

Book Club and Reader's Guide for



Tia Lugo Speaks No Evil

By Danette Vigilante

About the book

This suspenseful upper-middle-grade novel tells a story of culture and community in a gripping mystery plot.

Tia Lugo has a deadly secret.

Tia Lugo considers herself an ordinary thirteen-year-old girl. She just wants to enjoy the end of summer, which means hanging out with her best friend and neighbor, Julius, and ignoring her Puerto Rican grandmother's embarrassing reliance on creepy candles, weird-smelling herb bundles, and eerie statues—all available for sale at the nearby botanica. But when Tia witnesses a murder late one night from her bedroom window, everything changes in an instant.

Now, Tia is terrified to tell anyone what she's seen. What if the killer comes after her too? He knows where she lives. Even worse, Tia believes he's sending her secret messages, reminding her to stay quiet. Desperate to keep herself and her family safe, Tia turns to the last place she ever thought she'd go: her grandmother's favorite shopping spot, the botanica.

Two Options:

- *Book Discussion Questions:* These are big, broad questions that work best after the complete book has been read. These questions can be adapted for book clubs, reading journals, reading workshop class, library groups, or more.
- *Chapter Comprehension Questions:* For those reading the book chapter by chapter with a class.

Also included:

Vocabulary suggestions, 10 essay and project ideas, book recommendations



Tia Lugo Speaks No Evil



Book Discussion Questions:

1. Some people say first impressions really matter. Do you agree? What were your first impressions of Tia and Julius?
2. Do you think Tia's relationship with her parents influences how she makes decisions? Why or why not?
3. Compare and contrast Tia and Julius using examples from the text. Which character do you relate to more?
4. Describe how Gram knows that Tia is struggling with a problem.
5. Why is Tia embarrassed by Gram's beliefs? How do you know?
6. What adjectives would you use to describe Tia's community and why?
7. What is the theme of this novel? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
8. Does Tia change throughout the story? In what ways does she change?
9. If you were to pick an alternate title for this novel, what would it be?
10. Why do you think Tia breaks the monkey statue? Would you do the same?
11. Pick a character from the book other than Tia. How would this story be different if the book were written from their perspective?

Tia Lugo Speaks No Evil



GRADE 7 (used as example—can be adapted to fit other grades' standards) Common Core State Standards	Book Discussion Questions
Reading (Literature) Key Ideas and Details	
RL.7.1 Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10
RL.7.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.	7, 9
RL.7.3 Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).	8
Craft and Structure	
RL.7.6 Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.	3, 11
Range and Level of Text Complexity	
RL.7.10 By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 6-8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.	Accomplished through reading this novel.
Writing Text Types and Purposes	
<p>“W.7.1.b Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.</p> <p>b) Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.”</p>	1, 10
Literacy Vocabulary Acquisition and Use	
L.7.6 Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.	6

Tia Lugo Speaks No Evil



Chapter Comprehension Questions

*Individual questions are not categorized into curriculum standards.

Chapter 1

Describe Tia. Why does she have doubts about going away to camp?

On page 10 Julius says, “What if the sky falls too?” What does that mean?

How does Tia describe her asthma?

Describe the moment when Tia realized her life had been changed.

Chapter 2

On page 17 the policemen are described as, “grim and resolute.” What does that mean?

What are some of the items Gram buys at the botanica?

Why doesn't Tia tell Gram how she feels about the botanica?

How does Tia's Dad describe the botanica?

Chapter 3

Describe Tia's Mom. On page 24 she says, “everything's a lesson.” What does that mean?

At what moment did Tia almost tell her secret?

How were the campers chosen to attend Camp Troy?

What did Tia's Dad say to confirm her fear?

Chapter 4

Describe Julius. When did Julius start wearing cologne?

On page 31 Tia thinks, “... survival camp had already begun, and I didn't even have to leave my house.” What does she mean?

On page 34 when Gram says Tia looks different, Tia responds with, “It's my asthma. It kept me awake last night. I'm just tired.” Is it possible to tell a lie while still telling the truth?

When the doorbell rings, Tia grabs a makeshift weapon and prepares to use it. What does this say about Tia?

Tia Lugo Speaks No Evil



Chapter 5

Why does Tia think the cherry factory workers all look like murderers?

What does Tia mean when she says she has a perk of her own?

Why does Tia feel weird talking to Mr. Hernandez?

How does Tia feel about herself at the end of the chapter?

Chapter 6

How does Gram describe the botanica?

How would you describe the botanica? Does it make you curious?

Tia tells us Julius rescues earthworms after heavy rainstorms. What does that say about Julius?

Is Gram well liked at the botanica? How do you know?

Chapter 7

Why was Tia mad at herself?

Tia thinks Gram would be ashamed by the way Tia reacted to her secret. Do you agree? Why or why not?

Why does Tia want to wait a few extra minutes before opening her eyes?

Why does Tia refuse a bag to carry the necklaces and brown bottle in?

Chapter 8

Why do you think Julius doesn't buy the love potion?

On page 59 Julius calls LEGO man and Celia freaks. Does this upset Tia? Why?

Tia thinks if she had siblings, they'd help her keep the secret. Do you agree, or disagree? Tell us why.

How do we know Tia doesn't enjoy lying? Give an example.

Chapter 9

What do you think the meaning of Mr. Hernandez's tattoo, 'What worries you, masters you,' is?

Why does Tia think Mr. Hernandez couldn't be the murderer?



Tia Lugo Speaks No Evil



How does Tia feel about Danielle?

Why was Tiny upset after finding out Tia didn't go to survival camp?

Chapter 10

What does Tia mean by, 'you have to choose your battles in life?'

On page 73 Tiny seems upset with Danielle. Why do you think that is?

Miss Smith gapes at the statue Julius is holding like, "a squirming Medusa." Why do you think that is?

Page 75 says, "My stomach flip-flopped like fish caught in a net." What does this mean?

Chapter 11

Mr. Butler says he calls Potato, Sweet Potato for obvious reasons. In what way is this obvious?

Where did Jonathan and Mr. Butler meet?

What are some of Jonathan's attributes?

What happened to Mr. Butler's knee?

Chapter 12

On page 86 Tia describes Gram's apron by saying, "... the apron held on by a thread." What does that mean?

How does Tia react to Detective Erickson's questions?

Did you expect Tia's attitude toward Detective Erickson? Why or why not?

Why does Tia want Detective Erickson to quickly leave?

Chapter 13

What could be a good reason for Detective Erickson telling the story about his son having asthma?

Tia describes the question-and-answer session with Detective Erickson like playing a game of ping-pong. What does that mean?

Is Tia's behavior out of character? Does this help or hurt in keeping her secret?

How does Julius know ... "somethings up?"

Tia Lugo Speaks No Evil



Chapter 14

Does Tia regret her actions? How do you know?

What do you think of gram's concoctions?

Is Julius a good friend? Why or why not?

What makes Tia think about Jonathan?

Chapter 15

How did Tia and Julius become friends?

Tia stood up to a bully for Julius. Have you ever done that? If yes, tell us about it. How did it make you feel?

Why does Tia offer to finish cleaning up the mess?

Why do you think Marco tells Tia about the new movie theater?

Chapter 16

What makes Tia change her mind about going inside Mr. Butler's apartment? Would you have done the same?

Is Tia right to feel guilty?

On page 117 Tia says, "... but it was Mr. Butler who stayed with me." What does she mean?

Would you have made the same decision Tia made to use the yellow liquid in her bath? Why or why not?

Chapter 17

Tia thinks about how she danced with Gram on New Year's Eve and how they stayed awake until 2 a.m. How does your family celebrate New Year's Eve? Would you change anything if you could?

Why does Tia think she's going to die?

How does Julius's actions in Tia's dream reflect how Tia feels?

Do you think Tia made the right decision not to tell her Mother? Why or why not?

Tia Lugo Speaks No Evil



Chapter 18

Do you agree that Tia would have reacted differently to the murderer's warnings if she had gone to All About Kids? Why or why not?

Why does Tia think she's going to "crack under pressure?"

Since Tia has a hard time returning her Mom's gaze, do you think Tia has always had a bad attitude, or is it something new? How do you know?

What does Gram mean by "... jealousy makes people ugly on the inside?"

Chapter 19

Is Tia as selfish as she thinks she is? Why or why not?

On page 137 Tia says, "My eyes are the least of my worries." What does that mean?

Is it fair that Tia insists Julius swear on Pop-Pop Isaac?

On page 139 Tia says her "mouth transformed into cement." What does that mean? Has it ever happened to you?

Chapter 20

Is Julius surprised when Mom says Tia's pinkeye is a mild case? How do you know?

Why do you think Mom holds back from saying something after Gram says a cold compress won't get the job done alone?

Would you visit a foreign place if you didn't speak the language? Why or why not?

Do you agree that Tia is a coward? Why or why not?

Chapter 21

On page 150 it says, "It felt like words floated between us waiting to be said ..." What do you think that means?

Tia is scared and desperate, but does that justify how she treats Julius? Why or why not?

On page 154 it says, "my parents loved that photo like it was a Picasso." What does that mean?

Was it right for Tia to hold back an apology to Julius?



Tia Lugo Speaks No Evil



Chapter 22

Why does Tia's "heart sink" when Gram asked if anyone wanted seconds?

On page 159 Sal talks about an "old wives' tale." What does that mean? Do you know any?

Why do you think Sal "laughed stiffly?"

Do you agree with Dad when he says the botanica can give people false hope? Why or why not?

Chapter 23

On page 165 it says, "Everything just melted away." What does this say about Tia's emotional state?

What does having a green thumb mean?

If you had to re-name the grocery store chain, Food Dudes, what would you call it?

Was Tia's decision to sneak out of the house a good decision? Why or why not?

Chapter 24

What does it mean to feel lighthearted?

Why do you think it's so easy for Tia to talk to Mr. Butler?

Tia thought Mr. Butler was upset because he thought she was snooping. Why do you think he grew so serious?

Tia wants to clear things up with Mr. Butler. What would be the best way for her to do that?

Chapter 25

On page 176 it says, "... I listened as a stranger treaded around my living room like he belonged there. Like we were in his house and not mine." Based on this passage, choose an adjective that best describes the stranger.

On page 177 Tia thinks about things she could have done to stay safe. She says, "If only I had listened to Julius and called Detective Erickson. If only I had stayed away from my window that night." In your opinion, what else could Tia have done to stay safe? Add another "if only."

What does Tia mean when she says her asthma "kicked up a few notches?"

Tia doesn't think the stranger is sorry. Do you think he could be? Why or why not?

Tia Lugo Speaks No Evil



Chapter 26

On page 182 Tia says, “He had no idea fighting for my life had been something I’d become a pro at.” What is this referencing?

Does it seem as though Mr. Butler is having second thoughts?

Page 185 mentions a “makeshift weapon.” What does makeshift mean?

What did Tia mean when she took “stock” of how she felt?

Chapter 27

Tia says, “the truth flew” from her mouth. What does this imply?

What is the significance of Tia breaking the three wise monkey statue (hear no evil, speak no evil, see no evil)?

Why do you think Julius scowls at Marco?

Do you agree with Detective Erickson when he says, “Being under pressure can sometimes make people do things they wouldn’t normally do?”

Chapter 28

Based on what Detective Erickson learns about Jonathan, and the notes left at the memorial, what kind of person do you think Jonathan was?

Some of the neighborhood women referred to Mrs. Perez as a know-it-all. How would you describe her?

In Julius’s note to Tia, he says he wants to learn everything she learns while at camp. What types of things do you think Tia will learn there?

What are some other things Tia might add to her memento box? What would you add to yours?

Bonus Questions:

If you were to rename Sweet Potato, what would it be?

Tia’s favorite holiday is Halloween. Do you have one too? Why is it your favorite?

Gram can tell when something isn’t right just by looking at someone. Have you ever experienced this? When?



Tia Lugo Speaks No Evil



Tia's neighbors all seem to know each other. Is your community the same or different from Tia's?

Tia's family enjoys traditional food based on her culture. What type of food do you enjoy?

Essay Ideas:

1. Pick your favorite character and your favorite scene. Then re-write the scene based on that character's point of view.
2. Pretend you're a news reporter at the scene when Mr. Butler slips on the soapy water and appears to be "trying to swim away." Write an article describing the scene. Make it funny, serious, or both! It's up to you. Remember to use all your senses. This helps your readers to imagine the story you're trying to tell.
3. If magic potions were real, what kind would you want? Write a short story based on the potion.

Tia Lugo Speaks No Evil



Vocabulary:

Pg. 7 Mythological	Pg. 86 steadily	Pg. 137 gulped	Pg. 179 cascaded
Pg. 8 foundation	Pg. 87 Archangel	Pg. 138 ingredients	Pg. 181 eerie
Pg. 9 bulging	Pg. 88 shuddered	Pg. 139 shriveled	Pg. 182 ironic
Pg. 10 nudged	Pg. 89 splotchy	Pg. 144 affectionately	Pg. 183 surge
Pg. 11 skidded	Pg. 90 incriminated	Pg. 145 vital	Pg. 185 wreck
Pg. 12 gauzy	Pg. 91 interrogation	Pg. 149 tomb	Pg. 184 crumpled
Pg. 14 permanently	Pg. 93 disrespectful	Pg. 150 verge	Pg. 188 pathetic
Pg. 15 absentmindedly	Pg. 95 impersonation	Pg. 151 irritated	Pg. 189 shards
Pg. 17 resolute	Pg. 96 industrial	Pg. 153 atmosphere	Pg. 191 evaporated
Pg. 29 adrenaline	Pg. 97 peroxide	Pg. 154 grimaced	Pg. 193 various
Pg. 32 cylinder	Pg. 98 concoctions	Pg. 157 tethered	Pg. 194 condensation
Pg. 43 prosecuted	Pg. 99 ingredients	Pg. 158 culprit	Pg. 196 routes, hefty
Pg. 46 safeguarded	Pg. 102 transformed	Pg. 160 coincidence	Pg. 198 accommodate
Pg. 60 whirl	Pg. 103 wafted	Pg. 162 fluke	Pg. 199 conquer
Pg. 70 propelled	Pg. 105 hurl	Pg. 164 collage	Pg. 200 scruffy
Pg. 72 combusted	Pg. 106 chaperones	Pg. 165 quivering	
Pg. 73 absentmindedly	Pg. 108 forfeit	Pg. 167 fumbling	
Pg. 74 medusa, gaped	Pg. 109 abide	Pg. 168 nestled	
Pg. 75 interrogation	Pg. 110 flimsy	Pg. 169 ajar	
Pg. 77 scrutinize	Pg. 111 queasy	Pg. 171 triangular	
Pg. 79 throng	Pg. 112 rigid	Pg. 172 sulked	
Pg. 81 pang	Pg. 113 slathered	Pg. 173 cautiously	
Pg. 83 fiddled	Pg. 114 teetered	Pg. 175 thud	
Pg. 85 nauseous	Pg. 116 numbly	Pg. 176 enamel	
	Pg. 117 urge	Pg. 177 notches	