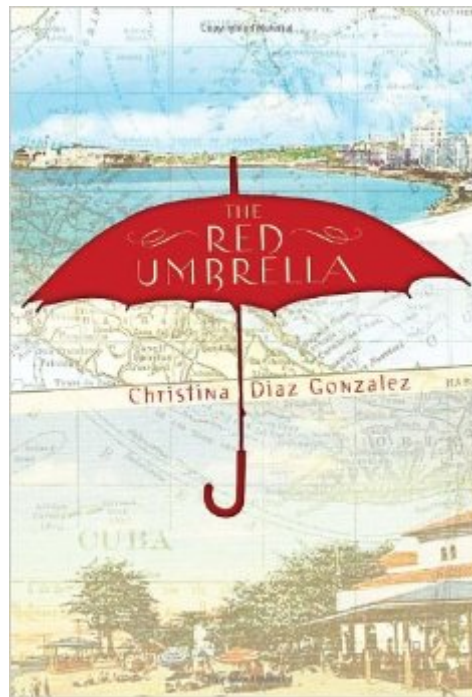


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The Red Umbrella



Synopsis

The Red Umbrella is a moving tale of a 14-year-old girl's journey from Cuba to America as part of Operation Pedro Pan—an organized exodus of more than 14,000 unaccompanied children, whose parents sent them away to escape Fidel Castro's revolution. In 1961, two years after the Communist revolution, Lucía Alvarez still leads a carefree life, dreaming of parties and her first crush. But when the soldiers come to her sleepy Cuban town, everything begins to change. Freedoms are stripped away. Neighbors disappear. And soon, Lucía's parents make the heart-wrenching decision to send her and her little brother to the United States on their own. Suddenly plunked down in Nebraska with well-meaning strangers, Lucía struggles to adapt to a new country, a new language, a new way of life. But what of her old life? Will she ever see her home or her parents again? And if she does, will she still be the same girl? The Red Umbrella is a touching story of country, culture, family, and the true meaning of home. • Captures the fervor, uncertainty and fear of the times. . . . Compelling. • "The Washington Post" • "Gonzalez deals effectively with separation, culture shock, homesickness, uncertainty and identity as she captures what is also a grand adventure." • "San Francisco Chronicle" From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 0590 (What's this?)

Paperback: 304 pages

Publisher: Yearling (December 13, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0375854894

ISBN-13: 978-0375854897

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.8 x 7.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars • See all reviews (103 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #32,187 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #32 in Books > Children's Books >

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Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

I do not read fiction. I read this book because it's about a moment in history of which I was a part of. I was a "Pedro Pan" child. I was fortunate enough to have my aunt, uncle and two cousins waiting for me at Miami International Airport the night I arrived from Cuba in 1961. I was seven years old. My mother and twelve year-old sister arrived the next day. We were very lucky to all have been reunited after one day. Many children weren't. Some never saw their parents again. This easy reading, fictional true to life story taking place after Fidel Castro's revolution in 1959 is very well written. You get to know and love the characters and how the revolution gripped the country and changed their lives, for the worst. Their problems are real, just as they were when my mother was deciding whether she should send me out of Cuba, not knowing if she would see me again and then leaving her home, family and literally her life behind in a span of two days (not knowing if the "underground" plans would change at the last minute). I have to admit I cried while reading this book because it brought back memories of small events and things I had completely forgotten about (example, my family in Miami waiting for hours or days to get a telephone connection to Cuba) that came back to me. Schoolmates that wore Cuban revolutionary clothes, in the PRIVATE school I attended (CIMA). At one point I wanted to get one of those outfits. I thought it was "cool". My mother was adamantly opposed to it. I was upset, but now I understand. No different from a child wanting a Hitler Youth outfit in 1940s Germany if the parents opposed the Third Reich. Beautifully written, this book should be welcomed at any public or private school library.

14-year-old Lucia Alvarez's life is turned upside down when Fidel Castro takes power in Cuba in 1960. Suddenly her best friend is a propaganda-spewing stranger, soldiers brutally kill her father's business acquaintances, and her parents are being closely watched. Lucia just wants to be an average teenage girl, hanging out with her friends, keeping up with the latest American fashions, and maybe even getting closer to her crush, but that can no longer be. Then Lucia and her younger brother, Frankie, receive visas to go live with a temporary foster family in Nebraska. The culture shock is great and frightening; can Lucia manage a new language and culture, growing into a young lady in the meantime, when the fate of her parents and her beloved Cuba are so uncertain? I have never read a novel like Christina Gonzalez's debut, *THE RED UMBRELLA*. This is a necessary story about an aspect of Cuban American history that has not received enough attention in YA literature--and best of all, it's extremely well written and engaging! Gonzalez writes convincingly of all her characters. Lucia is partly your average teenager, desiring friendship, love, acceptance, and pretty things. Her parents are a believable blend of loving, strict, and worried, and Frankie is a cute and appropriately occasionally annoying younger brother. The way the story follows Lucia through

this difficult time in her life, however, is a miraculous achievement: my heart ached as I read about the difficulties she faced, and I saw a distinct, yet subtle, growth in her as she realizes the extent to which Castro's takeover would affect her life. The pacing and plot were a little uneven, though, and thus not as fulfilling as it could've been.

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