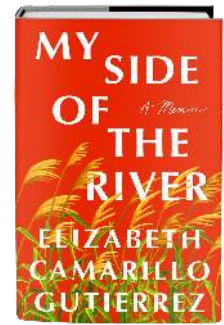


MY SIDE OF THE RIVER: A MEMOIR

ELIZABETH CAMARILLO GUTIERREZ

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



1. What do you think motivated Elizabeth Camarillo Gutierrez to share her story?
2. In the first several chapters of the book, Elizabeth observes her family closely, picking up on traits of theirs that she recognizes in herself. Do you feel like you inherited traits from your parents that you can distinctly remember witnessing in your childhood? How are inherited traits related to generational trauma?
3. When Elizabeth's parents are denied visas to return to the U.S., they remain in Mexico and bring her little brother to join them as well, leaving Elizabeth on her own in the states. What do you think of our border and immigration system, after reading about what it was like for Elizabeth to be separated from her family?
4. On page 101, Elizabeth asks herself: "Was choosing education over my family really the right choice? Or by choosing my education was I also choosing my family?" What's your general view on higher education in the U.S.? How can it open doors for people, and how can it increase barriers, stress, or pressure?
5. On page 111, Elizabeth writes: "Even though my dad had spent much of his life fixing everything broken, his relationship with my mom was not a totaled car in a subastas that he could repair. He couldn't fix the way machismo punished, destroyed, and caused toxicity to erupt in our family." When have you come into contact with machismo, or patriarchy, in your own life? How did you respond?
6. On her trip to Arizona, Elizabeth wonders: "Would my brother ever feel the pressure that I do; would he ever carry the same weight? Does he experience more of the freedom that I crave?" How do these questions play out over the course of their relationship as the two grow up? How do you think she'd answer those questions by the end of the book?
7. In her sophomore year at Penn, Elizabeth feels a great deal of isolation from her friends because she doesn't drink. Have you ever felt isolated from your friends? Were you able to find a bridge back to them?
8. While Elizabeth is in college, she shares a great deal about her story with the public. She writes: "My story mattered to other people, but it no longer mattered to me. I was desensitized to what we had been through, numb to the ways it affected us, and ignorant of the ways it was still affecting us." What happens when a story is no longer your own? How does Elizabeth seek to reclaim her story?
9. When her brother moves in with her in New York City, Elizabeth feels like she's had to make sacrifices that many other young post-grads can't understand. How could people like Elizabeth receive more support and not feel so overwhelmed by the sacrifices they have to make? Have you had to make sacrifices in your life? What was that like?
10. After you've read the whole book, why do you think its title is My Side of the River?