

## *Anita de Monte Laughs Last* Reading Group Guide

Welcome to the Reading Group Guide for *Anita de Monte Laughs Last*. Please note: In order to provide reading groups with the most informed and thought-provoking questions possible, it is necessary to reveal important aspects of the plot of this novel—as well as the ending. If you have not finished reading *Anita de Monte Laughs Last*, we respectfully suggest that you may want to wait before reviewing this guide.

1. The first time we meet Anita in the opening chapter, we see her in the presence of others at one of Tilly's infamous parties. In the following chapter, we also witness Raquel in a similar setting in college at Nick's art show. How do the power dynamics in these social gatherings continue to parallel both storylines throughout the novel? How do they serve to heighten the tension around both women's sense of belonging?
2. *Anita de Monte Laughs Last* alternates primarily between Anita's first-person POV, Raquel's third-person POV, and Jack Martin's first-person POV. Consider the role that structure plays in this novel. What does it mean for a reader to engage with these characters through these different means?
3. Hip hop and art history are both huge influences in Raquel's life. How are these two mediums a catalyst in her storyline and in her relationship with those around her?
4. This novel not only takes us through different perspectives, but it also takes us through a nonlinear timeline. Why do you think the author made the decision to break away from a more conventional, chronological retelling of Anita's life? How are the glimpses into her past significant to the story?
5. At the core of this novel, readers will find two Latinas in precarious romantic relationships. How is Anita's relationship with Jack similar to Raquel's relationship with Nick? How are they different?
6. What do the Art History Girls represent? How do their seemingly shared lifestyle goals and values contradict Raquel's when we first meet them? To what extent does this impact Raquel's confidence and sense of companionship?
7. Anita's death is one that looms over several characters throughout this novel. From Tilly to Belinda Kim to Mrs. Fitzsimmons—everyone seems to have their own perspective about what happened on that night in 1985. How do their reactions create a fully rounded view of Anita's sudden demise within the art world? What does this reveal about the erasure and the legacy of women artists in America?
8. Discuss the role of family in this novel, specifically Raquel and Nick's disparate upbringings. How do their families – both their parents and younger sisters - inform their decisions, actions, and behaviors?

9. Both John Temple and Belinda Kim serve as advisors to Raquel, especially as her interest in Jack Martin's piques. How do they each approach Raquel's curiosities? Is there a right or wrong way to either of their actions? What do you notice about the way each of them creates space for Raquel to expand her horizons as a student of art?
10. In the chapter titled "The Ceiba Tree" readers get a glimpse of Anita's first transition into a bat. "Bats can keep their form. Their physicality beyond the ceiba. They can travel back and forth. Be visible. Then invisible. Fly both here and there" (216). How does this chapter become a climactic moment in Anita's storyline? What does her descent into the lives of others give her permission to do and how does she wield this power towards the end of the book?
11. Anita's career as an artist becomes overshadowed in Jack's presence but, by the end of a novel, there's a community of people adamant to make sure Anita gets the flowers she deserves. Which of these moments of reclamation resonated the most with you, and why?
12. This novel explores so many themes—from feminism, to power, to artistry. Pick a theme and discuss its relation to the title of the book.