

*Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*  
**Discussion Guide**  
Grades 7 - 9

**Before Reading: to activate schema, build background knowledge, and set a purpose.**

- Before reading, have a class discussion to activate prior knowledge about friendships and what it takes to be a good friend
- Frontload vocabulary (see vocabulary list)

**During Reading: to engage students, check for understanding, and make connections.**

Part 1

- Describe Ari's character traits. (Ch 2)
- What does Ari mean when he says he's a pseudo only child? (ch. 3)
- Describe Dante and his encounter with Ari. What similarities do they share? (ch. 4)
- Compare and contrast Ari's dad with Dante's dad. (ch. 5)
- What do you think Ari meant when he said "words were different when they lived inside of you" What is he referring to? (ch.5)
- What did Ari learn about his dad and how did the conversation come up? (ch. 8)
- How does Dante feel about nicknames and why? (ch. 9)
- Compare and contrast Ari's family with Dante's family. (ch. 10)
- How does Dante's mom feel about him not wearing shoes, how does she view it? (ch. 11)
- What was the significance of the bird? (ch. 12)

Part 2

- What does Ari want from his dad? (ch. 1)
- Why do you think Ari won't share his dreams and why Dante won't share his sketches? Do you think the reason is the same or the different? (ch. 4)
- What do you think Ari means when he says "The sparrows were falling from the sky and it was me who was killing them?" (ch. 6)
- Describe Ari's relationship with his mother. (ch. 9)
- Why can't Ari talk about his older brother? What impact does this have on him? (ch. 10)

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Part 3

- What happened when they found the wounded bird? What happened as a result of it? (ch. 1)
- Why was everyone calling Ari a hero? How did that make him feel? What did he do about it? (ch. 3)
- What rules did Ari and Dante come up with? Why? (ch. 3)
- What do you think Ari meant when he said “I bet you could sometimes find all of the mysteries of the universe in someone’s hand.”? (ch. 6)
- Why won’t Ari look at Dante’s sketchbook? (ch. 7)
- Describe Dante and Ari’s final day together and infer on what Ari meant when he said “I love it too. I love it too.” (ch. 11)

Part 4

- Do you think Ari dreaming about hitting Dante with his car is symbolic? Why or why not? (ch. 7)
- How has Dante changed since moving to Chicago? (ch. 8)
- How did legs get his name? (ch. 18)
- Who does Ari compare himself to and why does that scare him? (ch. 20)
- What do you think Ari’s dreams symbolize? (ch. 20)
- Describe the encounter between Ari and Ileana? (ch. 29)
- Predict how it will go when Ari and Dante meet again. What actions led you to come up with this prediction? (ch. 30)
- What do you think Ari is referring to when he mentions “discovering the secrets of the universe”? (ch. 31)

Part 5

- What did Mrs. Quintana say to Ari and how did that make him feel? (ch. 2)
- Did your prediction come true? What new rules did the boys enact when they hung-out? (ch. 3)
- What happened in Dante’s room? Do you think this will change their relationship? (ch. 5)

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- What does Ari mean when he says “sometimes pain was like a storm that came out of nowhere”? (ch. 6)
- Do you think Ari and Dante’s relationship has changed? (ch. 10)
- Why did Ari go live with his Aunt Ophelia? (ch. 12)
- What event occurred that changed his mind? (ch. 14)

Part 6

- How does Ari feel about Daniel? Why? (ch. 16)
- Why do you think Ari’s parents talked about their secrets. What were they trying to do? (ch. 18)

**After Reading: to summarize, question, and reflect.**

- Dante is a well-developed, unique character. What characteristics and behaviors does the author give Dante that contribute to this uniqueness?
- Both Ari and his father have dreams in the story. Describe their dreams. What do the dreams mean to each of them?
- Both Ari and Dante are intelligent teens. How does the author use vocabulary to convey this characteristic? Cite examples.
- Both Ari and Dante have distinctive voices. How does the author use dialogue to develop character voice? Cite examples.
- The Influences on Character\*: Consider all the influences on the character - the problem(s) the character is facing, the other characters with who he or she comes in contact, and the setting of the story. Notice how the character interacts and reacts to these different forces. What effect(s) do characters, setting, and problems have on how the character acts earlier and later in the story?
- Figurative Language Chart: The author uses many types of figurative language to describe different scenarios throughout the story. Find some of the figurative languages, describe the type in which it is, and then describe how it relates to the story and what the author’s intentions were for using them.

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**If your students enjoyed this book...**

- Encourage them to continue to discuss it and refer to it in other lessons and conversations.
- Let them explore more about the topic by reading other books with similar themes, structure, characters, or content.