

Ashley hope Pérez



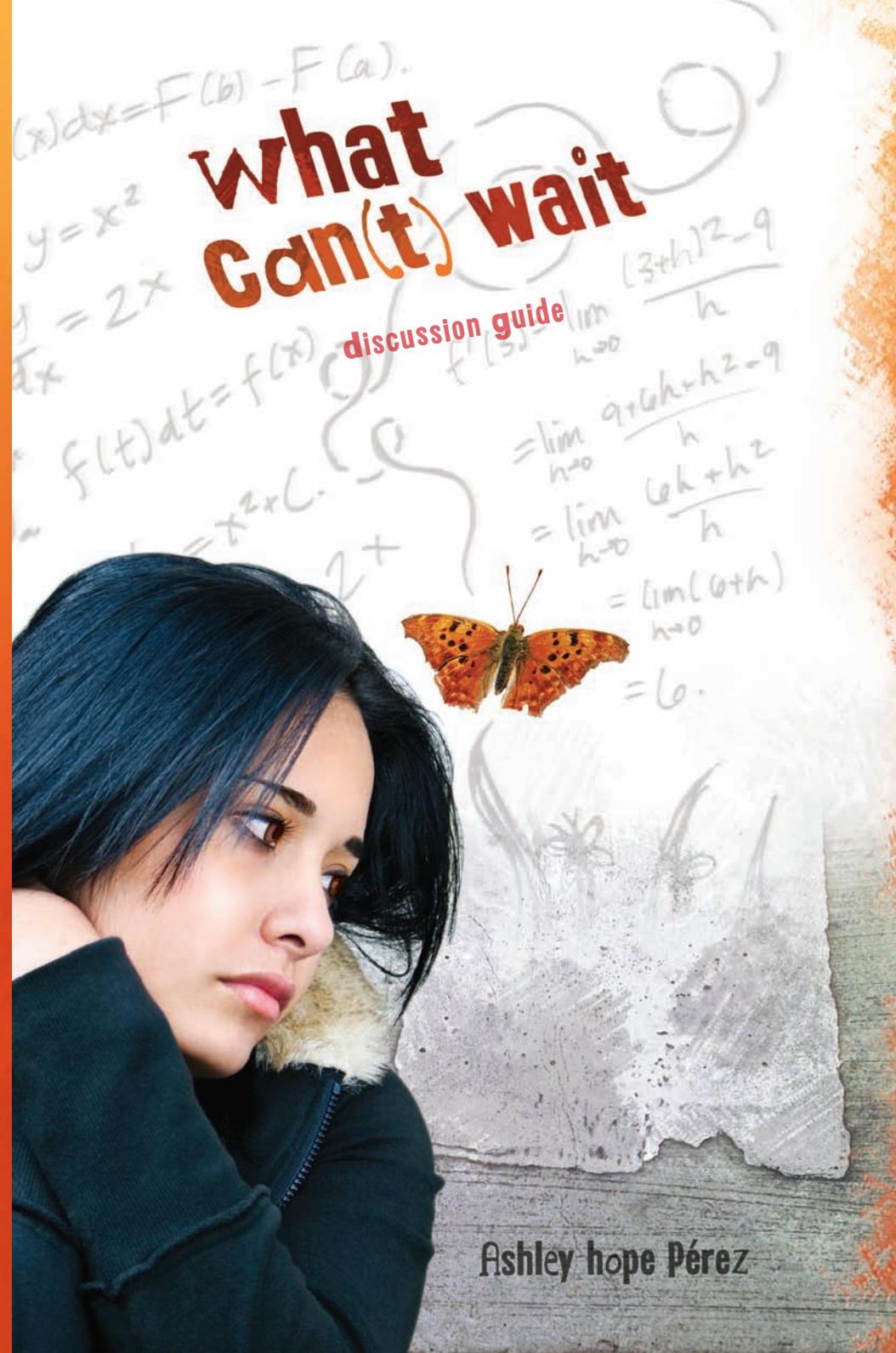
grew up in Texas and served in the Teach for America Corps in a neighborhood similar to the one depicted in her debut novel. She has worked as a translator and is completing a PhD in comparative literature. She lives in Indiana with her husband and their son. She is working on her next novel.



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“Another day finished, *gracias a Dios*.”

Seventeen-year-old Marisa’s mother has been saying this for as long as Marisa can remember. Her parents came to Houston from Mexico. They work hard, and they expect Marisa to help her *familia*. An ordinary life—marrying a neighborhood guy, working, having babies—ought to be good enough for her.

Marisa hears something else from her calc teacher. She should study harder, ace the AP test, and get into engineering school in Austin. Some days, it all seems possible. On others, she’s not even sure what she wants.

When her life at home becomes unbearable, Marisa seeks comfort elsewhere—and suddenly neither her best friend nor boyfriend can get through to her. Caught between the expectations of two different worlds, Marisa isn’t sure what she wants—other than a life where she doesn’t end each day thanking God it’s over.

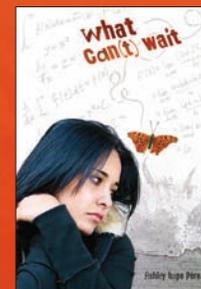
But some things just can’t wait...



topics for discussion:

1. Why do you think the book is titled *What Can't Wait*? What does the title refer to?
2. Why does the author include many words or phrases in Spanish throughout the book? What impact does this technique have on you as a reader? How might it affect other readers?
3. At first, Marisa is very reluctant to apply to UT. Why is she so cautious, and what changes her mind?
4. What does AP Calculus represent for Marisa? How does it influence the decisions she makes? Give an example.
5. Describe the connection that Marisa has with her niece Anita. Does this relationship inspire Marisa or hold her back? Explain.
6. Marisa’s father cannot read and knows little English, her sister got pregnant at seventeen and works at a gas station, and her brother only has a GED. In a family where education is not a priority, what motivates Marisa to work hard and get good grades at school? Be specific.
7. Why is Marisa expected to help pay the bills and babysit Anita for long hours after Jose’s “stupid” accident? What makes Marisa responsible for more in her family than her other siblings?

8. How does Marisa’s home life compare to the experiences of Brenda, Alan, and other characters in the novel?
9. In Marisa’s application to UT, she is asked to describe a significant setback, challenge, or opportunity in her life. What challenge does she choose to write about? What other challenges does she face that she did not include in her application?
10. After Marisa’s fight with her father and the incident with Pedro, she begins to distance herself from Alan and Brenda. Why? What would you have done in her situation?
11. How are marriages and romantic relationships portrayed in the novel?
12. Give examples of how family is valued more than education in the Moreno family. Is this similar to or different from the situation in your family?
13. What relationship is most important in Marisa’s life? Give examples from the text to support your view.
14. What is the significance of the birthmark on Marisa’s cheek? What does it symbolize?
15. Discuss the ending of the book. What feelings does it leave you with in terms of Marisa’s future?



What Can't Wait
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Hardcover
978-0-7613-6155-8
List: \$17.95 | **S&L: \$13.46**

eBook
978-0-7613-7163-2
List: \$13.46 | **S&L: \$10.10**

Reading Level: Grade 7
Interest Level: Grades 7-12
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