The Butterfly's Daughter by Mary Alice Monroe

Next meeting- 6:30 p.m.- Tuesday, November 8 at the home of Phil and Shirley Dubbs

Day of the Dead celebration—Everyone should bring a food to share that was a particular favorite of a loved one who has passed on.

Topics & Questions for Discussion

1. The author writes, "The annual migration of the monarch is a phenomenal story—a miracle of instinct and survival." (p. 9) Do you think this quote also applies to Luz and her friends' journey? Where else in *The Butterfly's Daughter* are there parallels between nature and the novel's characters?

2. Before she dies, Abuela tells Luz, "True courage comes from the heart. *Tu corazan*. Sometimes, it takes more courage not to jump and to stand strong." (p. 34) Later, Luz wonders whether courage is "nothing more than taking wing and staying the course." (p. 89) How do you define courage?

3. Abuela believed that "a monarch butterfly was the soul of the recently departed." (p. 52) What kinds of myths or superstitions does your own family believe in? What kind of purpose do you think these beliefs serve? What did you think about Ofelia and Luz's different interpretation of the use of Xochiquetzal in the creation myth?

4. Luz followed the butterflies to Mexico both literally and figuratively—often discovering a butterfly or some other kind of sign at the moment when she most needed help and guidance. What do you think these signs represent? Have you ever felt like you were receiving signs to aid you along your way?

5. Why do you think Abuela lied to Luz about her mother's death? Early in the novel the author writes that Abuela "had told the story so many times over the years it was accepted as the truth—even by herself. " (p. 9) Do you think she was right to lie, or should she have told Luz the truth from the beginning? Are lies of any kind acceptable in a family?

6. When Luz arrives in Texas and discovers that her mother, Mariposa, is still alive, she's filled with a mix of emotions—hurt, anger, joy, betrayal, panic. She's furious with Mariposa for leaving and disappointed that her mother is not the woman she'd fantasized about. What do you think about Luz's reaction to meeting her mother? Discuss how they ended the journey at the airport. Do you think that Luz and Mariposa will ultimately be able to have a mother/daughter relationship?

7. Margaret's mother told her that she had to make her own luck, and this is one of the reasons she decides to join Luz on her journey. Do you agree that you make your own luck?

8. In *The Butterfly's Daughter*, the author shows both Mariposa's struggles to turn her life around and the negative effects she's had, whether intentional or unintentional, on the people in her life. Do you think she is ultimately a sympathetic character?

9. Once she arrives in Texas, Luz sees herself in the mirror and "marveled at how the changes she felt occurring inside herself were reflected outside as well." (p. 270) In what ways does she mature internally? How did she most change? What was the most significant lesson she learned?

10. As they travel toward Mexico, Luz and her friends make an *ofrenda* for Abuela with scraps that signify each woman—the baby booties Ofelia made, dried flowers, Stacie's artwork. Discuss Mariposa's opinion that Luz's *ofrenda* was disrespectful. How do her actions reveal the breakdown of verbal and non-verbal communication between a mother and daughter? Was Luz's fury a response to feeling disrespected, or to her feeling that she was neither *seen* nor *heard* by her mother?

11. During the course of their journey, many of the characters emerge from her own "cocoon"—Luz leaves behind her sheltered existence, Margaret breaks free of her own rigid boundaries, Ofelia ends an abusive relationship, and Mariposa lets go of her guilt. In what ways did the women help one another with their individual metamorphoses?

12. Mariposa visits her garden when she needs peace and strength, because it makes her feel "rooted to a profound source that connect[s] her to a greater whole." (p. 283) Discuss different ways you find peace and strength when needed. Where else in *The* B*utterfly's Daughter* do the characters turn to nature for healing?

13. In Mexico, Luz celebrates Day of the Dead with her family. The family creates an altar to honor the departed and share stories of the deceased's life. What similarities and differences do you see between this tradition and the way that other cultures honor their dead?

14. Mariposa asks Sam, "Why does everyone always think only of the butterfly as beautiful? It's the change itself—the metamorphosis—that is the true wonder." (p. 257) Do you agree? Discuss the notion that true beauty lives not in the final result but in the act of transformation. How does this relate to Luz's journey and the discoveries she makes about herself?

15. A major theme of the novel is genetic memory. For the monarch butterfly, the fourth generation of monarch butterfly acts on instinct to make the journey. What traits and similarities—physical and behavioral—were carried on in Luz's family? In your own family?