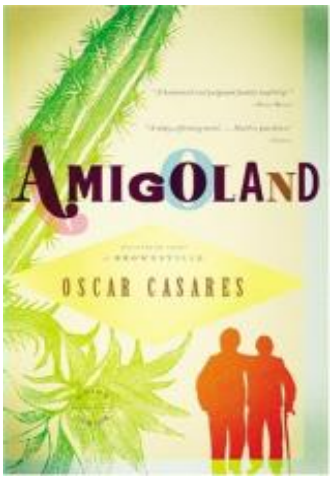
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Amigoland

by Oscar Casares



About the Book

In a small town on the Mexican border live two brothers, Don Fidencio and Don Celestino. Stubborn and independent, they now must face the facts: they are old, and they have let a family argument stand between them for too long. Don Celestino's good-natured housekeeper encourages him to make amends --- while he still can. They secretly liberate Don Fidencio from his nursing home and travel into Mexico to solve the mystery at the heart of their dispute: the family legend of their grandfather's kidnapping. As the unlikely trio travels, the brothers learn it's never too late for a new beginning.

With winsome prose and heartfelt humor, Oscar Casares's debut novel of family lost and found radiates with generosity and grace and confirms the arrival of a uniquely talented new writer.

Discussion Guide

1. Don Fidencio and Don Celestino constantly bicker with each other, but they have more in common than they would admit. What traits do the two men share? How do these similarities influence their relationship?

2. Amigoland explores the way family stories survive over time. What stories have been passed down in your family? Have they been reinterpreted, embellished, or debated? How so?

3. What do you think of Amalia?s decision to put Don Fidencio in a nursing home? Do you think her father could ever forgive her --- or understand her decision?

4. Why do you think Don Fidencio gives everyone in the nursing home a nickname? Do you feel there?s a reason for this beyond his failing memory? What does this show about his relationship with his fellow residents? And how might this lend irony to the name of the nursing home --- and the title of the novel?

5. Discuss the borders that exist between Socorro and Don Celestino --- both geographic and social. How do those borders affect their relationship?

6. The novel?s narrative point of view shifts among the three main characters, allowing readers to come to know and understand each of them. Which of the three characters did you empathize with the most, and why?

7. When describing Don Fidencio?s realization about old age on the road trip, the author writes that ?he had escaped one prison only to discover that there was no way of escaping his own failing body.? Did **Amigoland** change your perception of the elderly or the aging process? How so?

8. In the course of the novel we are made privy to several of Don Fidencio?s dream sequences, which are moments when time, memory, and reality collapse. What meaning did you find in these passages? Do they symbolize anything about the frustrations and futility of old age?

9. Why do you think Don Celestino was so hesitant to acknowledge his relationship with Socorro?

10. Oscar Casares makes it clear that sexism and certain stereotypes still persist. How does Socorro conform to and break these stereotypes in her roles as a wife, widow, and mistress?

11. What do you think drives Socorro to push Don Celestino so strongly to reconnect with his brother? Do you think it is partly out of her desire to connect with Don Celestino on a deeper level?

12. How does Oscar Casares convey the different flavor of life in Mexico compared to Texas once the trio crosses the border on their road trip? How do the people the trio encounters along the way illuminate the character of the country?

13. Do you believe Don Celestino will be able to give more to his relationship with Socorro after they return from the trip? If so, what do you think changes his outlook on their relationship?

14. Don Fidencio and Don Celestino are both older men in need of reawakenings, and their road trip is something like a quest to reclaim their dignity in old age. Do you think they succeed in accomplishing this goal by the end of the journey?

15. Why do you think Don Fidencio was content to stay in Mexico with Carmen and Mamá Nene? What did he find there, and how was what he discovered meaningful to him at the end of his life?

16. In the end, it is the journey embarked upon by the three main characters that teaches them the most about themselves. Discuss why the journey itself is more important to the story of **Amigoland** than learning the truth about the Rosaleses? grandfather.

Author Bio

Oscar Casares was born in the border town of Brownsville, Texas, the setting for his critically acclaimed story collection. The recipient of a 2006 National Endowment for the Arts fellowship, Casares is a graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop and now teaches creative writing at the University of Texas in Austin, where he lives with his wife and young son. This is his first novel.

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