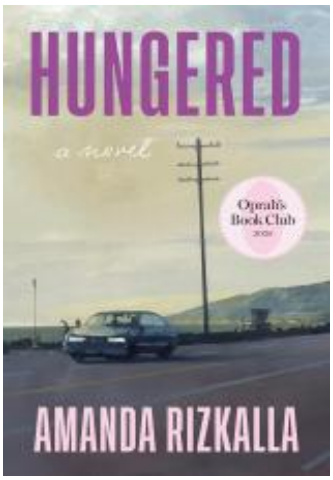
Hungered

by Amanda Rizkalla



About the Book

For readers of THE HOUSE ON MANGO STREET and WE THE ANIMALS, this striking debut brings to life an unforgettable young narrator and the complicated, loving, cruel and generous figures who make up her universe.

Sofia?s mother promises that soon she?ll have her own bedroom to decorate. Soon, too, she?ll be able to see her friends, go back to school, and eat the colorful, tempting cakes in the grocery store?s display case. For now, though, 12-year-old Sofia lives with her mother and younger brother in their car. For now, Sofia?s days are a blur of freeways and strip malls as her mother searches for a safe place to park for the night. For now, Sofia tries to carve out a space and an identity for herself while grappling with her family?s disintegration.

This haunting and lyrical novel captures the fault lines of an existence marked by economic insecurity, exploring what it means to come of age during a moment of displacement. Beautiful, evocative and emotionally charged, Amanda Rizkalla?s HUNGERED is an indelible ode to survival, memory and the search for home in its many forms.

Discussion Guide

Please Note: In order to provide book clubs with the most informed and thought-provoking questions possible, it is necessary to reveal aspects of the book. If you have not finished reading HUNGERED, you may want to wait before reviewing this guide.

1. How did Sofia?s twelve-year-old perspective influence your understanding of the story? How might the reading experience have been different if it were narrated by Rafa, or mama? How about if the book was written in the third person?

2. Over the course of the novel, Sofia and Rafa both urge mama to seek support with abuelo, with friends? parents, and even with baba. Why do you think mama is hesitant to acquiesce? In the times that she does, what is motivating her?

3. While this is a story of financial and housing insecurity, it is also a coming-of-age story. Can you recall moments throughout the novel that are pivotal to Sofia?s understanding of herself and of the world? In what ways do Sofia?s family circumstances influence, or not, her evolving sense of self?

4. There are lots of complicated familial relationships depicted in HUNGERED. How would you characterize Sofia?s relationship to mama? How about to baba? How would you describe the dynamics between Sofia?s parents and their own parents?

5. Sofia?s multiethnic identity is mentioned often in the novel. In what ways does her Mexican and Egyptian heritage shape her sense of self? How about her identity as an American child of an immigrant? Outside of her family background, what factors shape the way Sofia sees herself, and the world?

6. Among the novel?s many heartbreaking scenes is the moment when Ashley uses Sofia?s gift card to buy pastries for herself. What did that gift card represent to Sofia? What did it represent to Ashley? Were you surprised, or unsurprised, by Sofia?s reaction to the scene?

7. The idea of stories and storytelling comes up consistently throughout the novel. What does storytelling mean, to Sofia and Rafa? Why is it important to them?

8. Sofia experiences many changes over the course of HUNGERED: where she is sleeping night-to-night, where she is going to school, and what she is able to eat are certain examples. Discuss some of the things that stay consistent for her, even as her circumstances evolve.

9. While much of HUNGERED is concerned with familial relationships, Sofia?s friendships are also central to her life. In what ways do you think her friendships with Lena and Chloe differed from her friendships with Ana and Antonio? In what ways were they the same?

10. In the final scene of the novel, readers don?t know where Sofia, Rafa, and their mother are going to end up. Where do you envision them going, in the hours after the novel ends?

Questions for Parents

1. Sofia?s mother uses the word ?soon? regarding a bedroom, school, and even treats. As parents, we often use ?soon? to comfort our children. At what point does this move from a hopeful promise to a ?survival lie?? How does Sofia?s perception of her mother?s credibility evolve as the story progresses?

2. Sofia navigates ?first days of school and first friendships? while living in a car. What is the psychological toll on children of maintaining a ?normal? social life while hiding a fundamental part of their existence? How does this secrecy shape Sofia?s identity, compared to her peers?

3. The novel explores a family in crisis and a mother searching for safety. How does the book challenge or reinforce your definitions of a ?good parent??

4. While unhoused, Sofia?s longing for all the things she cannot have is amplified --- from the cakes at the bakery to the friends she left behind at her old school. Sofia?s experience is a visceral image of being on the outside looking in. How can we teach our children to be mindful of differences in access to things some people take for granted?

5. This novel explores how trauma survives across generations. Do you see Sofia?s mother?s actions as a reflection of her own upbringing, especially with how Sofia observes her mother while they stay with their abuelo? Do you think Sofia or her mother attempt to break that cycle?

6. Shilpi Somaya Gowda mentions ?beauty in small acts of grace? in her review. Which moment of kindness --- either from a stranger, a friend at school, or within the family --- felt most impactful to you? How can we model these ?small graces? for our children so they become the glue in their own communities?

Author Bio

Amanda Rizkalla is the author of the debut novel HUNGERED, an Oprah's Book Club pick. A recent Steinbeck Fellow and Wisconsin Institute for Creative Writing Fellow, she has been a writer-in-residence at Ragdale, Hedgebrook and Djerassi, among others. After graduating from Stanford University, she received her MFA from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she was a Kemper Knapp Fellow. Her work has received a grant from the Barbara Deming Memorial Fund and an Elizabeth George Foundation Fellowship through Hedgebrook.

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