

Totally Psychic



DISCUSSION GUIDE

About the Book



This debut middle grade series stars a Cuban-American tween medium navigating friends, family, and ghosts!

Paloma Ferrer is psychic. In fact, everyone in her family line has “the gift.” Now that Paloma has come into her powers, she dreams of becoming a famous medium to celebrities, just like her beloved grandma.

When Paloma’s parents move them from Miami to Los Angeles, she hatches a plan to get her career as a medium up and running:

- Host seances at her new school and stream on social media
- Build her profile and make a name for herself
- Avoid detection from her tattletale of a little sister

But when a reading gone awry leaves Paloma in a sticky situation with a new friend, she’ll need more than a crystal ball to find her way out of this mess.

About Brigid Martin

Brigid Martin is a New York based writer, reader, and serial hobbyist with a soft spot for friendly ghosts. Brigid received her master’s degree from Fordham University’s Gabelli School of Business and undergraduate degree in English and Music from Stony Brook University. Brigid has enjoyed a career in the publishing field for nearly a decade and is excited to be on the other side of the page with her debut novel, *Totally Psychic*.

About this Guide

The Common Core Standards push readers to look closer when reading a text including examining key ideas & details, craft & structure, and integration of knowledge & ideas. Martin's novel *Totally Psychic*, includes opportunities to look at author's purpose, character traits and growth, predictions, figurative language, and more that allow the reader to deeply delve into the text. This teaching guide includes discussion questions and language arts activities to be used in grades 4 through 8 as this text is read as a whole group, small group, or a combination. This guide could also be modified to be used with a student who is reading the novel independently.

The Common Core Anchor Standards in English Language Arts that can be addressed using the discussion questions and activities in this guide are:

English Language Arts

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3

Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4

Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6

Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.10

Read and comprehend complex literary texts independently and proficiently.



Discussion Questions

Use these questions as reading check-ins, writing prompts, or classroom discussions throughout *Totally Psychic*.

1. In chapter one, Paloma says that every person is born with a special kind of gift. Although we aren't born with magical gifts like Paloma and her Abuela, we all have something that we can do that makes us special. What is your gift?
2. Why did the author choose to include both Spanish and English in the book?
3. Paloma's Abuela was on a show when she was younger that is still being discovered by new viewers because of streaming services. How have streaming services changed access to shows? What is an older show you discovered because it was streaming?
4. In chapter three, we learn the five rules that every medium should follow. At this point, did you agree with all of the rules? If not, which did you question?
 - At the end of the book, did you change your mind?
5. We learn in chapter four that Paloma's mom does not have a gift like the rest of her family. How do you think this makes her feel? Do you think this influenced the move?
6. In chapter four we also learn the psychic abilities about each of Paloma's family members, and she explains how each ability fits their personality. What psychic ability do you think you would have? How does it match your personality?
7. Abuela tells Paloma, "Sometimes we have to do things we don't want to in order to make us stronger." Do you agree with the sentiment?
8. Paloma says that her "eyes were so heavy from the weight of the emotions." Emotions do not literally weigh anything, but do you think emotions figuratively weigh something? Explain.
9. Paloma shares that "Abuelito's food...felt like home." If you said this same sentence but for yourself, whose or what food feels like home to you? Why?
10. In chapter six we first learn of Eloise. Who do you think Eloise is based on the clues?
 - Update your prediction, if needed, throughout the book then at the end of the book as yourself if your prediction was correct.
11. Paloma's new school has some very interesting clubs including the agricultural club DIRT which Paloma wants to join because of her love of plants. If you could have any club at school focused on your passion, what club would it be?
12. In chapter eight, Paloma's mom says she is already disappointed in Paloma's behavior. It was day one of school and the only negative act that happened was Paloma being late. Do you think this was fair of her mom? How does this make you feel about her mom?

13. In chapter nine, Paloma shares that “being the new kid at school was extra hard during lunch.” Why is this? What other times during the school day is it also hard to be new? How could returning students help with this transition?
14. In chapter twelve, Paloma is invited to Willow’s party and is asked to do a reading with a Ouija board, which isn’t allowed; however, Paloma is worried about Willow not wanting to be her friend if she doesn’t do it. Because she does it, chaos ensues. How should have Paloma and Willow dealt with this situation differently if they are truly friends?
15. In chapter thirteen we learn the secret Willow’s grandfather wants Paloma to tell. How would you answer the questions Paloma was asking herself: “Should I tell her about her parents’ divorce, like her grandfather wanted? Or should I not tell her anything at all and let her be devastated by the news when it actually happens?”
16. Paloma is doing all of this to hopefully join her Abuela on her Latin America tour. Do you think her choices are helping or hurting her plea? Explain.
17. In chapter fifteen, we once again see Paloma’s mom’s resistance to Paloma speaking to ghosts. Why do you think she is so against it?
18. Would true friends kick you out of their group just because you can’t do something? How should Paloma deal with the situation she is facing in chapter fifteen?
19. Paloma tends to listen to others instead of herself; we see this at the end of chapter fifteen when she listens to the ghosts and in chapter seventeen when she listens to Stephen. Do you think this is a problematic character trait? Why or why not? If you were Paloma’s friend, how could you help her work on this?
20. Paloma’s mom swears that joining the choir is not a punishment. Do you agree with her or Paloma? Why?
21. In chapter twenty-one, we learn that Suzanne La Luca was in an accident and Paloma believes that it was what the ghost was trying to tell her earlier in the book. Do you think that if Abuela had warned her, she wouldn’t have gotten in the accident? Do you think it is better for mediums to share all information, even if it breaks the rules?
22. When Paloma tells Willow what her grandfather has been bugging Paloma to share, Willow reacts much differently than Paloma thought. Why do you think she reacted the way she did? Do you think Paloma did the right thing?
23. In chapter twenty-two, Paloma’s mom seems shocked that Paloma didn’t feel comfortable coming to her. Why do you think Paloma was so afraid to tell her mom? What had she done throughout the book that you see would have added to Paloma’s fear?
24. When we learn about Paloma’s mom’s gift, it is shared that it is “a very complicated gift to have.” Why is her gift so complicated? How would you deal with having it?
25. Abuela shares with Paloma that “stress and anxiety can be pretty powerful.” What does she mean about stress and anxiety having power? How can stress and anxiety affect us?
26. Abuela shares another one of her precepts in chapter twenty-two: “Remember what I always tell you about mistakes, darling? It’s how we learn and grow.” How does this change the perception of what a mistake is? How do mistakes help us grow as a person?

27. The book ends with the holidays, including their family tradition of a big family dinner then opening up presents the night before on Noche Buena. What is your family's winter holiday, or any holiday, tradition? Why are traditions so important AND so fun?
28. Throughout the book, the author uses figurative language, especially similes. Two examples can be seen in chapter twenty-two: "spilling out of me like water escaping from a broken dam" and "felt like a weight had been lifted off me." Why do you think the author uses figurative language? How does it affect your experience as a reader?
- **Extra fun:** Find other examples throughout the book!
29. *Totally Psychic* is told from Paloma's point of view. There are times throughout the book that a situation would have been told in a completely different way if the point of view changed. What are some examples of events in the book where this is true?
30. Paloma learns quite the lesson throughout *Totally Psychic*. What do you think the author hopes the reader learns from reading the book?

This guide was created by Kellee Moyer, a middle school teacher-librarian in Orlando, FL. Kellee is the author of various teaching guides for all levels; the co-author of the blog [Unleashing Readers](#); a past committee member & chair of the Schneider Family Book Award and Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award; on the 2016-2018 ALAN Board of Directors; and a member of NCTE, ALAN, and ALA. Kellee can be reached at Kellee.Moye@gmail.com.