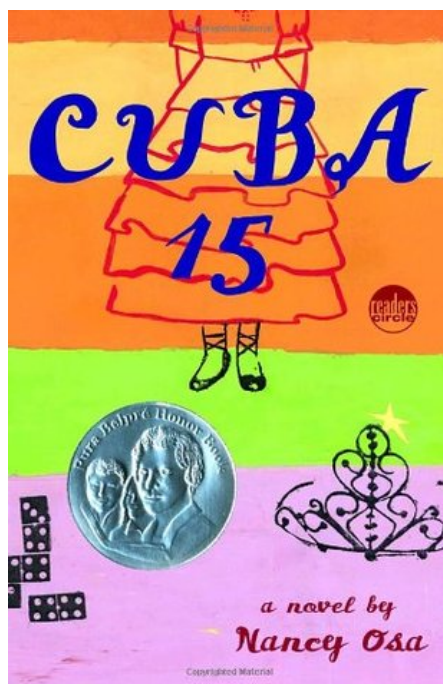




Cuba 15

Nancy Osa

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Violet Paz has just turned 15, 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. This is Nancy Osa's first novel.

From the Hardcover edition.

Cuba 15 Details

Date : Published March 8th 2005 by Ember (first published January 1st 2003)

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Author : Nancy Osa

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Genre : Young Adult, Realistic Fiction, Teen, Cultural, Fiction

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From Reader Review Cuba 15 for online ebook

Petra says

Cuba 15 reminded me of a 15-year-old version of "My Big Fat Greek Wedding," with a quinceanera instead of a wedding. It was entertaining, with a relatable premise, but to be perfectly honest the jokes weren't all that funny, and the writing seemed a little perfunctory at times. I was happy to find that it didn't include much swearing, which gets tiresome after a while. Overall, it wasn't a waste of time to read, but I think I could've found something better.

Crystal says

I really enjoyed this fun coming-of-age novel. Violet Paz is a character that brought smiles to my face over and over again as she prepared for her quince. She is half Cuban and half Polish and is working out what that means. There is a nice dose of humor throughout the book.

Sylvia says

Three and a half stars is about right. Terrific story - lots of information about bicultural families, a bit slow in parts. Ages 12-14 is most appropriate for this book but it's a good, solid read for those who enjoy contemporary family and teen stories. The Cuban father and the American mother are firm and loving and wacky, a welcome change from so many of the teen angst books with dysfunctional or non-existent parents. This book is also completely free of violence, swearing, and any inappropriate situations. Learn about Cuban tradition and music - read this book.

Daniel Garcia says

Allow me to start off by saying that this is nowhere near the genre of books that I usually enjoy to read, so it's something out of my comfort zone. However, I surprisingly enjoyed the book very much and continued to read it until the end. I highly encourage everyone to read this book of and read something from a different genre.

"Cuba 15," written by Nancy Osa, is a book that begins with Violet's grandmother wanting to plan a quinceañero for Violet because she feels that it is a necessity. In her grandmother's eyes, it is a transition from being a child into womanhood. Since her grandmother is Cuban, she finds this practice should be done whenever someone turns 15, though, in the eyes of Violet, she feels American and isn't looking forward to it. After much talking and having to discuss certain specifications with her family, Violet agrees to have her quinceañero with some of her own rules. Violet also does not know much about her culture, so she resorts to having to do research and reading a book on what occurs during a quinceañero. Throughout the book, Violet attempts to understand her family and the culture while preparing and performing a comedy sketch inspired by her family. Soon enough, Violet's perspective begins to change as she starts to realize and learn what it really means to have a quinceañero and accepts the idea.

Overall, Cuba 15 is a book that I thoroughly enjoyed reading because it was something that I am not

normally used to, so it gave me insight to a different type of book. Additionally, Nancy Osa includes humor in the book to get the reader hooked and feel as if they are part of the story, which was very effective in my opinion. I would recommend this book to anyone who feels that they would like to learn a bit about a different heritage and would like to have some laughs as well.

Lourdes Ryczek says

I was interested in this story because Violet is half Cuban and half Polish, just like my children. Her Cuban grandmother wants to celebrate her Quince/15th birthday with a traditional Cuban party. What the story doesn't explore is that long ago young ladies were presented in society at these sorts of parties. It was a rite of passage, a way to show that your daughter was grown up, a woman. In many cases, ready for marriage! As a modern Cuban myself, I refused to have this sort of party because I didn't agree with this mentality. Quince parties have become an embarrassment in the culture. Many times, families have extravagant parties that they cannot afford. It has gotten out of hand. Violet's party was moving in just that direction. My favorite part of the book is the exploration of three generations under one roof. It reminded me of my childhood in that way.

Ruhama says

A rollicking look at the Cuban quinceanero, a special ceremony for girls who turn 15. Violet Paz is half Cuban, half Polish, and her father's mother has decided Violet needs to have her quinceanero, though Violet barely speaks Spanish, knows little of her Cuban heritage (her father is quite close-mouthed about it) and Violet dislikes almost all aspects of the traditional party (especially having to wear a dress). Violet learns to love her family and her heritage, though it takes joining the speech team to do so. Violet is picked to do Original Comedy, and she creates a routine that personifies her family perfectly—right down to the accents her

grandparents have. In the end, Violet has her quinceanero the way she likes it—wearing pants—and her whole family learns more about themselves and how to share with one another.

Osa has written a fun story (parts of the story are laugh-out-loud) that shows the ups and downs a family, particularly a biracial family, goes through, particularly when one family member is a teenager. Violet's character grows and changes through the course of the novel at a believable rate, and the characters around Violet are not cardboard cut-outs, including her little brother, her best friends, her new boyfriend and her extended family. Spanish phrases are sprinkled throughout and fit the text accordingly. Even readers who aren't in a blended family will enjoy this title.

Casey Strauss says

Violet Paz, the 15 year old narrator of Cuba 15, is finding herself in the middle of preparing for her quinceanero, a traditional party thrown for fifteen year old girls in Latin American countries. The problem? Violet has no interest in celebrating. Wearing a pink dress and a tiara in front of all of her friends and family is the last activity she would ever want to participate in. She is more interested in her speech team, her friends, and American culture. Violet's father is from Cuba, while her mother is Polish American. Throughout the story, Violet learns more about a culture that at first seems so foreign to her.

Nancy Osa has created a strong voice in the character of Violet. The writing is often witty, and Violet's sense of humor is illustrated throughout the book. She is a typical teenager, with the typical worries, yet she is trying to figure out what culture she feels she fits best; American or Cuban. There is conflict between Violet and her father as she is looking for answers and desires to know more about his life growing up in Cuba. Violet is surrounded by her Latin American culture, and when she takes a Spanish class, she desires to know more about where she is from. The character of Violet shows growth throughout the story, as she learns more about her roots and where her family is from. Seventh graders and up would enjoy reading this coming of age story, discussions of acceptance, understanding, and cultural diversity could tie into the novel. This is a realistic fiction novel that many cross-cultural students will relate to. Readers, who enjoyed Pam Munoz Ryan's *Esperanza Rising*, would also enjoy this story, told also from the point of view of a strong female voice coming of age in America.

Larissa says

It was cute! Honestly there was a lot of queerbaiting lmao but it's whatever...I appreciated the mixed-race Latina representation (especially with two cultures that aren't often paired together--as a Polish-Brazilian-American I loved this) and the main character opens up a conversation I would've loved to think about in early high school.

Brittany Rubio says

As a half-Cuban, half-Polish girl myself, I knew I had to check out this book (even if I'm a good decade older than the protagonist). It's a cute coming-of-age story that I feel like was pretty accurate to my own early teen years in the late 90's/early 2000's before my friends and I were consumed with the internet and were still fairly innocent as we crossed from middle school into high school. I never had a quince myself, but what really hit home with me was the relationship that the older generations of Violet's family had with Cuba, the history, current relations with the US etc. which is also pretty true of my own family. The culture is very, very strong at home but Cuba itself is a very sore subject and was not often talked about unless we were reminiscing about pig roasts or some such. The book did drag in parts, but I liked how the culture was woven in and became a major topic of conversation at the end, not only because Violet starts asking more serious "adult" questions and takes the initiative to learn more on her own, but because it also broaches the subject of relations between older and younger generations, and how that relates to experience and understanding as well as communication.

Aly Gutierrez says

- Book summary

-This is a wonderful multicultural coming of age story. Violet is the protagonist of this story and she did not know much about her Cuban culture. Her grandmother convinced her to have a quinceanera, even though she fought through the whole process. Did not want the big sparkly dress and definitely did not want to get escorted by a boy. Though, throughout the planning of her party, she learned a great deal about her culture. By the time her party came around, she was excited. She now has a new boyfriend, and is more connected to her Cuban roots.

- Pura Belpré Honor Award
 - Grade level, interest level, Lexile
-750L 6th-8th grade.
 - Appropriate classroom use (subject area)
-Read while learning about other cultures. Learning multiculturalism is essential in our multicultural society.
 - Individual students who might benefit from reading
-Students that are Hispanic and know about a quinceañera will greatly enjoy learning about the culture and read this coming of age story.
 - Small group use (literature circles)
-After reading, students can analyze the events that occurred and what they learned about her Cuban culture. How might her family and culture relate to yours? What did you find interesting after reading?
 - Whole class use (read aloud)
-After reading, ask students what they found interesting or if there was anything that they could relate to.
 - Related books in genre/subject or content area
-"Quinceañera means sweet fifteen" by Verónica Chambers is another good book for the students that are interested in reading more stories about girls and their quinceañeras.
 - Multimedia connections
-Available with Kindle or as a paperback copy.
-

ANDREA says

Great coming of age story from a different culture's perspective!

Ellen says

I thought this was a well-written and humorous story with an interesting background context. It's not a 5 for me because I found a lot of it to be quite predictable. Also, I tend to be critical of books with female characters who are very against dresses, the color pink, and other "traditional" feminine things. To me that is the easiest way to start writing a "strong" female character, but I find it cliché. The dislike of dresses plays a big role in this book, so that prevented me from totally loving this. BUT that said, the context that this book is set in (a girl whose Cuban family won't talk to her about Cuba because of their political experiences in the country) was very interesting.

Steph says

I've come to a decision to not force myself to read books that I don't enjoy. I got to 25% and still can't get this book to be interesting. I don't feel interested in characters who occupy page after page of stereotype.

Here's a Haiku for this book:

blah blah blah
blah blah blah blah blah
blah blah blah

Raquel Castaneda says

I like this books so far because it has to do with a girl that barely became 15 and her Cuban grandmother wants her to have a quinceañera. The thing is that she doesn't want one because she doesn't like dresses & it doesn't fit her personality. While planning she's starting to get to the idea of actually wanting one. I can't wait to finish it!:)

Erin says

This was a cute book about a thouroughly Americanized half Cuban/half Polish girl whose family wants her to embrace some of her Cuban roots. I thought it showed pretty accurately how many mixed race kids are often taught to ignore their white side as not having a culture. It also showed the difficulty of refugees assimilating to America and was a good portrait of friendship, although the praise of Che Geuverra, who murdered millions of people was nauseating. No one teaches that side of the story.
