



Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe



By Benjamin Alire Sáenz

Together Dante and Aristotle begin questioning the secrets of the universe and navigate the painful journey from adolescence into adulthood.

Think while you read...

- The first quote in the book is: *“The problem with my life is that it was someone else’s idea.”* Think about a time when someone expressed an idea of how your life should be? How does that make you feel? Inspired? Confused? Angry?
- Dante introduces Ari to poetry in the afternoon while Dante cleans his room (pg.2 8-31). Ari muses, *“Words were different when they lived inside of you.”* What does he mean by this? How is this a turning point in Ari’s life?
- On pg. 141, Ari thinks about Dante’s sketch book and the fact that he never even looked at it. He thinks he is punishing Dante, but Dante doesn’t even know. Why is Ari refusing to look at the most personal thing Dante could share?

Talk

- Ari talks about his name (Angel Aristotle) and why he hates both names (pg. 83-83). Being named after someone can be both an honor and a burden. What does your name mean to you? Do you know why you were named that? Would you change your name if you could? To what? Why?
- Ari is obsessed with his brother, a brother he barely knew and can’t remember. Why is he so drawn to someone not in his life? Why does he have trouble connecting with the people that are there?

Write

- On pg. 97, Ari begins to write random thoughts in his journal. *“Things happening in my life (in no particular order).”* In your journal, follow Ari’s example. Write down the things that are happening in your life and how you feel about them. Don’t analyze or wonder if it “counts.” Just write whatever comes to mind. When you are done, look at what you wrote. Do you see joy? Fear? Anger? Love? A mixture? How does putting it on paper change how you feel about it?

Connect

- On pg. 359, Ari says, *“We all fight our own private wars.”* While this is true about individuals in general, it is especially true about people who have not been accepted by society throughout time: the LGBTQ community, Black Americans, women, people of different faiths, those with disability, etc. Think about someone you know or someone you have learned about. What might their “private war” be like? Is there a way you could help them? Write your thoughts in your journal and do research if needed.

This week, I looked at books on...

Sun. Mon. Tues. Weds. Thurs. Fri. Sat.



Dream Journal Sketchbook

Create the journal of your dreams!

Materials Needed: a journal, pen or pencil, colored pencils, scissors, glue

Part 1: Dream Journal

Ari's dreams play an important part in his story. Every day when you wake up, write down what you remember from your dreams. Try to do this for at least two weeks, but keep it up as long as possible! After two weeks have passed, look back at your dreams and write down what they meant to you. Are there any recurring themes? Do they reflect anything happening in your real life?

Part 2: Sketchbook

After reflecting on the dreams you have while sleeping, think about the dreams you have while waking. What goals and aspirations do you have for your life? How do you envision your future?

Create a "sketchbook" where you can creatively express your dreams. Use the same journal you used for the dream journal! You can express yourself through sketches (like Dante!), cartoons, poetry, rap or song lyrics, collages, etc. When you are ready, share it with someone. Do you want them to comment or discuss it with you? Do you want them to keep it? Do you want them to look at it and give it back? You decide! There is no right answer.

