

## Praise for **WANTED**

“Wanted is a well-written, suspenseful, even violent book made more troubling by the authenticity and likability of its characters. Readers will ache as they read this page-turner.” —**ALA Booklist**

“Ayarbe does not shrink from the gritty, depressing reality of twenty-first-century American race and class issues, or from the uncertainty as to how the future will unfold. Despite her own insecurities, Michal emerges as a clear voice in an important conversation. With just enough romance and a fair amount of suspense, this realistic story prompts dialogue about a difficult topic.” —**VOYA**

“Teens will be drawn in by the action, but the larger issues will linger after the last page is read.” —**School Library Journal**

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**HEIDI AYARBE** grew up in Nevada and has lived all over the world. She now makes her home in Colombia with her family. She is also the author of *Compulsion*, *Freeze Frame* and *Compromised*. You can visit her online at [www.heidiayarbe.com](http://www.heidiayarbe.com).

*Be sure to read  
Heidi's other  
gripping novels!*



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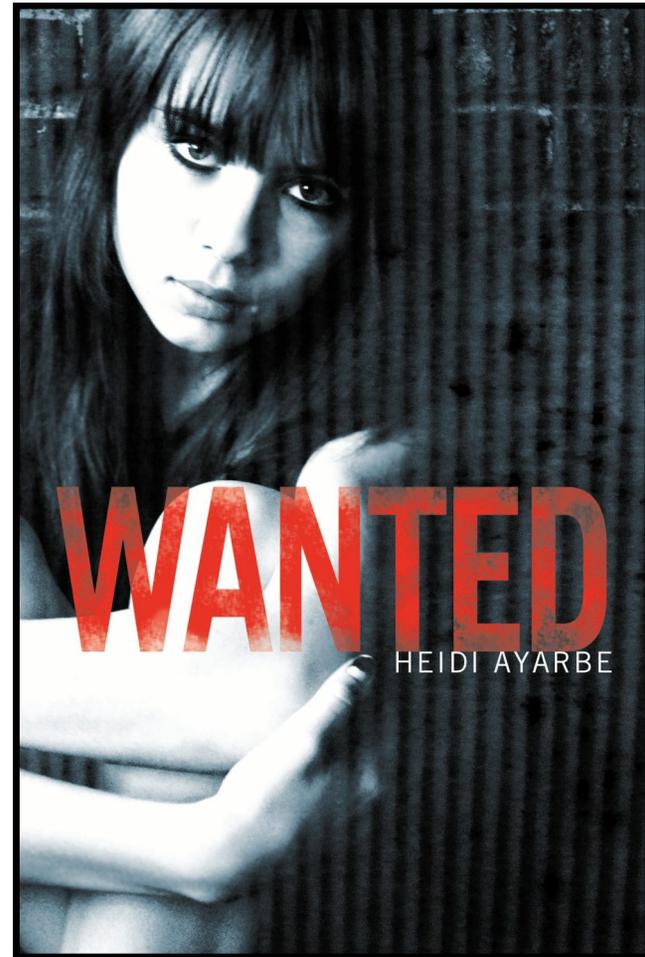
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\* Discussion guide created by Stefanie Hoffman and Emilie Polster

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

# WANTED

by Heidi Ayarbe



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—*ALA Booklist*

## ABOUT THE BOOK

*Sanctuary*. A one-word text message: That's all Michal Garcia needs to gather a crowd. Michal is a seventeen-year-old bookie, and "Sanctuary" is where she takes bets for anyone at Carson City High with enough cash. Her only rule: Never place a bet for herself. Then Josh Ellison moves to town. He pushes Michal to live her life—play the game, he urges, stop being a spectator. So Michael breaks her one rule. She places a bet, feels the rush, lives. And loses. In an act of desperation, she and Josh concoct a plan: Steal from the rich to pay Michal's debt. Then they'll give the rest of their haul to those who need it most. How can burglary be wrong if they are making things right?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) Do you agree that "gambling isn't a whole lot different than high school. It's all about knowing the rules, the stakes, and when to quit" (p. 7)? Why or why not? If you don't agree, what would you compare high school to?
- 2) How is gambling an addiction? How is the rush that Mike feels in the course of her and Josh's vigilantism similar to the rush of gambling? How are both activities dangerous?
- 3) How are ethnicity and race related to identity? What effect does Mike's half-white, half-Mexican parentage have on her identity?
- 4) After learning that Moch is dealing drugs, Michal calls him a cliché (p. 76). What does she mean? Why do you think Moch gave up on his dreams and became part of *la Cordillera*?
- 5) What effects do the deaths of Roe and Mrs. Mendez have on Mike?
- 6) Mike thinks, "There's something powerful about being the person nobody expects you to be" (p. 252). What type of person does Mike think others see her as? What type of person does she see herself as? How have you felt the "power" of breaking through others' expectations?
- 7) Mike wonders if Mrs. B is Moch's lifeline, just as Babylonia is her lifeline (p. 325). What is a lifeline, and how can it be necessary to survive high school and beyond?
- 8) What do you think motivates Josh to take on vigilante justice? What do you think motivates Mike? Do you believe Mike's rationalizations for Babylonia? Why or why not?
- 9) What does Mike mean when she asks, "Have you ever, I don't know, been given a chance to do something, really *do* something?" (p. 356)? She adds, "It was all about now. Hope. Purpose." How can hope sustain a person? How can hope also mislead?
- 10) What does "play the game" refer to in relation to gambling? What larger meaning might it have for Mike's life?
- 11) How is Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *The Gambler* a literary guidepost in the novel? Why do you think Dostoyevsky's work has such significance to Mike? How does it literally save a life in *Wanted*? How do books—and in a broader context, art—connect people and give them common ground?
- 12) Describe the multiple meanings of the book's title. How do Mike, Josh, and Moch feel wanted *and* unwanted over the course of the story?
- 13) Were you surprised by the book's ending? Why or why not?
- 14) Six-word memoirs are a motif throughout *Wanted*. Choose a six-word memoir from the novel that resonates with you and describe what you think it means. What would your own six-word memoir be?