



# SEA MONSTERS

## A Novel

by CHLOE ARIDJIS

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### Reading Group Guide

1. The first half of *Sea Monsters* alternates between Mexico City and the beach in Zipolite. How do these alternating flashbacks shape the story?
2. Though she knows so little about him, Luisa is immediately drawn to Tomás and fixates on him. The Ukrainian dwarves are similarly enigmatic, so much so that Luisa impulsively runs away to search for them. What is it about these figures that Luisa finds so compelling?
3. Luisa often has small moments of communion with animals and insects. She feels the knowing stare of an iguana, she aids a wounded dog, she imagines the microorganisms that feed on shipwrecks in vivid, sympathetic detail. How do these moments shape your sense of Luisa as a character?
4. *Sea Monsters* contains many different references to 1980s rock music—Luisa listens to Joy Division, Siouxsie and the Banshees, and the Smiths. How does music influence Luisa? Why do you think Aridjis chose to set the book in the 1980s?
5. Discuss the shift that occurs in Tomás and Luisa’s relationship once they arrive in Zipolite. What does she come to realize, both about Tomás and about herself?
6. Luisa has a tense relationship with the ocean—she seeks calm, but the ocean is personified as restless, tumultuous, overpowering the landscape and even killing some unfortunate beachgoers. Zipolite is also referred to as the “Beach of the Dead.” How does the ocean add to Luisa’s growing disillusionment?
7. “The beach looked like a naïve composition, the stock motifs laid out, read for a pair of scissors to come and create a gap, a boundary, where there failed to be one, to separate the water from the sky” (115). What do you think Luisa means when she describes the beach as a “naïve composition”? How does this contrast with Luisa’s own recklessness and her desire for independence?
8. The merman is likely the character with whom Luisa speaks the least—he even speaks a different language than her—and yet, she believes they have a deep connection. How would you describe the relationship she develops with the merman?
9. Over the last few pages of the novel, Luisa’s father reveals how he came to find her. What does the father’s perspective illuminate about the world of the novel, and about Luisa’s perception of events?
10. Luisa finally returns home, feeling more defeated than triumphant. How has Luisa’s perception of the world changed after all that transpired in Zipolite?
11. As a young person, did you ever run away from home? Or fantasize about it?