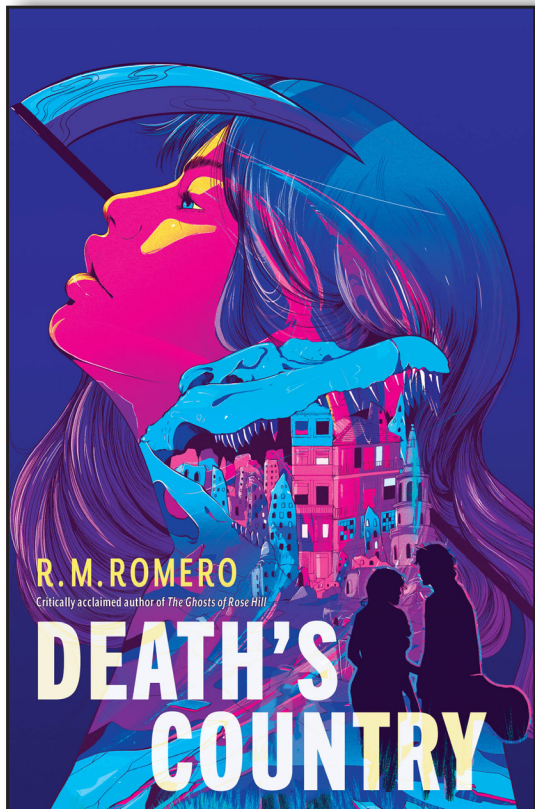


READING GROUP
GUIDE



Death's Country

by R. M. Romero

“Romero’s novel in verse ensnares hearts and imaginations through vivid and memorable poetic craft that captures the ache and complexity of love. An alluring and lyrical journey.”

—Kirkus Reviews, Starred Review

ABOUT THE BOOK

Lakelore meets “Orpheus and Eurydice” when two Miami teens travel to the underworld to retrieve their girlfriend’s soul.

Andres Santos of São Paulo was all swinging fists and firecracker fury, a foot soldier in the war between his parents, until he drowned in the Tietê River and made a bargain with Death for a new life. While wandering Miami Beach, he meets two girls: photographer Renee, a blaze of fire, and dancer Liora, a ray of sunshine. The three become a polyamorous triad, happy, despite how no one

understands their relationship. But when a car accident leaves Liora in a coma, Andres and Renee are shattered. Then Renee proposes a radical solution: she and Andres must go into the underworld to retrieve their girlfriend’s spirit and reunite it with her body—before it’s too late.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Contrast Andres Santos’ behavior in São Paulo and Miami. Explain what he means by, “I wore two faces in honor of my home: the jaguar and the prince” (p. 6). Discuss the jaguar as a representation of Andres. Explain Andres’ role as the prince.
- How is Andres affected by his parents’ tumultuous relationship? In what ways does Mami think Andres is like his father? How does this assessment make Andres angry? Explain what Andres means by, “Usually, I was able to stay on the outskirts of their tragedy” (p. 94).
- Discuss why Andres dives into the Tietê River when he knows it is dangerous. Explain what he means by, “I was in Death’s Country” (p. 20). Define euphemism. Cite the many euphemisms used for death in the novel. Andres says, “To face Death is to glimpse the whole of your life” (p. 23). How does he see his life when he drowns in the Tietê River? What do you think he would say about his life in Miami when he returns from the underworld?
- Andres is tired of being angry. What is the bargain he makes with Death? How does Death grant him a second chance? How does his bargain with Death explain his guilt about Liora’s accident?

- What does Andres learn about love as the novel progresses? What are his mother's thoughts about love? How does Andres meet Renee Delgado and Liora Rose? Discuss the love between the three.
- Ariel is Andres' electric Strat guitar. Explain why he names his guitar. What does the guitar symbolize? Discuss what Renee means when she says to Andres, "You tuck your secrets in Ariel's body" (p. 68). Explain the power of music in the book. At what point does Ariel become Andres' weapon? Discuss the symbolism of Renee's camera. How does the camera speak the truth? In what way do Ariel and the camera get them out of the underworld?
- How does Mrs. Rose treat Andres and Renee when they inquire about Liora? Explain the following metaphor: "The woman in our path, Mrs. Rose, was a glacier in the wrong latitude" (p. 82). Discuss the conversation between Liora and her mom at the end of the book. How might Liora's life change because of this conversation?
- Describe the underworld and its cast of characters. Why does Renee's grandmother warn her never to enter the underworld? Explain this line: "The City is an attempt at life" (p. 139). Why is it called the "kingdom of regrets" (p. 194)?
- The novel is described as "magical realism." Identify the magic in the book. At what point does Andres learn of Renee's magic? What is "soul retrieval"? Trace Andres and Renee's journey to the underworld to retrieve Liora's soul. What does Andres risk by going to the underworld?
- What is the central theme of the novel? Identify secondary themes. Cite passages from the book to support your thoughts.

ABOUT THE CREATOR



Photo Credit: R. M. Romero

R. M. Romero is a Jewish Latina and author of fairy tales for children and adults. She lives in Miami Beach with her cat, Robin Goodfellow, and spends her summers helping to maintain Jewish cemeteries in Poland. *Death's Country* is her third book with Peachtree Teen, after *The Ghosts of Rose Hill* and *A Warning About Swans*. You can visit her online at RMRomero.com or on Instagram @RMRomeroAuthor.