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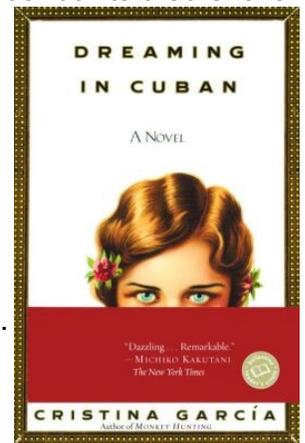
Book Club in a Box

DREAMING IN CUBAN

About the Book

Garcia's first novel is about Cuba, her native country, and three generations of del Pino women who are seeking spiritual homes for their passionate, often troubled souls. Celia del Pino and her descendants also share clairvoyant and visionary powers that somehow remain undiminished, despite the Cuban revolution and its profound effect upon their lives. This dichotomy suffuses their lives with a potent mixture of superstition, politics, and surrealistic charm that gives the novel an otherworldly atmosphere. Garcia juggles these opposing life forces like a skilled magician accustomed to tossing into the air fiery objects that would explode if they came into contact. Writing experimentally in a variety of forms, she combines narratives, love letters, and monologs to portray the del Pinos as they move back and forth through time. Garcia tells their story with an economy of words and a rich, tropical imagery, setting a brisk but comfortable pace. Highly recommended.

- Janet W. Reit, Univ. of Vermont Lib., Burlington



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About the Author



Cristina García was born in Havana and grew up in New York City. Her first novel, **Dreaming in Cuban**, was nominated for a National Book Award and has been widely translated. Ms. García has been a Guggenheim Fellow, a Hodder Fellow at Princeton University, and the recipient of a Whiting Writers' Award. She lives in Los Angeles with her daughter.

Critical Praise

"MARVELOUS . . . A JEWEL OF A NOVEL . . . *Dreaming in Cuban* is beautifully written in language that is by turns languid and sensual, curt and surprising. Like Louise Erdrich, whose crystalline language is distilled of images new to our American literature but old to this land, Ms. García has distilled a new tongue from scraps salvaged through upheaval. . . . It is [the] ordinary magic in Ms. García's novel and her characters' sense of their own lyricism that make her work welcome as the latest sign that American literature has its own hybrid offspring of the Latin American school."

—THULANI DAVIS

The New York Times Book Review

"Poignant and perceptive . . . It tells of a family divided politically and geographically by the Cuban revolution . . . [and] of the generational fissures that open on each side: In Cuba, between a grandmother who is a fervent Castro supporter and a daughter who retreats into an Afro-Cuban *santería* cult; in America, between another daughter, who mocks her obsession . . . The realism is exquisite."

—RICHARD EDER

"Impressive . . . Her story is about three generations of Cuban women and their separate responses to the revolution. Her special feat is to tell it in a style as warm and gentle as the 'sustaining aromas of vanilla and almond,' as rhythmic as the music of Beny Moré."

—AMELIA WEISS

Time

"Remarkable...An intricate weaving of dramatic events with the supernatural and the cosmic...Evocative and lush...A rich and haunting narrative, an excellent new voice in contemporary fiction."

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

Further Reading

Other works by Cristina Garcia:

The Aguero Sisters

Cubanisimo: The Vintage Book of Contemporary Cuban Literature

Cars of Cuba

Monkey Hunting

If you liked *Atonement*, you might like:

The Cigar Roller: A Novel by Pablo Medina

Silent Wing by Jose Raul Bernado

A Simple Habana Melody (from when the world was good)

by Oscar Hijuelos

The Sugar Island by Ivonne Lamazares

Discussion Questions

1. What is the nature of Celia's devotion to the revolution? Why is she such a true believer in it?
2. Why does Celia continue to write Gustavo? What does he represent to her? What purposes do her letters serve in the novel?
3. Why does Jorge come back to visit Celia? Why did he lie about Celia to Lourdes, and why is it important for him to tell her what he 's done?
4. Though the events of modern-day Cuba are woven throughout the novel, García never refers to Fidel Castro by name, only as El Lider. Why does she do this and what does this bring to the novel?
5. Why does Lourdes defend her daughter after Pilar unveils the punk Statue of Liberty painting?
6. This novel is told from several different perspectives over three generations. What does this technique lend to the novel?
7. The themes of magic and faith are predominant throughout the novel. How do the novel's characters view magic and faith, and how do they use these qualities in their daily lives?
8. All of the characters seem to be searching to fulfill unnamed desires. Can you identify what each of them want? Does regret play any part in their actions?
9. García writes, "The family is hostile to the individual." Discuss how this applies to the novel's characters.
10. How are the many intersections of race and class depicted in the novel?

11. By the novel's end, all of Celia's children are lost to her, either by death or estrangement. This is echoed by the troubled relationship between Pilar and Lourdes, the twins' relationship with Felicia, and the final spooking away of Ivanito.

What is García trying to show here, and why?

12. The final portion of the book, in which Lourdes and Pilar travel to Cuba, is titled "The Languages Lost." What do you think this means? How do you interpret the other passage headings?

13. What is Pilar searching for in her relationship with her grandmother? Does she find it?

14. What is Celia's legacy to Pilar?

15. Why does Pilar lie to Celia at the end? How is the theme of betrayal handled throughout the novel?

16. What is it that drives Celia into the sea at the end? Is it Ivanito's disappearance or Pilar's lying to her or something else?

17. What does the title of the book signify? Who is "dreaming," so to speak? Do you think García is referring to a specific character or is it a collective dreaming?

Source: Random House Publishing Group

