

*The Last Cuentista*  
**Discussion Guide**  
Grades 5-9

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

- Activate prior knowledge: *Cuentista* means storyteller in Spanish. Help your students make connections by asking what role storytelling plays in their cultures. If time permits, allow students to share some of the stories from their cultures.

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

- Why does Petra want to become a storyteller? (Ch.1)
- Where are Petra and her family going? Why? What do you think is happening to Earth? What details from the story make you think that? (Ch. 2-4)
- Who are the Monitors? Why does Petra’s mom think the Monitors are making a sacrifice? (Ch. 3)
- What is En Cognito? What problems occur with Petra’s En Cognito Cog? How do you think this will influence the rest of the story? (Ch. 3-6)
- Who is Ben? What is his role? What happens to Ben? How do you know? (Ch. 6-8)
- What is the Collective? What do they want to do? How can you tell? Use details from the text to support your thinking. (Ch. 6-8)
- Who is the Chancellor? How would you describe Chancellor Nyla? (Ch. 10)
- Ch. 11 gives the origin of Petra’s name, why do you think her name is important? Notice what role naming plays throughout the book. (Ch. 11)
- What is an epiderm filter? Why do you think the Collective uses them? (Ch. 12)
- Why do you think Petra gives the Zetas names? (Ch. 12)
- In Ch. 13, the Chancellor reveals that if the atmosphere on Sagan is not suitable for living they will leave for a new planet. Petra notices, “the people surrounding us drink tonic and poke at the stars zooming by them, clueless to the decisions being made about their life” (p. 103). What do you think she means? (Ch. 13)
- How are the viewpoints of the Collective different from those of Petra’s parents? What does Petra find out about her parents in this chapter? (Ch. 15)
- Why do you think Petra tells Zeta-4/Feathers and Rubio a cuento? How do they respond? Do you think it was a good idea for Petra to tell the cuento? Why or why not? (Ch. 16)

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**During Reading: (continued)**

- What is Petra’s plan? Do you think it will work? Why or why not? (Ch. 18)
- What happens to Len? Why can’t Petra express compassion and kindness to Len? Why do you think the author includes Lita’s story of the Conejo and Quetzalcoatl in this chapter? (Ch. 19)
- What are some qualities of Voxy that make him different from the rest of the Collective? (Ch. 20-22)
- What do you think the Conejo/Rabbit represents? Use details from the text to support your thinking. (Ch. 21)
- Who is Epsilon-5? How does Petra discover this? (Ch. 23)
- What do you think Petra’s dad meant by, “to achieve their goals– to have no starvation, or war—they are willing to do the worst kind of evil” (p. 225)? Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? (Ch. 24)
- Why is the Collective leaving Sagan? How is Petra able to remind Epsilon-5 that he is her brother Javier? (Ch. 25)
- Why do you think the Collective was willing to give up connections to culture and ancestry? Why is Petra against giving up these connections? (Ch. 26)
- Who is the Librarian? What does Petra discover Ben did for her? (Ch. 27)
- Why do you think Voxy wants to leave the Collective? How did Javier help them leave? (Ch. 29)
- What did Javier mean when he said, “If this small part of my journey is to give everyone else a chance, then that is what will make our parents and ancestors proud” (pp. 313-314)?

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

- A Goldilocks planet is a planet that is “just right” for life. In this book, Sagan is a Goldilocks planet. In groups, pairs, or individually, have your students do research to determine what conditions make a planet a Goldilocks planet.
- At the end of the book, Suma, Rubio, Feathers, and Voxy are at their new home on Sagan. Have your students write a sequel about what happens next.
- Use a Venn Diagram to compare/contrast the views of the Collective to those of scientists, like Petra’s parents, who are travelling to Sagan.

If your students enjoyed this book...

- Encourage them to read other science-fiction or dystopian books.
- Let them explore more about the topic by reading other books with similar themes, structure, characters, or content.