

THE BOOK OF ROSY

READING GROUP GUIDE

TAMBIÉN DISPONIBLE EN ESPAÑOL

1. The United States is a land of immigrants. Where are your family's roots? What generation of your family immigrated to the United States? Do you know why? Do you have any stories about their journey?
2. Do you know anyone who has crossed the border from Central America to the United States? Have you spoken with them about their experiences?
3. Like many others seeking asylum at the US border, Rosy didn't know about the "zero tolerance" policy that led to parent-child separation until the moment she was separated from her children. Yet she is unsure if foreknowledge would have changed her mind. "Among the many things that people don't understand about migration is this," Rosy writes (p. 35). "No one wants to leave the people they love. Most people don't want to leave the land where they were born, or the soil where their umbilical cord was buried. If they believed that staying would ensure survival, they would never set off on such a treacherous journey. They would never walk through that door, fighting the impulse to look back with the deepest longing a person is capable of feeling." Did reading about Rosy's experience show you anything new about the immigration issues we read about in the news?
4. To Rosy and the other detainees, many of the policies of the detention center seem designed to dehumanize, beginning with identifying inmates by their last names or nine-digit "alien numbers." Rosy writes, "The guards are women who can't entertain the thought of being in our place, and so they treat us as lesser humans" (p. 12). How do these dehumanizing policies enable the guards' cruel treatment of the detainees?
5. On page 115, Rosy writes: "Detention offers plenty of opportunities to deepen one's spiritual life." What does Rosy mean? What are some of the ways that she turns to faith to garner hope while imprisoned in Eloy? What is it about hope that is so powerful?
6. Even before her time in detention, Rosy had already been through more than many of us can imagine, including poverty and hunger, losing her husband to murder, getting shot by a would-be assassin, and two dangerous border crossings. She writes that the only way to escape the violence in her home country was to "see a door and run through it" (p. 32). When the door opened for her to travel to the United States for the first time, she had to leave immediately and was able to take only one of her four children with her. She writes of the judgment she's faced for having made this "agonizing decision" (p. 34). Why do you think we, as a society, can often rush to judgment?

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7. Like many Americans, Julie was deeply moved by the plight of the separated families. She channeled that emotion into action, creating Immigrant Families Together and changing many lives in the process. Is there an issue that moves you deeply, inviting you to take action? If you feel overwhelmed by the immensity of a social problem, how might you identify one small step you can take to make a difference?
8. When pondering the ramifications of the child-separation policy, Julie writes, “[S]ome people raised the questions: Were we headed toward a twenty-first-century version of the Holocaust? And if we failed to act swiftly and denounce what was happening, would we be complicit?” (p. 163). What are our moral responsibilities when we see a crisis of this nature unfolding?
9. On page 188, Rabbi Kolin gives a speech for Rosh Hashanah after Rosy, Yordy, and Fernando arrive in Brooklyn that includes: “The barrage of things coming at us all at once is not going to let up soon. This is both the nature of life as well as this historical moment in which we are living. But in our own hands is the healing of our souls, our homes, and our world.” What does Rabbi Kolin mean in this statement? What are some ways that you stay hopeful in the midst of national tragedy?
10. In this same Rosh Hashanah sermon Rabbi Kolin explains the concept of hineini (“Here I am”). As Julie writes, “Here I am. Here we are. That’s really what this is all about, just showing up. Showing up with what we have, where we are” (p. 186). Is there a time when you “just showed up” or someone just showed up for you and it made a difference? Where could you show up now?
11. Both Rosy and Julie write about feeling connected to all the mothers experiencing the tragedy of being separated from their kids, even those whom they’ve never met. Can you relate to this feeling of connection? Have you experienced a similar feeling of community, even with complete strangers?
12. Rosy longs to work, volunteers to be P.T.A. co-president, and signs up for ESL classes. She writes, “This is the immigrant experience I wish people could see, not because it’s my experience, but because it’s the story of so many of us, coming to the United States to escape violence and to build lives in which we will contribute fully to society. We are grateful for all support, but we’re not waiting for a hand-out. We want to be part of your American dream. We want to help you realize it. We want to share in it with you” (p. 202). Did reading her story change the way you view immigrants or asylum seekers?