



# The *Pedro & Daniel* Reader's Discussion Guide

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*Pedro & Daniel* follows gay, neurodivergent, Mexican American brothers over twenty-four years, as they experience joy and laughter, despite various forms of abuse and oppression.

This Reader's Discussion Guide will help readers and book clubs explore the many topics and themes in *Pedro & Daniel*, which can be grouped into 8 general categories:

1. The Characters.
2. Social & Societal Topics.
3. Identity & Intersectionality.
4. Religion & Philosophy.
5. Historical Points.
6. Dichos [or Proverbs].
7. Language.
8. Writing.

## THE CHARACTERS

### Pedro

How would you describe Pedro?

What are his struggles?

What brings him joy?

What frustrates / angers him?

What are his story arcs [Part One v. the rest of the book v. his relationship with Daniel]?

### Daniel

How would you describe Daniel?

What are his struggles?

What brings him joy?

What frustrates / angers him?

What are his story arcs [Part One v. the rest of the book v. his relationship with Pedro]?

How are Pedro and Daniel alike / dissimilar?

How do Pedro and Daniel see each other at various stages in their lives?

### Family

How would you describe Mom / Pop / The siblings?

### Extended Family

Talk about Mamá, Papá, Mean Tío/Tío Bigote, Abuelita, Graciela

### Supporting Characters

Mrs. Walker, Mrs. Davidson, Mr. Merle

Dr. Fritz, Ramon Garza, Mrs. Knudsen, Mrs. Ludetsky, Mr. Martin

Brad, Tony, Betty, Doug, Mrs. Langford

Gerard

### Adults Who Knew About Pedro and Daniel's plight?

Neighbors, comadres, compadres, police, priests, nuns, family doctor.

## **SOCIAL & SOCIETAL TOPICS**

The social and societal issues the brothers deal with include colorism, racism, homophobia, domestic violence, migrant families, neurodivergence, mental health, HIV stigma, food insecurity, and intersectionality.

Colorism: Definition. Examples within *Pedro & Daniel*

Racism: Definition. Examples within *Pedro & Daniel*

Homophobia Definition. Examples within *Pedro & Daniel*

Food Insecurity

Mental Health

Consider depression, anxiety, insomnia, OCD, PTSD, suicidality.

When does Pedro start contemplating suicide?

Why does he say, "and I will think of suicide no more"? [IMPOSTER]

Why does he contemplate suicide a few scenes later, in the same chapter?

Neurodivergence

Consider lack of awareness, evaluations, diagnoses, services, treatments.

Domestic Violence in various chapters:

Familia en México Lindo

Writings on the Wall

Shades in our Colors

April Shower May Flower

Later chapters, told in first person narration.

HIV/AIDS: Stigma from families, religions, businesses, governments.

Migrant Families



## **IDENTITY & INTERSECTIONALITY**

### **Identities**

#### Gay

Pedro and Daniel do not experience internalized homophobia.

Why don't they talk about being gay earlier in their lives?

Is it a survival tactic?

What is Nature vs. Nurture? Why does Daniel consider these [in RELIGION]?

Cross Dressing as a child / as an adult.

#### Latino

#### Indigenous Mexican American

Neurodivergent: The boys are neurodivergent, and show signs of autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and other associated conditions.

#### Definition

Examples of Daniel's neurodivergence?

Examples of Pedro's neurodivergence?

### **Intersectionality**

There are many examples of intersectionality in the book because of the way the boys identify themselves, or are identified by others.

## **RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY**

Similarities/Differences between Pedro and Daniel's approach to religion?

What role does religion play in their lives?

What are the historical roles of religion that come up?

Why is Daniel so devoted? Why is Pedro so skeptical?

What is the particular significance for each of the following, for each of the boys?

Jesus Christ, Mary [La Virgencita], God, The Pope

What are some of the philosophical questions Daniel ponders?

Are you familiar with the controversial Sinéad O'Connor appearance on Saturday Night Live?

## HISTORY

With regard to Historical points there are opportunities to discuss Colonialism, the Doctrine of Discovery, the Swine Flu scare, the AIDS Pandemic, and the AIDS Quilt.

Colonialism

Doctrine of Discovery

Swine Flu

HIV/AIDS Pandemic

The AIDS Quilt

## DICHOS

How are dichos used throughout the book?

What are the various ways in which they are translated?

What is the cumulative effect of all the dichos put together?

Are they a sort of uncredited narrator, a subconscious guide, a constant companion?

Are they *the adult in the room* [wise old person who should not be ignored/disrespected]?

Which are your favorite dichos?

## LANGUAGE

How are Spanish and English used?

There is rhyming poetry, free verse, prose, and a variety of other poetic devices.

It is unusual to incorporate all these writing styles into one book.

What are the various approaches to translation?

English was Pedro and Daniel's second language, yet they seemed to excel in their grammar and vocabulary compared to most of their classmates.

Talk about their use of Word Games, and how it comes out in their narrations.

How are the various forms of writing used to convey different emotions and rhythm?

## WRITING

The writing styles in *Pedro & Daniel* utilize rhyming poetry, free verse, and prose - with and without poetic devices.

Why is *Pedro & Daniel* not a memoir?

Talk about the story structure / formatting: The various points of view; the use of dichos and poems to introduce chapters in Part One; the approaches to translation; elements of novella, vignette, short story, chapter book, picture book, middle grade, young adult, new adult, verse novel, memoir, non-fiction, and fiction.

How does the writing style change from chapter to chapter?

What are some favorite lines? Scenes? Chapters?

### Part One

Part One is a 16-chapter story arc about Pedro and Daniel's relationship during a formative 16-month period, told in 3rd person.

Why is Part One told in third person narration?

Each of the sixteen chapters has a subtly different, unidentifiable narrator, watching the scene dispassionately. Can you imagine who the narrator might be?

Talk about the first sentence of Part One.

It is a 175-word sentence that puts the reader "in media res," in the middle of an unfolding scene of domestic violence.

It establishes that Pedro and Daniel have already been living with violence and abuse at the beginning of the book.

It introduces the reader to Mom, and her inner demons.

Talk about the last sentence of Part One.

It is after the scene where Mom blesses them with palms.

Pedro has a glimmer of hope that *time heals everything*.

What does each chapter tell you about each boy and their relationship?

How have the boys changed from the first to the last sentences in Part One.

Thoughts on the images on the wall?



## Parts Two - Five

The rest of the book is told in alternating first person narration.

Are there passages where the fourth wall is broken?

Talk about the last scenes.

### The Last 50 Words

Talk about the last 50 words of the novel.

It is paired with a photo of the author and his brother Daniel.

They were the first 50 words written about these boys.

They transformed into chapter one.

They are now the last 50 words in the novel.

What music and movie references did you notice?

Compare the Bernie Taupin lyrics for “Daniel” with the corresponding passage in EULOGY.

Talk about the revelation of Mom’s biological father, and how it affected her.

Talk about Pedro and Daniel’s strive to learn, and the limitations in their education; about their lack of friends; about their naïveté and ignorance of “all things adolescent.”

Talk about each boy’s interaction with Dr. Fritz in the medical exam room.

Talk about these specific poems:

*Is It Because of the Smoke, or My Immense Sadness?*

*I Am Running.*

*Hunger is a Weapon.*

Talk about repeated themes, or refrains:

The animals on the wall.

*Does he have a tendency to fantasize?*

The scar on the scalp.

Be sure to read the Acknowledgments and Author’s Notes for more *food for fun thoughts*.