



Hummingbird Season

Written and Illustrated by Stephen V.W.

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Grades 6-8

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Reading Guide by Jennifer Silver, Southland Council of Teachers of English

Discussion Questions

1. How does the author use the language of the COVID-19 pandemic to describe Archie's experiences and feelings? Think about masks, being "muted," "we're all in this together," "(not real) school" and other ideas or descriptions related to this time period.
2. The author uses a number of motifs, also known as recurring ideas. Note how these motifs change in their meaning and importance to Archie each time they are mentioned: haircuts, the color orange, eyebrows, hummingbirds, and heartbeats/hopebeats.
3. Hummingbird Season quietly situates itself in California as Archie discusses "wildfire season" beginning on page 194. How does this brief exploration of a specific setting contrast with the more universal experiences of the pandemic era? What would be lost in the narrative if these additional setting details were omitted?
4. Why is Ruby so important to Archie? How does each member of the family interact with this hummingbird?
5. On page 68, Archie observes, "Love can be noisy." In what ways do Archie and Hank connect and grow apart? What motivates these changes?
6. How does Archie's virtual school experience compare or contrast with your own experience or the experiences of people you know?

EXPLORE

Beyond This Book

1. Read the short essay “Joyus Valadoras” by Brian Doyle online or check out [this video](#). How are Archie’s “facts about hummingbirds” expanded for another audience by Doyle? What new information can you learn from this companion piece?
2. If you are interested in reading additional books set during the COVID-19 pandemic, [Worlds of Words](#) has a great list. How are the books, or even the book descriptions, similar or different to Hummingbird Season?
3. Try to imitate Archie’s poetry style by capturing a moment in time important to you using quick and vivid verses. Your goal should be to connect with the reader by painting a vivid picture with your words. Read your finished poem aloud or invite your teacher or classmates to help stage an open mic event in your class.

