even though in many ways Scott, Nina, and even Emily have all oriented themselves around her: spokes on a wheel. In fact, she never speaks at all. How does that relate to the themes of the book? If we had read a chapter from Aurelia's perspective, what would you have wanted to know?
8. After finishing the book, does the title, *The Safe Place*, mean something different to you? How are Emily's, Scott's, Nina's, and even Aurelia's versions of safety different? How does the titular safe place—Querencia—transform for each of the characters (and for you as a reader) from the story's start to its end?
9. Reading *The Safe Place*, what did you find the most chilling moment? What was the moment when any illusion of safety fled?
10. If you've read the Author's Note, you'll know that *The Safe Place* is loosely inspired by the author's own time at a similar estate. Does this knowledge at all change your understanding of Querencia? If so, how?

