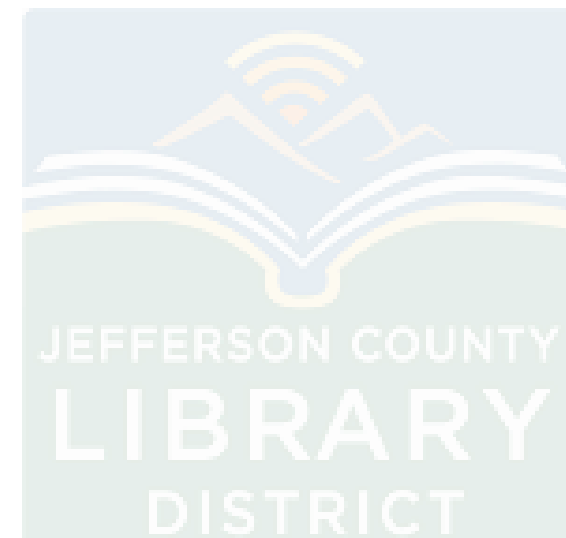


Winter Read Book Discussion

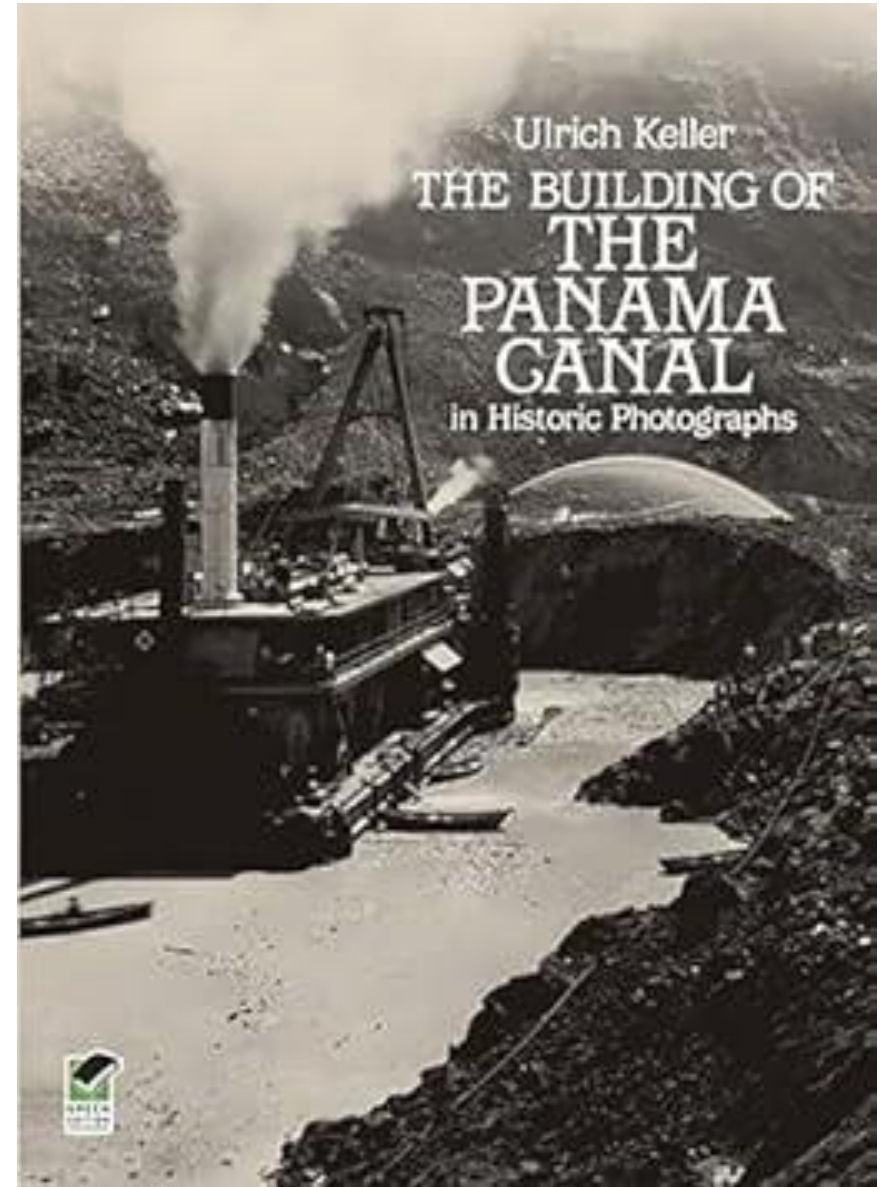
The Great Divide

Cristina Henríquez



The Building of the Panama Canal in Historic Photographs

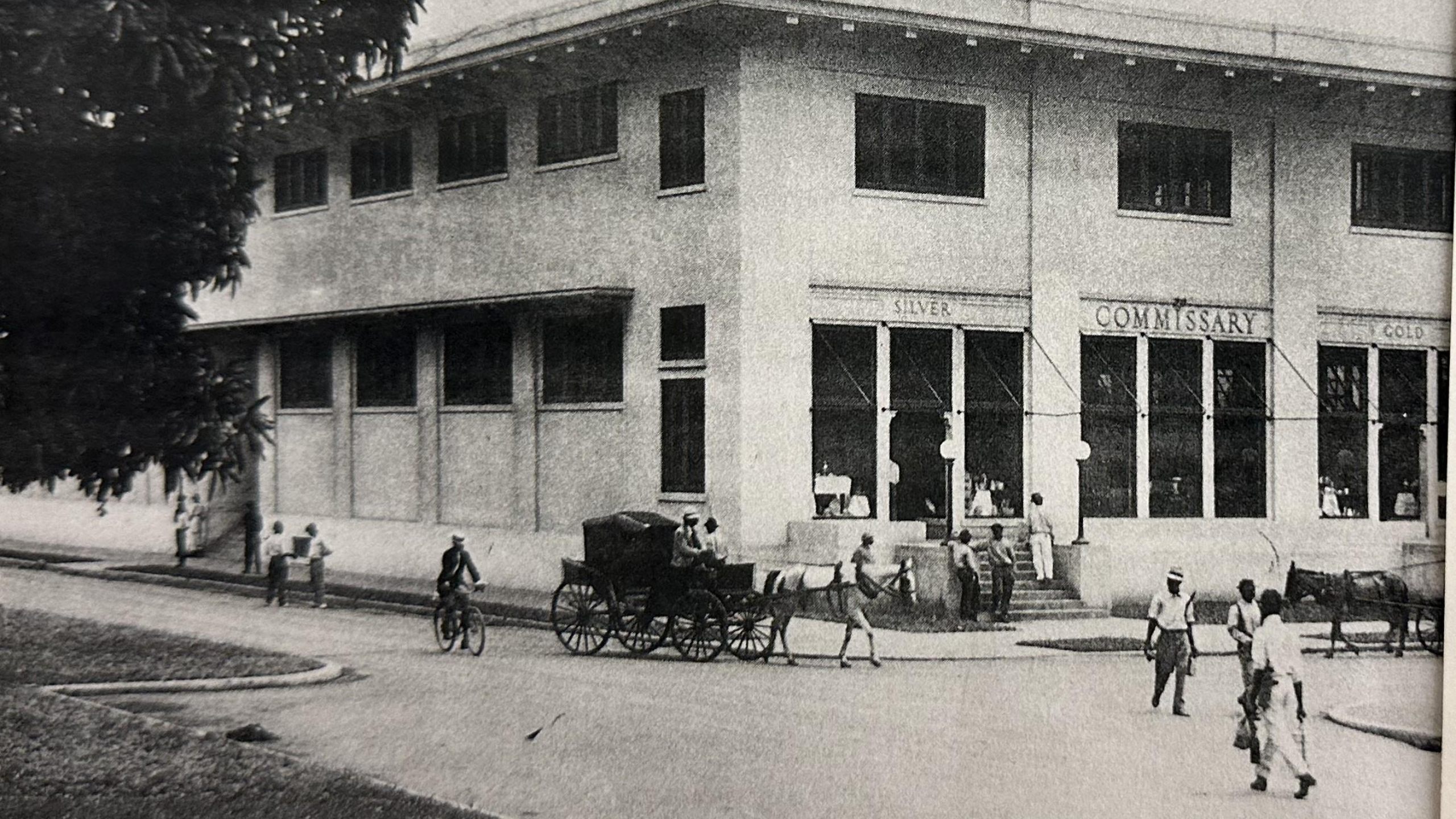
ULRICH KELLER







Laborers dig a ditch around the toe of Cuchara slide October 11, 1913. This slide occurred after the railway network had been removed from Calebra Cut. Consequently, the slide had to be excavated by hand.



SILVER

COMMISSARY

GOLD



52. Two-family house (type 4), Colaba, 1910. 53. Bohis village street, 1912.



A gang of 150 men shift track
by hand, Culebra Cut, January
1912





77



79

79. The pay car at Culebra, January 12, 1908. 80. Interior of an I.C.C. pay car.



80

54



Construction forces re-erecting houses removed from areas to be flooded, Corozal, April 1913. Characteristically, black and white laborers pose in two strictly segregated groups.



Arrival at Cristobal of S.S. Acon with 1500 laborers from Barbados, September 2, 1909.





Dredges at work in the Culebra Cut,
January 28, 1914.



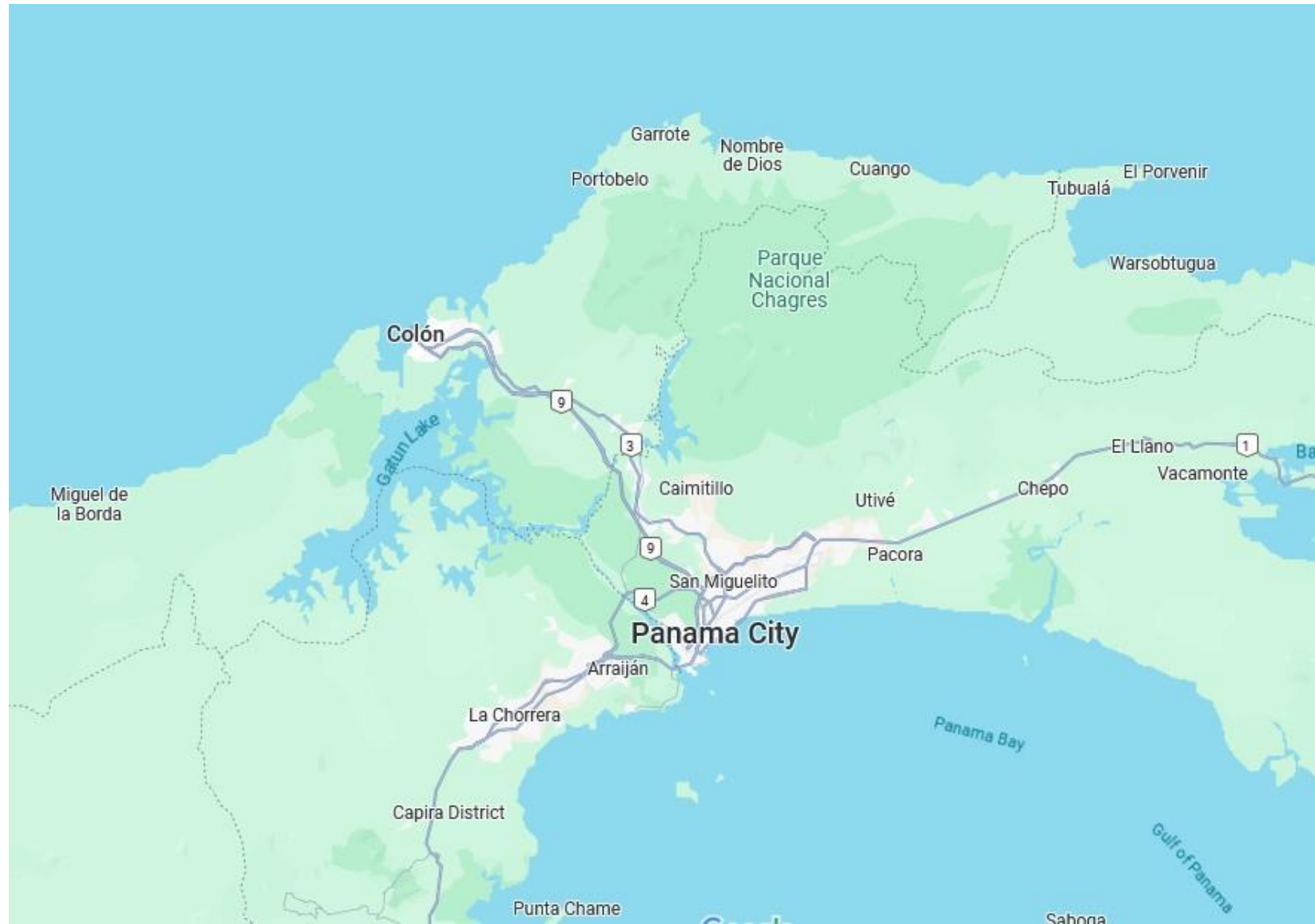


Death to the mosquito. The most effective weapon against the mosquitoes was "larvicide oil," a chemical mixture designed to cover water surfaces with a thin film. Mosquito larvae must periodically come to the water surface to breathe and are killed upon contact with such pesticides.

The Land Divided – The World United. The official seal of the Panama Canal Zone.



From Google Maps



From Google Maps





How Does the Panama Canal Work

<https://shorturl.at/hp5nw>

Exploring 1900s Panama with Author Cristina Henríquez

<https://youtu.be/7mD8Tv11OFQ>



The Great Divide by Cristina Henríquez

Question 1

Francisco has raised his son, Omar, since his wife mysteriously disappeared at sea years ago. Despite Francisco's sacrifices, the relationship between them has been difficult, and Francisco disapproves of Omar working on the Panama Canal. How would you describe the different values between father and son? What do you think the Panama Canal represents to each of them?

<https://www.readinggroupguides.com/reviews/the-great-divide/guide>

The Great Divide by Cristina Henríquez

Question 2

Several characters make the trip to Panama because of work or family obligations or to leave behind a past life. Have you ever had a life event take you somewhere completely unexpected? If you had the chance, would you repeat your decision?

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The Great Divide by Cristina Henríquez

Question 3

This book explores numerous forces that are integral in shaping the future of Panama --- politics, power, community, faith, family, love and more. Which do you think is the most powerful, and why?

<https://www.readinggroupguides.com/reviews/the-great-divide/guide>

The Great Divide by Cristina Henríquez

Question 4

After giving birth to Omar, Esme struggles to recover and eventually disappears with Francisco's boat. In what ways does she reappear throughout the novel? Do you think it's possible to maintain a connection to someone even if they are not present?

<https://www.readinggroupguides.com/reviews/the-great-divide/guide>

The Great Divide by Cristina Henríquez

Question 5

Valentina has a strong relationship to the town of Gatún, which becomes evident when she considers leaving it behind: "She needed him to understand that Gatun was her. That although she lived in the city, Gatún was the place whose air she has breathed, whose dirt she had walked barefoot upon, whose streets she could follow blindfolded, the place where she had learned to cook and how to climb and how to argue and how to love, the place that made her." Have you ever had a particularly strong connection with a place? What do you think it means to call somewhere home?

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The Great Divide by Cristina Henríquez

Question 6

In the beginning of the novel, Francisco has lost his ability to dream of the world to come: "Perhaps the problem, he thought, was that a person needed faith to be able to see things that did not exist, to imagine a world not yet made." What do you think it takes to believe in the future? What do you think is at stake if we don't?

<https://www.readinggroupguides.com/reviews/the-great-divide/guide>

The Great Divide by Cristina Henríquez

Question 7

Molly is a minor character, but when she takes photographs at the protest and shows them to an editor at *The Canal Record*, it leads to one of the most impactful lines in the book. The editor declines to publish the photographs, saying that they are "not right for the *Record*." What do you think the novel is saying about how history is or is not recorded? Are there other instances in the book that touch on this theme?

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The Great Divide by Cristina Henríquez

Question 8

Miller, disgruntled by his lack of power, takes out his frustration on the men in his charge. To what extent do you believe Miller is responsible when one of them --- Berisford --- collapses in the Cut and dies?

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The Great Divide by Cristina Henríquez

Question 9

Marian recounts a story about John stopping her from wandering off the path to look at an orchid. Instead, John brings a potted orchid to the house. Marian thinks, "It was always curious to her, though, how a flower like that could look better to John in a pot than it did growing free." For Marian, what is the larger meaning of that statement? Do you think any other characters in the book seek control, like John, or freedom, like Marian?

<https://www.readinggroupguides.com/reviews/the-great-divide/guide>

The Great Divide by Cristina Henríquez

Question 10

On its surface, The Great Divide, refers to the physical divide of the canal itself, but what other divisions, whether physical or metaphorical, are present in the novel?

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The Great Divide by Cristina Henríquez

Question 11

Omar feels that in Ada, he has found someone who understands him. In what ways do Ada's and Omar's situation both mirror and differ from each other? In particular, consider each of their relationships with their families. How much do you need to have in common with someone in order to understand them?

<https://www.readinggroupguides.com/reviews/the-great-divide/guide>