

PART I
It Doesn't Have To Be This Way: A Barrio Story
By Luis J. Rodríguez

1) Before you start reading the introduction, consider the title and first two illustrations to help you make a prediction. If you have already read the book, see what you can remember about what happens.

2) In the introduction, what do you think Luis Rodríguez meant when he wrote, "I hope we can create a community that fulfills these longings, so young people won't have to sacrifice their lives to be loved and valued in this world." Please discuss this passage with your partner. Use a dictionary if needed to look up words you don't understand. We will talk about it more once we have read the whole book.

3) Read together pages 5-9. First, one partner reads a paragraph aloud while the second person follows along in the book. Then, switch so that the second person reads the SAME paragraph out loud and the first partner listens and follows.

4) Stop at the end of page 9. Write down at least 5 things you already know about the main character, Monchi.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

5) Read page 10. Add at least one more thing you learned about Monchi to the list above.

6) Then discuss the following questions:

• **Does Monchi want to join the Pee Wees?** The book doesn't exactly say, but you can use the information in the book to make an inference (a good, educated guess based on the text). Justify your answer using evidence from the book.

• **Why do you think Monchi thought joining the Pees was the only thing he could do?** Again, you will have to infer the answer. Making a person connection or using your background knowledge might help you make a good inference.

• **Do you agree with Monchi? Why or why not?**

7) Read page 13 and 14

8) Read together about peer pressure: Peer pressure is when kids around your own age try to convince you to do something that they are doing. Sometimes people will pressure you directly by asking you to do something, but sometimes people pressure you indirectly (the prefix "in" means not) by treating you differently if you follow what they are doing or not.

9) What are some things that Monchi is being peer pressured to do or change about himself? How do you think he feels about doing these things? Tell about at least 2 different things.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

PART II
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1) Review with your partner what happened in the first part of the book.

2) Read pages 17 and 18 together, taking turns to read. The first person reads a paragraph while the second person follows along in the book. Then, the second person reads the **SAME** paragraph, while the first person listens.

3) **In what ways is Monchi changing?** To help you answer this question: Think about how Monchi spent his time at the beginning of the story and what he is doing now. **AND** Think about how he interacted with his family and how he interacts with his family now.

4) Read pages 21 and 22. This is an intense and scary part of the story. **Please spend time to write a detailed connection, thoughtful set of questions or reflective comment.**

5) Read pages 25 and 27. Monchi thinks, "I never knew anything like this would happen." By deciding to join the gang, Monchi did not consider ALL of the possible consequences. **What were some positive and what were some negative consequences of Monchi's actions?** Some consequences you may have to infer from information in the book and your background knowledge about gangs.

Positive:

- _____
- _____

Negative:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

6) Talk with your partner about what Tío Rogelio meant when he told Monchi, "I know you want to be a man, but you have to decide what kind of man you want to be." Explain:

7) Read pages 28 and 31. Answer all the following questions with complete sentences. Do you think getting revenge on the other gang will make things better? Why or why not? What do you think would happen if they took revenge on the Night Owls?

8) The last page says: "That was a brave thing," he said. "I have a lot of respect for you." Nobody ever said that to me before. It made me feel real good. **Tío Rogelio seems to think that deciding NOT to join a gang shows even greater bravery than doing the dangerous things gang members are asked to do. Why do you think Tío Rogelio thinks this? Would you agree? Why?**

9) To make good decisions for your life, it is very helpful to have a plan or dream of what kind of person you want to be when you are older and what sort of things you want to do with your life. **What kind of person do you want to be? What sort of things do you dream of doing in your life? Give details.**

10) Please discuss with your partner what you already **KNOW** about gangs and what you **WANT TO KNOW** (questions) about gangs.

Know:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Want to Know (questions):

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____