



THE  
RESURRECTION  
OF  
FULGENCIO  
RAMIREZ

A NOVEL

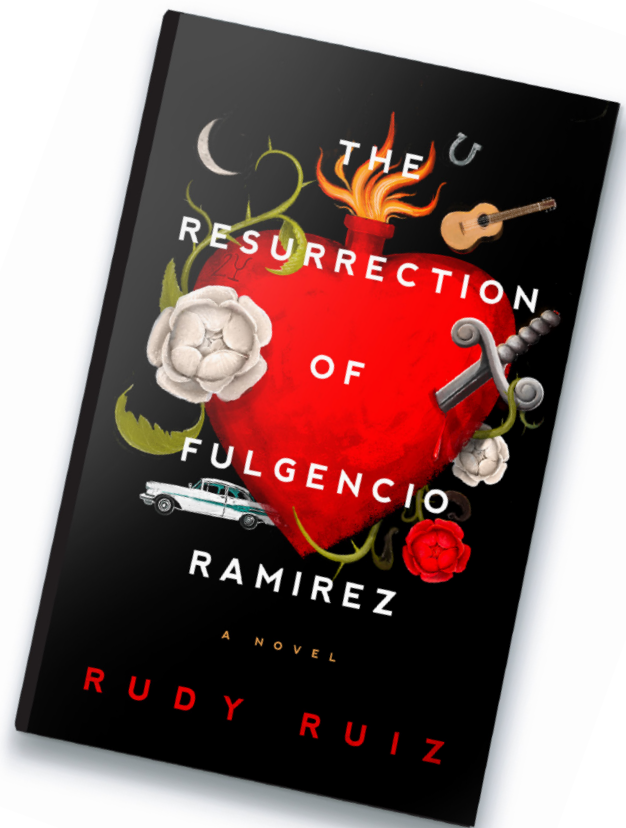
RUDY RUIZ

TEACHING & DISCUSSION GUIDE

# THE RESURRECTION OF FULGENCIO RAMIREZ

A NOVEL

BY RUDY RUIZ



**TEACHING & DISCUSSION GUIDE:  
OVERCOMING & FULFILLING ONE'S OWN DESTINY**

**SETTING UP DISCUSSIONS:**

Fulgencio Ramirez, the protagonist of the novel, has a long and complex journey through life, and beyond. Born into challenging circumstances as the son of poor immigrants from Mexico, his ambitious dreams, wide-eyed innocence, and creative energy draw people to his cause. At the same time, there is a dark side to Fulgencio, one riddled with obstacles, both internal and external, which make it hard for him to reach his goals. One message or theme that stands out through the story is that Fulgencio would not have a chance to make any of his dreams come true by merely working alone. It is his friends, his family, and ultimately the loves of his life that help him overcome his personal flaws, societal and historical obstacles, and ultimately make his fulfillment possible.

Fulgencio and the other characters that make his journey possible are characterized below in brief. Each character aids Fulgencio in his quest, but also changes to a certain degree as they go through their own personal journeys.

**RECAPPING THE CHARACTERS:**

**Fulgencio Ramirez** – The son of impoverished Mexican immigrants, Fulgencio falls in love with Carolina Mendelssohn and the American Dream. A mystical family curse, the racial

and ethnic prejudices of the 1950's, and his own flaws stand between him and his aspirations. Fulgencio is often his own worst enemy. At times stubborn, misguided, and infuriating, Fulgencio is also inspiring, exciting and lovable.

**Carolina Mendelssohn** – The Anglo-American daughter of the local pharmacist falls in love with Fulgencio in high school only to have her life ruined. Her strong spirit and modern American mindset often clash with Fulgencio's traditional Mexican values, but her love for him is undeniable and resilient, giving both of them hope.

**Brother William** – The principal of the Catholic boys' school, Brother William is also Fulgencio's football coach and lifelong mentor. Even as a spirit, he endeavors to help Fulgencio dispel the family curse.

**El Chotay** – Fulgencio's pharmacy delivery man and constant companion, both in life and death, El Chotay helps Fulgencio in his entrepreneurial endeavors while he is alive, and he philosophizes with Fulgencio and keeps him grounded in his loneliest moments, even if he is but a ghost.

**Little David** – Fulgencio's youngest brother, who has intellectual disabilities and depends on Fulgencio and his mother for caregiving and support, does his best to help bring Fulgencio and Carolina back together again, his smarts and wisdom often exceeding those of his "non-disabled" brethren.

**Ninfa Cisneros** – Fulgencio’s headstrong but loving mother claims to not believe in curses and witchcraft, yet one gets the feeling that this is simply her way of escaping the magical reality that she was born into on the family ranch, El Dos De Copas. She resents Fulgencio’s independence and feels abandoned by him when he leaves home, but in the end she also loves, accepts and helps him overcome the family curse by providing key pieces of information.

**Fernando Cisneros** – Fulgencio’s grandfather lives a lonely and cursed life out on his Mexican ranch, El Dos De Copas, accompanied only by a magical apparition of the Virgen de Guadalupe and his beloved grandson.

**Paloma Angélica Ramirez**, Fulgencio and Carolina’s daughter, demonstrates how the second generation has the power to build on the efforts and accomplishments of first-born children of immigrants. Trained at Harvard as an architect, she bridges the borders between countries and cultures as well as between life and death through her vision for a more harmonious future.

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Consider Fulgencio’s journey from the moment his mom sends him to Mendelssohn’s Drug Store for her back medicine to the final pages of the novel. Which of the other characters are most vital to his growth as a person? Why?
2. The characters in the novel are very much rooted in a sense of place. La Frontera is the mythical bordertown setting of the novel. El Dos De Copas is the ranch Fulgencio spends much of his time on in Mexico. How much of Fulgencio’s identity comes from where he was born and raised? How much of who he is – and who he strives to become also depends on him going beyond La Frontera? What does his experience at UT Austin mean for him? How does it change him? Do you see sense of place as important in your own life and self-identity?
3. Fulgencio’s life as an individual separate from his family seems set into motion the moment he first meets Carolina in the drug store. What does Carolina mean to him? How does that change over the course of time? Do you think how he views her and what she means to him is fair to her as a person?
4. Fulgencio has many dreams, from being successful in America to winning and then reclaiming Carolina’s heart. Yet, the obstacles standing between him and his dreams are just as large. What are those obstacles? Which are internal and which are external?

5. Both la maldición de Caja Pinta (Fulgencio’s family curse) and the presence of machismo are major challenges for Fulgencio. Do you believe the curse is symbolic of something deeper? If so, what does it represent? How important do you think it is that Fulgencio understand what part of his problems come from the curse and what part lies within himself? Do you think he succeeds in tackling both aspects of what is preventing him from being a good partner for Carolina?
6. Fulgencio sings Mexican songs throughout the novel. How did those make you feel? What do you think they meant for Fulgencio? Do you feel the same way about anything in your life?
7. At the end of the novel, Paloma Angélica has a vision for a better future that bridges the borders between countries, culture and even the living and the dead. What do you make of that?
8. The novel is written in the style of magical realism. What did you think of the magical aspects of the story? What did they represent to you?
9. Do you think Fulgencio overcame his destiny, fulfilled it, or both? How and why?

#### WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:

1. What kind of goals do you have for your life and how do they differ from what others in your family might have pursued or accomplished? Do you ever feel that your goals or dreams make you feel different or separated from your parents or other family members? How do you try to reconcile those differences if they exist?
2. What obstacles do you feel exist between you and your dreams for your life, both internally and externally? What are you doing to try to overcome those obstacles? Who do you think can be of most help to you in your journey?
3. Have you ever experienced any of the gender role challenges that Fulgencio ran into in life, like machismo? If so, how has that experience made you feel? Is there anything you would like to do in your life to help yourself or others overcome obstacles created by traditional gender roles or value systems and behaviors like machismo?
4. What do borders mean to you? Do you feel you transcend borders in your own life, whether those may be physical, emotional, generational or spiritual? Do you ever feel other people have a different view of borders than you do? Have you ever tried to change somebody’s mind about how they

see the difference between one side of a border and another? What do you find most helpful in changing a person's mind about something like that?

5. What are the most important aspects of your culture to you? How are those the same or different from how you think your family views your culture? What about how society views your culture? Your friends and peers? Is there anything you would like to see change about how American society and media view your culture? Is there anything you think you could do in your life to help make those changes happen?
6. Do you speak another language? Do you ever feel like you are a different person, or that different aspects of your personality emerge, when you speak that other language? Why do you think that is? How might being aware of those differences help you bridge the gaps and grow as a person?

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

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