

Monstrilio Discussion Questions

1. Each act is narrated by a different character. Why do you think the author chose to tell this story in this way? Did you like this structure? Did you have a favorite perspective? What made you identify most with your choice?
2. The novel centers a family that is made up of both biologically related and chosen figures. How essential is this unconventional family system to this story and, relatedly, to Monstrilio's development?
3. Magos is a complicated character who makes several surprising, uncomfortable, and even disturbing choices in this novel. Did you feel her actions were justified? Why or why not?
4. Lena's is the only section not narrated by a member of Monstrilio's nuclear family. Why do you think the author included her perspective?
5. A recurring motif in this novel is monstrosity, explored through Monstrilio's arc, Lena's relationship with her mother, and Joseph's attitude toward the tarantula in his apartment. What do you think the author is communicating about the social construction of monstrosity?
6. Monstrilio's perspective is saved for the very end of this novel. How did his voice compare to other characters' descriptions of him? Were you surprised by anything he revealed about his experiences or interior life?
7. Many of the characters in this novel are queer, but the story itself could be analyzed through a queer lens. How does using this framework deepen your understanding of Monstrilio's themes?
8. Similarly, the author pays close attention to the physical bodies of his characters. Crip Theory combines queer theory and critical disability studies to investigate different intersecting social norms and pressures. Are you able to apply Crip Theory principles to this text? What would that look like?
9. What do you think the author is trying to say about love through each character's relationship with Monstrilio?
10. How did you feel about this novel's portrayal of grief? Were there any passages that felt especially impactful or truthful?
11. Monstrilio is a work of genre-bending fiction, with elements of horror, folklore, and literary realism, that employs a variety of tones. Did you find this blending effective?
12. Some readers might categorize Monstrilio's proclivities as cannibalism. Do you agree? And if so, what do you make of the recent rise of cannibalism in fiction?
13. Did you enjoy the ending and/or find it cathartic? What do you think happens to Monstrilio after the final page? What do you hope for these characters' futures?