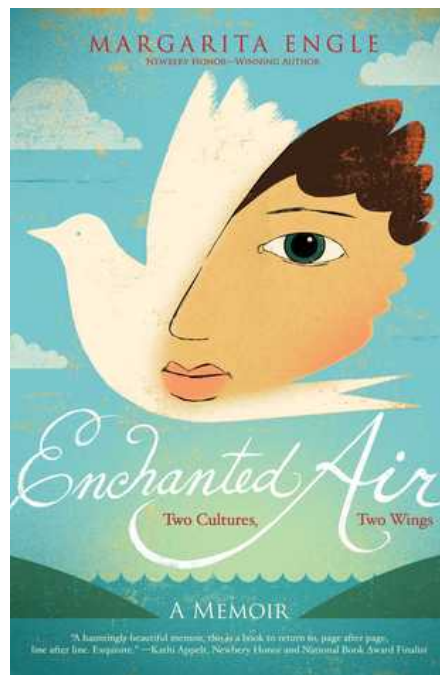




Enchanted Air: Two Cultures, Two Wings

Margarita Engle , Edel Rodriguez (Illustrations)

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In this poetic memoir, Margarita Engle, the first Latina woman to receive a Newbery Honor, tells of growing up as a child of two cultures during the Cold War.

Margarita is a girl from two worlds. Her heart lies in Cuba, her mother's tropical island country, a place so lush with vibrant life that it seems like a fairy tale kingdom. But most of the time she lives in Los Angeles, lonely in the noisy city and dreaming of the summers when she can take a plane through the enchanted air to her beloved island. Words and images are her constant companions, friendly and comforting when the children at school are not.

Then a revolution breaks out in Cuba. Margarita fears for her far-away family. When the hostility between Cuba and the United States erupts at the Bay of Pigs Invasion, Margarita's worlds collide in the worst way possible. How can the two countries she loves hate each other so much? And will she ever get to visit her beautiful island again?

Enchanted Air: Two Cultures, Two Wings Details

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Author : Margarita Engle , Edel Rodriguez (Illustrations)

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From Reader Review Enchanted Air: Two Cultures, Two Wings for online ebook

Mrs. Krajewski says

Margarita Engle's poetry was beautiful, but I found this story lacking at times. I wanted to know more about my conflicted narrator than I ended up learning.

Laura Resau says

Beautiful, moving, captivating... and I learned so much! Highly recommended!

Beth says

I don't think my mind can fully process yet how much I loved Margarita Engle's beautiful memoir in verse. I need to come back and write a longer review when I'm not feeling ALL THE THINGS all at once.

Lovers of Jacqueline Woodson's *Brown Girl Dreaming* will love *Enchanted Air*. Put this book on your TBR list and look for it to hit bookstores in August.

Linda Lipko says

This lovely book, written in poetry explores the thoughts and feelings of the author as a young child embracing both the cultures of Cuba, her mother's country, and the United States, the country where she resides.

Visiting Cuba when a child and documenting the rich culture, the air, the markets, the colors and the freedom depicted in poetic form by the author lends to a stunningly beautiful rich feeling.

Returning to the United States and learning art, music and culture, the author compares and contrasts the countries.

Writing of her fears during the Cuban Missile crisis enables the reader to feel the pain of Cubans who are impacted dramatically, while focusing on the fears of the United States as Russia and the United States struggle for a peaceful resolution.

Beautiful, insightful and stunningly written, I highly recommend this book.

INVESTIGATED

One day Mami receives a phone call
that makes her look terrified
She calls Dad and begs him to rush hom.

A few minutes later, two men in suits
knock on our door.
Luckily, Dad is home by the time Mami
has to face two grim agents
from the Federal Bureau of Investigation.
FBI
Just like on TV.
Only somehow, now
we are suddenly the bad guys

What's wrong with receiving
phone calls, letters, and packages
from Cuba?

Are we supposed to care less
about Mami's family on the island
than Dad's family -- my grandma
and grandpa, aunts, uncles,
and cousins
who live so close
who live so close
that we see them
every Sunday?

Can one half of my family
really be so much worse
than the other?

If only I could just be myself,
instead of half puzzle
and half riddle.

Hallie Jackson Brackett says

5 stars.

The good: There's a reason why this is an award winner. Several reasons, really. I've just finished the book and I'm still a bit swept up in the emotions that are inherent in finishing something so beautiful, but I will try to collect my thoughts here. First, the language is beautiful and lyrical while remaining accessible to middle grade readers. The themes and metaphors are complex enough to engage YA and adult readers. The plot flows nicely and doesn't have any of the narrative hiccups that verse novels are prone to. The most important element of this novel, though, is that it gives a human face to a conflict of which many (most) Americans have only seen one side. This would be a great companion read for middle and high school students learning about the Cold War or Latin American History.

The not so good: There's nothing that I did not like about this novel.

Who I'd recommend it to: Obviously, readers who like historical fiction and anyone who is looking to read

more diversely. I'd specifically recommend this title in conjunction with All the Light We Cannot See, The Book Thief, Wolf by Wolf, Shades of Gray, Code Name Verity, and Number the Stars.

Saajid Hosein says

This was a stunning look at the complexities of growing up as a Cuban-American during post Revolution/Cold War hostilities. It focuses on the desires to explore and travel, as a means of empathy, as a means of connecting with parts of yourself that exist beyond your own shores.

Wow that sounded like a tacky pseudo-deep tumblr post.

But seriously, read this book.

Mrs.Heather Lassley says

I have found that I love everything that Margarita Engle writes. Not only does she beautiful describe things through verse, but I feel like I know her even though I have never met her.

David says

4.0. This was a solid read, but it felt a little thin in areas and I think it would have been much better had the author added more content. It just had the feeling of being a little disjointed. At times it felt like memoir, at times a history lesson and at times a travel brochure. I just wish the author had spent more time on all three and added more detail. I really enjoyed the perspective of having two selves and her descriptions of Cuba made me want to visit. I am so glad she can finally be reunited with her family..

Mary Louise says

As a child, Margaret Engle loved visiting the Cuba of her mother's people-- the trees, the birds,the sea, which made it an enchanted place. But then the revolution in Cuba and later, the 1960s Cuban Missile Crisis change the relationship between the United States and Cuba. All this news confuses one sensitive girl who loves both countries and doesn't understand the politics that keep her wings clipped so that she can't fly to Cuba and visit the land she loves and her family.

I appreciated that the author shared her memoir of loving both the United States and Cuba, and her hopes of returning to Cuba in the near future.

Abby Johnson says

This is a really beautiful book. This finely crafted memoir in verse depicts Margarita Engle's childhood, traveling to Cuba to visit her mother's family there and growing up in America while events like the Bay of Pigs Invasion and the Cuban Missile Crisis were going on. Fans of BROWN GIRL DREAMING, don't miss this one!

Monica Edinger says

My review here.

Holly says

I know you're not supposed to judge a book by its cover, but look at this one! So beautiful. Fortunately, the inside matches the outside - a beautiful memoir in verse by Cuban-American Margarita Engle. It's full of gorgeous language that describes the angst of growing up, feeling torn between two countries, longing for adventure and travel, not always fitting in, confusion over politics and culture clashes, the beauty of Cuba and America, the love of art, stories, and poetry, and so much more. It makes me want to visit Cuba! I was just as absorbed in this story as I was in Brown Girl Dreaming - they will sit side by side on my bookshelf.

Krista the Krazy Kataloguer says

Every book I've read about Cuba makes me want to visit the island. This book is no exception. Engle here describes in poems her childhood until the age of 14. Her father was American, but her mother was from Cuba, and they lived in various places on the west coast. They would make the trip to Cuba to visit the relatives as often as they could. What I related to here was her experiences in school during and after the Cuban missile crisis. How well I remember, even though I was half her age at the time. It's so sad that it had to divide families. I didn't know that Cubans in the U.S. at that time were detained and questioned by the government on suspicion of being Communist. I can also relate to some of her childhood frustrations, such as not being able to have something you really want (for her it was a horse, for me it was a piano). Like all teens, she wondered what her place in the world would be, and here she is today, using her love of poetry and stories to write award-winning novels and non-fiction in verse. And out of her love of plants and animals on the relatives' farms in Cuba, she also became an agronomist, which I didn't know. The lesson is to follow what you love (which is how I became a librarian). This Pura Belpre winner is a quick, enjoyable read that I highly recommend.

Ricki says

This is a poignant memoir in verse about Margarita's experience as a child of two cultures. Her words float across the page. Margarita beautifully balances the vibrance of Cuba and the noise of Los Angeles during Cold War and Missile Crisis. The title reflects the content because this book has wings. It lifts readers to another time and place in history and vividly captures her childhood.

Richie Partington says

Richie's Picks: ENCHANTED AIR: TWO CULTURES, TWO WINGS: A MEMOIR by Margarita Engle, Atheneum, August 2015, 208p., ISBN: 978-1-4814-3522-2

"I was walkin' down the sidewalk not causin' any harm.
The radio reported, it sounded with alarm.
The Russian ships were sailin' all out across the sea.
We all feared by daybreak it would be World War Number Three."
-- Bob Dylan "Cuban Missile Crisis"

"After those first soaring summers,
each time we fly back to our everyday
lives in California, one of my two selves
is left behind: the girl I would be
if we lived on Mami's island
instead of Dad's continent.

On maps, Cuba is crocodile-shaped,
but when I look at a flat paper outline,
I cannot see the beautiful farm
on that crocodile's belly.
I can't find the palm trees,
or bright coral beaches
where flying fish leap,
gleaming
like rainbows.

Sometimes, I feel
like a rolling wave of the sea,
a wave that can only belong
in between
the two solid shores.

Sometimes, I feel
like a bridge,
or a storm."

Cuba has long been a place of mystery and interest to me. Havana was one of the ports of call on my parents' honeymoon cruise in the early 1950s. I grew up with photos, postcards, and tchotchkes from their trip, and occasionally I sampled a bottle of cloyingly sweet Cuban pineapple liqueur that gathered dust in the back of their liquor cabinet.

As an elementary school student in the 1960s, I was too young to understand the rationale for air raid drills and the futility of seeking shelter from nuclear war by ducking under our desks. As I grew and learned the darker side of American foreign policy, I came to understand more about Cuba and wondered whether the situation would eventually evolve.

It's both magical and unnerving to experience Cuba of the 50s and early 1960s through the eyes of Margarita Engle. She grew up having summer relationships with four generations of her maternal relatives in Cuba before the Bay of Pigs fiasco and the Cuban Missile Crisis all but severed her connection to the island. There

are tales of idyllic rides on bareback horses and warm days outdoors, working alongside a great-grandmother who was born back when Cuba still belonged to Spain. But we also see hints of the growing crisis: she begins encountering the bearded, khaki-clad soldiers. Then, one summer, Engle's mother worries that she won't be able to get the required paperwork to return home to California with her daughters.

Back in California, Margarita Engle was a bright young girl who was too often treated in a vile fashion by ignorant, oh-so-patriotic American adults who blamed her for America's troubles with Cuba because she was of Cuban descent.

The beautiful poetry of ENCHANTED AIR transports us to a time and a place that's been unknown to most of us in the US. It will enlighten young people about a place so close to the US of which they likely know nothing.

The Obama administration has sought to move toward normalizing relations with Cuba. But given the war of words I've recently read--with Senator Marco Rubio taking one extreme position and Cuban President Raul Castro staking out another one-- ENCHANTED AIR might be as close as I ever get to that island.

Richie Partington, MLIS

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