

BURN DOWN, RISE UP

BY VINCENT TIRADO

EDUCATOR GUIDE



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Educator Guide for grades 9-12

Echoes of the past haunt the Bronx, the beloved home of Raquel Celestin, and threatens to take all she loves. To save her Mami, her crush, and her community, Raquel must enter the Echo and reclaim all it has stolen from her. The rules are simple: Enter the train station at 3:00 am, recite a chant, ride the train for an hour only going in one direction and try to stay alive. Raquel and her friends discover even the simplest rules are easy to break because just a train ride away, a parallel Bronx exists perpetually on fire and inhabited by dead “passengers” burning and stuck in an underworld controlled by the Slumlord who has infected them all with rot and mold. Can Raquel defeat the Echo and quench a fire that’s burned for decades?

ANTICIPATION GUIDE

Statement	Agree +/- Disagree -	Rationale for +/-	Post Reading Reflection
Events of the past heavily influence the present.			
Our realities are often only a construct of our imagination.			
It is better to leave the past in the past.			
To exist in safety means you must at some point face danger.			

THEMATIC CONCEPTS

Some possible themes for this novel are survival, power, injustice, reality, and oppression. On a Padlet, Jamboard, or on chart paper, ask students to finish the following sentences with words, images, additional texts based on their current understandings of the words. Engage in student-led discussion based on the class responses. After students have finished the novel, ask them to review their statements/images here and connect them to the novel's possible themes. Students should select the thematic concept best aligned with the novel.

Survival is _____

Power is _____

Oppression is _____

Reality is _____

Injustice is _____

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND READING ACTIVITIES

The following prompts can be offered as discussion starters, writing prompts, or reading activities.

PROLOGUE

At the onset of the novel, the reader is introduced to the Bronx. "The Bronx was alive." The Bronx becomes a character in the novel. What is revealed in the prologue about the Bronx as a character?

PART ONE

What are your initial impressions of Raquel? Use textual evidence to support your assessment of her. Robert Moses' name comes up several times in this section of the novel. Raquel tells Aaron about him for their history project. Papi's friend Xiomara mentions him as she shares Bronx history with Raquel. Robert Moses seems to be central to the story of the Bronx. Conduct your own research and identify three things you learn about Robert Moses and his connection to the Bronx.

Complete the chart below selecting three examples of imagery from this section of the novel. Explain the significance of the selected imagery.

Imagery from Part One	Explanation/Significance

How does Cisco's disappearance impact Charlize? How does she change over the course of part one? Cite evidence from the novel that demonstrates this change.

Research the fires in the Bronx in the 1970s. Complete the chart below.

What happened?	Who was impacted?	Why did it happen?	How did the residents/ community react and recover?	Add any additional interesting facts...

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PART TWO

How does preparing for the Echo game change the relationships between Raquel and the people closest to her? Papi? Aaron? Charlize? Cisco?

What important details do Raquel, Aaron, and Charlize learn about the Echo game from Olivia? How does Olivia survive the Echo?

What do you believe the Echo symbolizes? Why? Provide textual evidence to support your assertion.

PART THREE

Track the thematic concepts *appearance and reality* in this section of the novel as things and events throughout are often not as they seem. Provide specific examples of this from part three. Identify a motif (a recurring element or pattern of imagery that support this theme (*appearance and reality*) present in this section. Provide textual evidence to support this motif.

PART FOUR

Upon returning home from the Echo, Raquel dreams about the Slumlord who infects her with the "rot." Even though it is a dream, Raquel knows that the infection transcends the dream. She states "The Echo was inside me now." What does this mean and what are the implications of Raquel being infected?

PART FIVE

Raquel refers to her life as "trauma after trauma." She's also referenced the trauma of the Bronx fire. What is the role of trauma in the novel thus far? How does trauma define and/or redefine the characters (including the Bronx)?

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PART SIX

Select one or two key details from each timed chapter and explain why you believe it's important to the novel.

Time	Detail	Importance
2:55 am		
3:05 am	Pelham Bay Park, Bronx	
3:15 am		
3:27 am		
3:35 am		
3:45 am		
3:55 am		
3:59 am		
4:15 am		

PART SEVEN

How does Mami react to seeing Raquel? Papi? Analyze their interaction. What does it reveal about each character?

How is culture represented in this chapter? Raquel's culture? The culture of the Bronx?

"But the Bronx has more good to it than anyone could think... You don't have to move out of your neighborhood to live in a better one." Why do you believe it was important for the author to conclude the novel making these declarations?

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WRITING ACTIVITIES

View *Defending Your Block: How to Stay, Fight and Build* at <https://vimeo.com/390012467>.

Respond to the following prompt: Connect the novel to the fight that real communities across the country are engaging in to defend their neighborhoods.

Raquel is proud to be from the Bronx; it is part of who she is. Consider your own community. How is your community a part of your identity? What are its strengths? What do you know about its history? How does its history impact the present? What are its challenges? What can be done to address its challenges? What is your role in that change?

SCIENCE

Years of neglect by slumlords in the Bronx led to structural and health issues. Derelict buildings with leaky pipes and roofs and rodent infestations left inhabitants having to live for years with pervasive rot, decay, and mold. Learn about the science of black mold. How does it form? How is it different from other types of mold? What are its effects?

Suggested readings:

<https://molekule.science/black-mold-symptoms-what-happens-when-youre-exposed>

<https://science.howstuffworks.com/life/cellular-microscopic/black-mold.html>

Resources:

Decades of Fire Documentary Interview at <https://youtu.be/ITGfKeMZ6dA>

How the Bronx Burned at <https://bronxriver.org/post/greenway/how-the-bronx-burned>