

Via Dolorosa

—Ronald Damien Malfi—

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways does the scenery of Malfi's novel mirror the plot of the book? What role does Nick's artwork play in the novel? How does his artwork reveal his interior emotions? In what ways is Nick's painting, namely his mural, cathartic for him, and how do others respond to this very public, tangible act of catharsis?
2. Describe the ways Nick's experience in battle is still with him, and in what ways he has moved forward in his life. What helps Nick most in his attempts to overcome his past, and what holds him back?
3. What affect does Isabella have on Nick? Is she a sympathetic character? Why or why not?
4. In what ways does Malfi use painting, photography, and art as a metaphor for Nick's interactions with Isabella, and how does this motif function within the narrative? What does this use of metaphor convey that mere description would not?
5. Describe the Paradis D'Hotel. How does Malfi use the idea of a lush, tropical resort to add an ironic twist to his novel? Considering the emotions and interactions of the characters, in what ways is this setting appropriate?
6. In what ways are Emma and Isabella similar? In what ways are they different? Why is Emma drawn to Isabella's friendship?
7. How do the "Limbo" signs function within the narrative? In what type of situations do they seem to appear, and in what ways are they used to foreshadow and add irony to the story?
8. Describe the tone of the narrative. What devices does Malfi use to evoke this somber, poetic mood in his novel? How do descriptive passages about the characters' surroundings affect the tone of the book?
9. What role do secrets and evasion play in the story? How does the ending treat this recurring theme within the narrative?