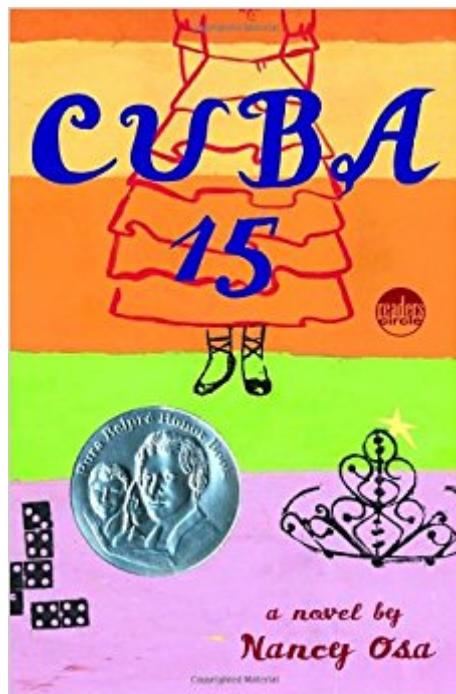


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Cuba 15 (Readers Circle)



Synopsis

For fans of Matt de la Peña and Sandra Cisneros comes a novel about family and identity, where Violet Paz prepares for her quinceañero and learns about her Cuban heritage. Violet Paz has just turned fifteen, a pivotal birthday in the eyes of her Cuban grandmother. Fifteen is the age when a girl enters womanhood, traditionally celebrating the occasion with a quinceañero. But while Violet is half Cuban, she's also half Polish, and more importantly, she feels 100% American. Except for her zany family's passion for playing dominoes, smoking cigars, and dancing to Latin music, Violet knows little about Cuban culture, nada about quinces, and only tidbits about the history of Cuba. So when Violet begrudgingly accepts Abuela's plans for a quinceañero "and as she begins to ask questions about her Cuban roots, cultures and feelings collide. The mere mention of Cuba and Fidel Castro elicits her grandparents' sadness and her father's anger. Only Violet's aunt Luz remains open-minded. With so many divergent views, it's not easy to know what to believe. All Violet knows is that she's got to form her own opinions, even if this jolts her family into unwanted confrontations. After all, a quince girl is supposed to embrace responsibility "and to Violet that includes understanding the Cuban heritage that binds her to a homeland she's never seen. Violet's hilarious cool first-person narrative veers between farce and tenderness, denial and truth. "Booklist, Starred Review" This funny and tender chronicle of Violet's 15th year...[has] heart and humor." -Kirkus Reviews "Cuba 15 will make readers laugh, whether or not their families are as loco as Violet's." "The Horn Book Magazine" Osa's tale about a warmhearted, fun-loving family, a teenager's typical ambivalence about different cultures, the stress of dealing with high school demands and pressures, a budding romance, and how an imaginative, high-spirited young woman handles some thorny issues and does some growing up in the process, rings true and makes for an entertaining story." -VOYA "The characters are so charming that while readers are in their company, the experience is interesting and engaging." -SLJA Pura Belpré Honor Book An ALA Notable Book An ALA Best Book for Young Adults A Booklist Top Ten Youth First Novels From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Grade 6-10-Violet Paz, a 10th grader in suburban Chicago, spends the better part of a year preparing for her quincea-ero, the celebration of her womanhood, that her Cuban grandmother longs for her to experience. While her attention to the plans and her understanding of what the event means wax and wane in her consciousness, she turns her family's personal foibles and social extravagances into fodder for her speech team's Original Comedy competition. She wittily points up the bizarre-ness of her father's sartorial choices, her little brother's peskiness, her mother's quest to open her own restaurant, and the family's devotion to dominoes. She also struggles to make sense of traditions-including formal gown and waltzing-that are foreign to her life. Violet's father, born in Cuba and brought to the U.S. as a baby, refuses to discuss his native culture with his children, and Violet becomes increasingly anxious to learn more about her roots. Her two best friends are more than simply foils; they provide texture, humor, and tension to the story. In addition to speech team and family affairs, Violet's year includes a first crush and first date, each of which resolves pleasantly. Among the many strengths of this book are its likable and very real protagonist and her introduction to the nexus of politics and family. Too much goes on in this first novel, but the characters are so charming that while readers are in their company, the experience is interesting and engaging rather than frustrating. Francisca Goldsmith, Berkeley Public Library, CA

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Starred Review Gr. 6-10. Violet Paz, growing up in suburban Chicago, barely knows Spanish, and

her dad refuses to talk about his Cuban roots, so it's a real surprise when Abuela insists that Violet have a grand quinceanero, the traditional Latina fifteenth-year coming-of-age ceremony. But Violet insists that she is an American. After all, she looks a lot like her Polish American mother. What's more, she wouldn't be caught dead in any onstage ceremony wearing a ruffled pink dress and a tiara. As wonderfully specific as this first novel is to one immigrant family, many teens will recognize the cross-generational conflict between assimilation and the search for roots. Violet's hilarious, cool first-person narrative veers between slapstick and tenderness, denial and truth, as she shops for her party dress, attends a Cuban peace rally, despairs of her dad's values and his taste in clothes, sees that her American friends are also locked in crazy families, and finds the subject for her school comedy monologue in her own wild home, where she is "sentenced to life." There's no message, unless it's in the acceptance that resolution doesn't happen and that Dad is still worth loving--even if he comes to the elegant quinceanero in his favorite sunshine-yellow shirt with multicolored monkeys printed on it. Hazel RochmanCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Oh my gosh I love this book it is so good a girl named violet paz knows almost nothing about her father's country cuba and her abuelita wants to throw her a quince Party it is such a good book I love it!!!

Nice book for young readers. It was for a discussuion group, and I am glad, as I would never have picked it for myself.

If you love the show Ugly Betty, the family part, not the glitz, you will love this book.

Having had the traditional quince party, it brought back memories. Quinceaneras celebrations in 2010 are much different. I had a traditional quince, but with all the hassles no less. A fun read, specially if you are a "Cuban."

Violet's quinceanero, something she thought of as a humiliation, changed all her views and prompted an area of her life that changed everything that was anything, and with the party, anything was everything. A quinceanero is what fifteen year-olds of the Hispanic persuasion use as the show of changing from a girl to a woman, and Violet was far from happy about hers. Over a year, Violet competed on the speech team, from which she got a boyfriend, organized her quinceanero, and

tried futilely to learn from her secretive family about Cuba, where her Dad was from. Violet got pumped for the party, lied to her parents, and nearly didn't get to have the traditional dance with her Dad. Luckily, every part of the quinceanera's party thudded into place with funny family and friends and an easy to read, quirky book that I would recommend to middle to early high school girls. Violet, or Violeta, was not a perfect teenager, but she learned from her mistakes. For her school speech team, she was in Original Comedy, and she was not very skillful at first, but she figured out how to make something that would win awards. She also figured out that she liked being out on stage. She listened to part of a poem that her best friend Janell was dedicating to her, and got offended before she had the right to do so. Janell told her the rest, and she was flattered. Violeta's biggest mistake was most likely when she lied to her parents about where she was going with her second best friend Leda. They went to a rally for PEACE WITH CUBA, and her father believed that it was evil, especially since she didn't tell him that she was going. Violet did have some sort of reason to go -her father would never talk about Cuba- but she learned not to lie, but to talk. Nancy Osa gave the characters all very different personalities, which kept things interesting. Violet's grandfather (Abuelo) was stubborn; he wouldn't talk about Cuba either, funny with his music and constantly unchanged clothes, and excellent at dominoes. Violet's boyfriend, Clarence, was easy-going, seeing as how he was wide open to playing dominoes with Violet's father and brother instead of being alone with her, caring with his phone calls and willingness to go to a Cuba rally with her and Leda, and sort of scandalous because of the fact that he called Violet's house to ask if she would be at the party and then flirted with Leda. Violet at first didn't think that she was too cool of a person, but learned that she was very unique as a Cuban Polish girl with the crazy family, which she used in her Original Comedy. Cuba 15 brought you through ups and downs that made it really easy to read. As I said, Violet's first speech team performance brought her down for good reason, but after that she got better and started to figure out that a quinceanero is not that bad. She went to the Halloween party after hearing Janell's poem and taking offense to it only to feel bad about her costume and her "headless date." Of course, her friends explained and everything was better. The lowest point of the book was when Violeta's dad wouldn't even go to her quinceanero because of her lies, that is, before he came to his senses and gave in to talking about Cuba. There were a lot of things in Cuba 15 that I could relate to, like unfair parents, stress about life in general like Violet had in her fifteenth year of life, or fights with friends as Violet did once, both friends at the same time. It left you with things to think about, but it didn't make it seem like a sequel would come because it would probably mess up the aura of the story, which I will add was fantastic.-K. Carson

Violet Paz is a 15 year old, half Cuban half polish teenager growing up in the suburbs of Chicago. She goes through the challenges and difficulties of growing up and following her Cuban traditions which mean so much to her grandmother. With her tenth grade year being full of crazy, loving, zany, funny cookouts, her coming of age party (quince), first dates and crushes, along with the speech team, and tons of domino games she wonders how she'll survive. This book Cuba 15 is filled with great descriptions, humor, and everyday situations for teenage girls just trying to get through one day, without having to worry about how crazy school, boys, and family can be. Cuba 15 is a great book, and I would recommend it to anyone who enjoys a good laugh. With Violet turning 15 and spending a fair amount of her 10th grade year planning for her quince, a coming of age party which is a Cuban tradition. She must choose a dress; in which her grandmother wants her to wear a Pepto-Bismol pink colored dress with tons of ruffles. She decides to mix her new-age ideas with her old Cuban traditions. While in an adventure to learn about her own traditions and Cuban culture, she realizes how important family is along the way. As Violet is about to become a woman she uses at home situations in her comedy speeches to help her laugh off some of the hilarious get-togethers and cookouts. This book is hilarious and will keep you laughing, from the burning of the roast at the cookout to the endless games of dominos. The book Cuba 15 is a good choice for anyone of any background not only of the Cuban culture. I would recommend this book to anyone who enjoys learning about something different and would enjoy taking an adventure on a magical ride through a mystical journey, and through the history of different cultures and values by which one culture lives by. The book also makes you feel connected to the characters with the many ways the author describes the mood and feelings of the character, and with the growth of the character, Violet Paz, through the book into womanhood; you also feel like you grow with the character in accepting different forms of doing things and different traditions. The book Cuba 15 shows a wonderful mix of cultures and traditions, and shows the different customs and responsibilities of different cultures. I recommend it 100% to anyone!

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