

a teacher's guide to

ROOTING FOR RAFAEL ROSALES



KURTIS SCALETTA

guide prepared by

Mary Jean Vejr

Ages 9–12 // Grades 3–7

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about **ROOTING FOR RAFAEL ROSALES**



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Rafael has dreams. Every chance he gets he plays in the street games trying to build his skills, get noticed by scouts, and—someday—play Major League Baseball. Maya has worries. The bees are dying all over the world, and the company her father works for is responsible, making products that harm the environment. Follow Rafael and Maya in a story that shifts back and forth in time and place, from Rafael’s neighborhood in the Dominican Republic to present-day Minnesota, where Maya and her sister are following Rafael’s first year in the minor leagues. In their own ways, Maya and Rafael search for hope, face difficult choices, and learn a secret—the same secret—that forever changes how they see the world.

about **KURTIS SCALETTA**

Kurtis Scaletta is the author of eleven books for young readers. Many of them are about baseball, but he has also written about snakes, robots, and giant fungi. He grew up in five states and three foreign countries, but now stays put in Minneapolis with his wife, son, and house cats.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Early in the story, Juan tells the other boys playing street baseball that they should listen to Rafael because he is the “real deal” (p. 10). Why does Juan call Rafael this? Find evidence in the story that demonstrates that Juan believes Rafael is the real deal. Does Rafael have the same high opinion of Juan? Compare and contrast Rafael and Juan’s talents and character traits. CCSS (*Reading*): RL.3.1., RL.4.1., RL.5.1, RL.6.1., RL.7.1., RL.3.3., RL.4.3., RL.5.3., RL.6.3., RL.7.3.

2. Rafael’s father refers to *buscones* as pirates (p. 132). Based on the text, why might the *buscones* or private coaches be viewed as pirates? Does Carlos fit this negative portrayal? How does Carlos’s role as a private coach/agent impact Rafael? Describe the relationship between Carlos and Rafael and Rafael’s father. According to the story, what are the possible risks and gains of the arrangement for Carlos, and for Rafael and his family? CCSS (*Reading*): RL.3.1., RL.4.1., RL.5.1., RL.6.1., RL.7.1., RL.3.3., RL.4.3., RL.5.3., RL.6.3., RL.7.3.

3. Describe the relationship between Maya and Grace at the beginning of the story. Discuss how the sisters’ personalities, character traits, interests, and age might contribute to their differences and conflicts. How does their relationship change as the story unfolds?

What is a specific event or experience that demonstrates a turning point in their relationship? Explain how other events have a positive impact on their relationship. CCSS (*Reading*): RL.3.1., RL.4.1., RL.5.1, RL.6.1., RL.7.1., RL.3.3., RL.4.3., RL.5.3., RL.6.3., RL.7.3.

4. Reread pages 111 through 114. Identify specific words and phrases the author uses to convey the urgency of the emergency room experience. CCSS (*Reading*): RL. 3.4., RL.4.4., RL.5.4., RL. 6.4., RL.7.4.

5. Maya and her father express very different views of Alceria. Describe their views and the factors that influence their thinking. When Maya is asked to appear in the commercial, she initially refuses to say the words, “Because Alceria cares” (p. 253). In your opinion, is Alceria a company that cares? What do you think they care about? Use specific examples from the story to explain your thinking. CCSS (*Reading*): RL.3.1., RL.4.1., RL.5.1., RL.6.1., RL.7.1.

6. Maya spoke out against an Alceria insecticide product during a TV interview. Give examples from the story of the consequences of her outspokenness. How did this incident affect her relationship with her father? CCSS (*Reading*): RL.3.3., RL.4.3., RL.5.3, RL.6.3., RL.7.3.

7. In the first half of the book, both Rafael and Maya feel that their fathers do not support their ambitions. What factors might have shaped Papa's attitude about Rafael's desire to play professional baseball? What factors might have shaped Dad's attitude about Maya's desire to save bees? How do the fathers eventually show their support? CCSS (*Reading*): RL.4.1., RL.5.1., RL.6.1., RL.7.1., RL.3.3., RL.4.3., RL.5.3., RL.6.3., RL.7.3.

8. Maya's father said, "Never discount evolution. All animals have a way of adapting to circumstances. Even humans." (p. 281) Use examples from the book to show evidence of this theme throughout the story. Evolution was just one theme of the book. Identify another theme and explain how it is demonstrated in the story. CCSS (*Reading*): RL.3.1., RL.4.1., RL.5.1., RL.6.1., RL.3.2., RL.4.2., RL.5.2., RL.6.2., RL.7.2.

9. How does Maya respond when she learns that Hugo is using Juan's identity? Use details and examples from the text to discuss her concerns and decisions. CCSS (*Reading*): RL.3.1., RL.4.2., RL.5.1., RL.6.1., RL.7.1.

10. Determine the main characters, subject matter, and timeline the author used to organize the chapters of *Rooting for Rafael Rosales*. How does the chapter structure help you understand the worlds of Rafael and Maya and how they intersect? The book is written in the third-person limited voices of both Rafael and Maya. How does this structure help you understand Rafael and Maya? CCSS (*Reading*): RL.3.5., RL.5.5, RL.6.5.



EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. At the end of the story Maya keeps the secret about Hugo using Juan's identity. In your opinion, is Maya doing the right thing? Make a list of consequences that could occur if Maya tells the truth and the consequences that could occur if she continues to keep the secret. Write an essay (opinion/argument) to explain your point of view. Use evidence from the story to support your opinion and explain your thinking. CCSS (*Writing*): W.3-5.1., W.6-7.1.

2. Maya read that bee populations were slowly regrouping, but that their numbers were still dropping. Research the reasons for the decline in bee populations and ways to help save the bees. Create a visual model (chart, diagram, flowchart) to show what you learned. CCSS (*Writing and Science*): W.3-5.7., RST6-7.7.

3. Think about how the author's use of baseball terms, descriptive language, and figurative language affect you as a reader. Create a list of descriptive phrases and figurative language which might be used to enhance writing about a different sport. CCSS (*Reading*): RL.3.4., RL.4.4., RL.5.4., RL.6.4., RL.7.4.

Some of the examples from the story are:

- steal a base (p. 38)
- scorch the ball (p. 67)
- hit for the cycle (p. 143)
- sailed a ball (p. 143)
- fast bat (p. 162)
- show his stuff (p. 163)
- hot corner (p. 164)
- this boy owned me (p. 164)
- breaking for home (p. 164)



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