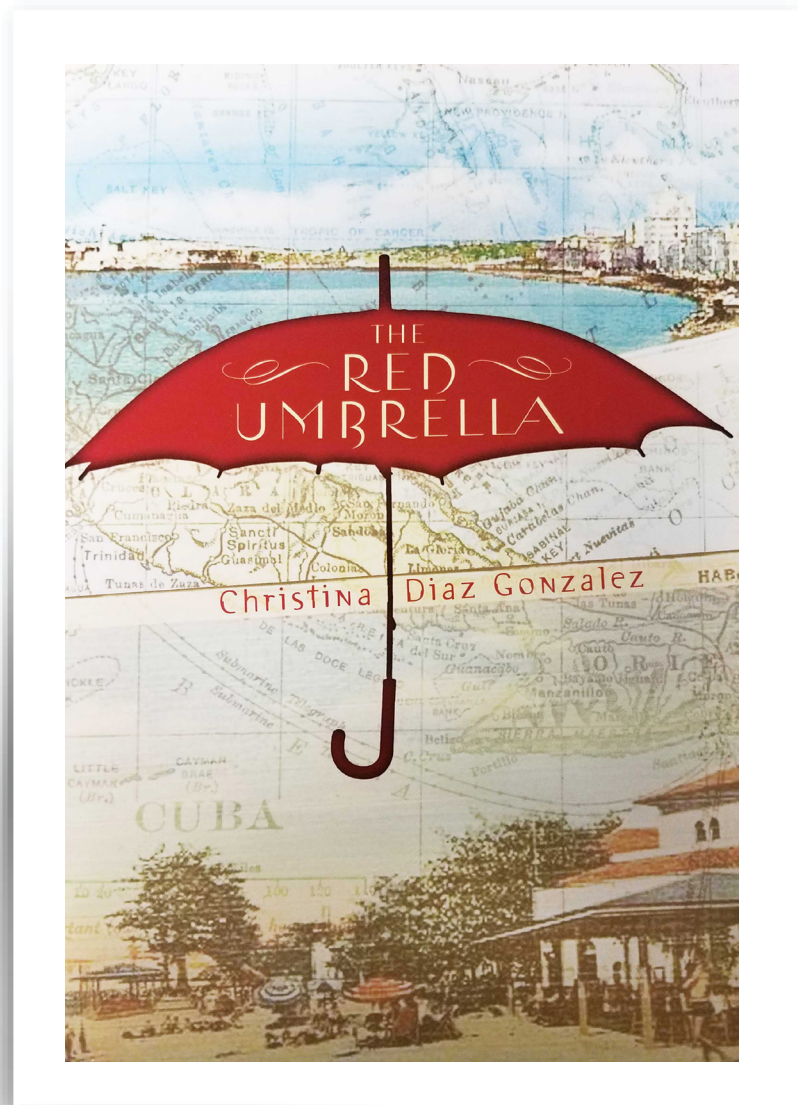


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teaching latin america through literacy



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Educator's Guide

The Red Umbrella

Written by Christina Diaz Gonzalez

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Ages 10 and up



BOOK SUMMARY

The Red Umbrella is the 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 Álvarez 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. Her friends feel like strangers. And her family is being watched. As the revolution's impact becomes more oppressive, 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 moving story of country, culture, family, and the true meaning of home. (Taken from <http://www.amazon.com/The-Red-Umbrella-Christina-Gonzalez/dp/0375861904>).

AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS

- ALA Best Fiction for Young Adults
- Finalist Bank Street Child Study Children's Book Award
- Winner Cooperative Children's Book Center Choices
- Winner 2011 ALA Best Books for Young Adults
- International Reading Assoc. - Teacher's Choice Book
- Skipping Stones Honor Award Winner
- Nominee New York State Charlotte Award
- Nominee Nebraska Golden Sower Award
- International Latino Book Award – Silver Medal

AUTHOR'S CORNER

A little bit about Christina Diaz Gonzalez in her own words:

I grew up in a Cuban household where black beans and rice were a staple of my diet (I craved pastelitos, but only got to eat them when we'd visit Miami). Yet, the moment I stepped outside my house, it was all chicken fried steak and mashed potatoes (which I still like to order). You see, my parents are both Cuban, but we lived in a very small Southern town. I had the best of both worlds. Thanks to my parents and grandparents, I speak fluent Spanish and have a deep love for the Cuban culture. Thanks to my hometown, I was able to spend my days riding my bike, hanging out with my friends or reading books in my "tree house" (just a plank of wood up in a dogwood tree, but it was my private place). I credit this time in my life for inspiring the dream to be a writer.



Then, when I was fourteen, I moved to Miami and temporarily forgot about writing. I enjoyed my high school days and went on to study accounting at the University of Miami. Yes, accounting. Not Creative Writing, not English Literature, not even a general Liberal Arts degree. Well, I still loved books so I decided to go to law school right after college (so much for that accounting degree). I returned to my Southern stompin' grounds and attended Florida State University College of Law. But my family's roots called out to me, so I enrolled in a summer abroad program in Spain. It was perfect because, lucky me, I met my husband while studying in Madrid!

After graduating from law school and practicing law for several years, I realized (with the help of my two brilliant sons who were now starting to read) that my true passion was not writing legal memoranda, but writing books for children, teens and adults. So with the encouragement of my very large extended family (think of the movie *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* but everyone speaks Spanish), I started pursuing the dream that the girl who sat up in that dogwood tree had always imagined.

Now, a few years later, my first novel, *THE RED UMBRELLA*, is available in bookstores everywhere and my second novel, *A THUNDEROUS WHISPER* (also being published by Knopf/ Random House) should be out in Fall 2012!(Taken from <http://www.christinagonzalez.com/about.html>)

For more on Christina Diaz Gonzalez check out the links below:

- [Her blog](#)
- [Her official website](#)
- [An interview with Diaz Gonzalez from Powell's Books Blogs](#)
- [A short video of an interview with Diaz Gonzalez from FuriousFiction](#)

USING THE RED UMBRELLA IN THE

The Red Umbrella begins in May of 1961, two years after the 1959 Cuban Revolution. Our main character, 14 year old Lucía Álvarez, leads a fairly normal, if not idealized, life for a teenager. She reads fashion magazines, talks

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about boys with her best friend, gets annoyed with her younger brother Frankie, and feels her parents are overly strict. For many contemporary teenagers, she would be easy to relate to. But, Lucía's life is about to change drastically. While the first two years of the revolution under Fidel Castro brought little change to the lives of the Álvarez family, this is no longer the case. There is increasing pressure for all Cuban citizens to join the cause of the revolution. Those who don't, like Mr. and Mrs. Álvarez, find themselves in precarious positions, unable to trust family members or friends. There is no room for dissent in Castro's new Cuba. Amidst all of this, there is a growing fear of *patria potestad* or the idea that the Cuban government plans to take over guardianship of all Cuban children in order to educate and prepare them to be active and supportive members of the Cuban revolution.

As a result of all of these changes and an increasing fear for their own safety, Mr. and Mrs. Álvarez choose to send Lucía and Frankie to the United States as part of what is now referred to as Operation Pedro Pan. Between the years of 1960 and 1962, approximately 14,000 children were sent to the United States unaccompanied. Half of these children had family to take them in, but the other half were taken in by the Catholic Welfare Bureau and then placed in orphanages or with host families. Lucía and Frankie are in this latter group and find themselves living in a small Nebraska farm town with the Baxters, an older couple who no longer have children of their own at home. The second half of the novel follows Lucía and Frankie as they adapt to life in Nebraska and what continues to transpire with their friends and family in Cuba. As much as it is a story about one family's experience during the Cuban Revolution, it is also about a teenage girl's coming of age as she leaves all that she knows and makes a new life for herself and her brother in a country she knows little about.

Writing a book on the Cuban Revolution would be difficult, but Christina Diaz Gonzalez has done it well here. Diaz Gonzalez provides a beautifully written account of what it was like to live during the Cuban Revolution and not support it. Much of the story is based upon her own family's stories and other historical accounts of this period. Written from the point of view of a teenage girl, an important historical period becomes accessible and engaging for other young adult readers. Even as an adult, I had a hard time putting the book down—I think I read it in two sittings. Too often our students think of history as a subject relegated to boring, overly thick textbooks. *The Red Umbrella* provides an amazing gateway into studying a multitude of historical events in the timeline of U.S.-Cuban relations.

As history has shown over and over, political movements are always incredibly complex and layered. The ideals and objectives of political movements seem so clear on paper, but the reality becomes quite complicated. *The Red Umbrella* is obviously written from a perspective that is anti-Castro and critical of the Cuban Revolution. I don't think it is any secret, even to those who have supported Castro's revolution, that there were serious issues, including human rights violations. Like so many other revolutions throughout history, the reality didn't always live up to the ideals. Yet, as a U.S. citizen, I find it hard to make an absolute or overarching statement about

the revolution. While the book does an excellent job of discussing many of the issues that plagued Castro's revolution, it doesn't discuss why so many were so eager for the changes that Castro promised, or why so many were willing to support Castro. For much of its history, there have been two very different sides to life in Cuba beginning with colonization and the introduction of slavery. In the period preceding Castro's revolution many Cubans continued to suffer and struggle to make ends meet, while wealthy Americans and Europeans profited off of lucrative business arrangements. Cuba was a popular vacation destination known as the Las Vegas of the East Coast among wealthy U.S. citizens. Diaz Gonzalez doesn't address this. In the novel, it is Mrs. Álvarez's diamond earrings that allow the family to purchase the plane tickets for the children—but what about those who never had that kind of wealth, those who may not have supported the revolution, but did not have the financial resources to get out? It would be important to discuss this background with students if using the book in class. Regardless of one's political beliefs, the Cuban Revolution and Operation Pedro Pan are significant events in history that should be acknowledged and taught. *The Red Umbrella* is an incredible resource with which to begin that discussion.

While the majority of the novel is easily appropriate for 6-12 grades, and perhaps even late elementary, there are allusions to rape and execution, though nothing explicit is ever stated. It would be up to the discretion of the teacher whether or not this was appropriate for his or her students. If using it in 5th or 6th grade, it may be best implemented as a read aloud, in which case the teacher could choose to not include those parts.

LESSON PLANS & ACTIVITIES

In addition to the lesson plans and activities included here, Natalie Dias Lorenzi created an excellent in-depth [teacher's guide](http://www.christinagonzalez.com/pdf/discussionguide.pdf) (click on the hyperlink) or find it at <http://www.christinagonzalez.com/pdf/discussionguide.pdf> on Christina Diaz Gonzalez's website. Lorenzi's guide includes some great pre-reading activities, chapter guides that include vocabulary and comprehension skills, culminating activities and an interview with the author. It is definitely worth checking out. While there is some overlap in our own guide and that of Lorenzi, we have worked to keep it to a minimum, so we hope you'll use both as you plan how to implement *The Red Umbrella* in your own classrooms.

While it is not absolutely necessary in order to use the book in a classroom, background information on Cuba, the revolution, and certain political movements, theories or concepts will be quite helpful in providing your students context and knowledge with which to understand the ideas and the events presented in the novel. Below you will find a list of links to various resources for teaching about Cuba in the classroom. These resources could be used before, during and/or after reading the book.

- “The Arts in Cuba: An Eye Behind the Curtain”: This resource includes a very large collection of links to various websites and lesson

plans for teaching about Cuba. It also includes a powerpoint presentation on the title of the resource and past resources created by Kellogg <http://kellogg.nd.edu/outreach/cuba2011.shtml>

- A Scholastic Guide to teaching about the 1959 Cuban Revolution: http://teacher.scholastic.com/scholasticnews/indepth/upfront/features/index.asp?article=f090108_Cuba
- PBS Lesson Plans on Race and Government Policy in Revolutionary Cuba <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/black-in-latin-america/resources/lesson-plan-race-and-government-policy-in-revolutionary-cuba/198/>
- “Dreaming of Cuba: The stories that bind with storyteller Antonio Sacre”
<http://www.racebridgesforschools.com/antonio/sacrelessonplan.pdf>
- “Revolt! Comparing Historical Revolutions” from teaching and learning with the New York Times
<http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/02/08/revolt-comparing-historical-revolutions/>
- “Operation Pedro Pan: A leap of faith for the sake of freedom”
http://briefings.dadeschools.net/files/67343_Operation_Pedro_Pan_Instructional_Resource_Packet-_Final_Version.pdf
- Flight to Never-Never land: The story of Operation Pedro Pan
<http://depthome.brooklyn.cuny.edu/latinashistory/PedroPanlesson69.pdf>

You may also want to show your students the book trailer (like a movie trailer, just for a book) available for The Red Umbrella [here](#) or at http://www.christinagonzalez.com/books_red_playlist.html

The following lesson plans are divided into three sections:

- A short section of suggested activities that can be used before, during or after the reading of the novel which are organized thematically by different subject areas
- Guided reading questions organized by chapter
- Reflective writing questions that can be used for a culminating written assessment.

Common Core Standards Addressed:

K-12

Reading

Key Ideas and Details

- Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
- Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Craft and Structure

- Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
- Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.
- Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

- Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Writing

Text Types and Purposes

- Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Geography:

Find Cuba on a map of North and South America. How close is Cuba to the United States? Do you think that the U.S. and Cuba are close enough that events in the two countries could potentially affect each other? Can U.S. citizens travel to Cuba? Can Cubans travel to the U.S.? How do you think these travel restrictions affect relations between the United States and Cuba?

Social Studies and History:

1. At the very beginning of the novel, Lucía hears a crowd chanting “Socialismo o muerte!” (Socialism or death).
 - a. Using a history textbook or appropriate print and online resources, research socialism. What is socialism? Socialism is often held in contrast to capitalism. Using similar resources find a definition or explanation for capitalism. How would you compare and contrast the two?
 - b. Think about the quote “Socialism or death” (p. 6). This is not the first time a quote like that has been used to rally or inspire people in a political movement. Research others who have used similar chants and what those chants stood for or meant in like of their political context. For example: Patrick Henry’s “Give me liberty or give me death”; Emiliano Zapata’s “Tierra o muerte” (Land or death); Harriet Tubman’s “I had reasoned this out in my mind; there was one of two things I had a right to, liberty or death; if I could not have one, I would have the other; for no man should take me alive.” There is a similar theme running throughout all of them--what do you think they are all trying to communicate? Why do you think death is present in all of them?
2. Mr. Álvarez references Karl Marx in relation to the Cuban Revolution (pg. 32). Using text books, or appropriate print and online resources research Karl Marx and the Cuban Revolution. Who was Karl Marx?

What is he famous for? What did he have to do with the Cuban Revolution? What did the Cuban Revolution stand for? Do you think there was a difference in what it stood for and the reality that it became? Why?

3. The Cuban Revolution took place in 1959. Research what Cuba was like prior to the revolution. Why were so many willing to support Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution?
4. Watch the film *Maestra* (more information available at <http://www.maestrathefilm.org/>). This brief and engaging documentary tells the story of 100,000 Cuban teenagers, most of them girls, who participated in Cuba's 1961 literacy campaign. Historical footage and current-day interviews bring the campaign to life. Most compelling to U.S. students will be the stories of the girls themselves, many of them middle school age, who left their families to take on major responsibilities far away. Fifty years later, the brigadistas reminisce about the independence and self-confidence they gained from the great adventure and the trust the country placed in them—in one year, they taught more than 700,000 people to read and write! (In English with voiceovers.) Compare what is presented in the film with the descriptions of what Ivette worked for offered in the book.

**Literary
Interpretation:
Guided Reading
Questions**

Guided Reading Questions:

Chapter 1:

1. What does Lucía see while she is at the beach? Is this common? (p. 2)
2. When Lucía and Frankie return from the beach what do they find at home? What does Lucía notice that is different that evening in comparison to other evenings? (p. 4-6)
3. At the close of the first chapter, Lucía hears the phrase “Socialismo o muerte” (Socialism or death) on the radio. What is socialism? What do you think that phrase means? How would you interpret it? For an extension activity related to this question, go to the Social Studies section below for an activity on famous leaders who have used a version of this same quote. (p. 6)

Chapter 2:

1. Why does Lucía's mom want the children to stay in? (p. 10-12)
2. What does Frankie learn at school about Comandante Fidel and the revolution? Do you think that his parents agree with what the school is teaching? Do you think schools should teach about politics? (p. 11-12) Why?
3. The author gives a number of clues in chapter 1 and 2 to let the reader know things are changing in Cuba, and to foreshadow even bigger changes. What clues does she give? Predict what else you think is going to change.

Chapter 3:

1. What do Lucía and Frankie see through the fence? (p. 16-18)
2. What name do the revolutionaries call those they arrest (p. 17)? Ivette uses this term as well (p. 25) to refer to those who don't support the revolution. What does this term mean?
3. Lucía's father comes home with news about Señor Betafil, Lucía thinks she saw him through the fence. What do you think actually happened to Señor Betafil?
4. What happens to Laura Milian's dad? Why? (p. 25)

Chapter 4:

1. What is the Jovenes Rebeldes? Why do you think Lucía wants to be a part of the group? (p. 30-31)
2. What does Lucía's father think about the revolution? (p. 32-37)
3. What do Lucía and her father argue about? What does Lucía believe about the revolution? (p. 32)
4. What has Lucía read about the revolution? (p. 34-35).
5. What does Lucía's father mean by fancy rhetoric in the following quote: "Everyone's in love with all the fancy rhetoric" (p. 36)? Do you think we ever use 'fancy rhetoric' in politics here in the U.S.?

Chapter 5:

1. Why does Lucía's father come home in the middle of the day? What does he do and why? (p. 44)
2. Consider the following quote from Lucía's father: "The idea is that all of the wealth should be spread out. So they're taking from those who have worked their entire lives, like us, keeping some of the money for themselves and then supposedly giving the rest to the poor. Isn't that wonderful? I've worked since I was fifteen just so I can be as poor as the bum who never worked a day in his life. Welcome to Castro's Revolution" (p. 44). What do you think of his statement? Would you feel the same way? Why would someone disagree with him? Having researched the Cuban Revolution, do you think it's an accurate statement about the revolution? Have you ever heard similar statements said about the government in the United States? Did you agree with those? Why or why not?

Chapter 6:

1. What does Lucía have to go on an errand for at the beginning of the chapter?
2. How does Señora Garra act at the pharmacy? Do you think the author is warning us about something through Señora Garra? (p. 49-50)
3. Who does Lucía run into on the way home? How do we know the revolution has changed even the lives of teenagers? (Hint: were Laura and Lucía friends before?) (p. 51-52)
4. What does Lucía see when she cuts through the park? (p. 54)
5. What was the odd behavior of Señora Garra foreshadowing?

Chapter 7:

1. Why does Lucía's father say they killed Señor Garra? What was Señor Garra trying to do? (p. 58)
2. What plan does the family make now, so that nothing will happen to them? (p. 59) Do you think it will work?
3. Why must Lucía go to the dance now? (p. 60)
4. How would you feel if you were Lucía? Why?

Chapter 8:

1. What is Mamá trying to do for Lucía at the beginning of the chapter? (p. 62-63)
2. What does Lucía tell Ivette about the jewelry? (p. 69)
3. What happens between Papá and Tio Antonio at the end of the chapter? (p. 70-71)
4. Do you think things are changing between Ivette and Lucía? How can you tell? Do you think that Lucía should trust Ivette?

Chapter 9:

1. Lucía tells her mother that Tio Antonio is there to apologize, does he ever actually say that to Lucía though? (p. 75)
2. What does Lucía's mother give her to wear at the dance? (p. 76)
3. Who takes Lucía to the dance? (p. 77)

Chapter 10:

1. How does the beginning of the dance go for Lucía? Is it what she hoped it would be? (p. 80-82)
2. How do Raul and Manuel describe their summer? (p. 81)
3. When Lucía questions Manuel about killing those who are against the revolution, what does he whisper in her ear? (p. 82)
4. What does Lucía learn about Ivette's summer plans? (p. 82) How does she react? How would you feel if you were Lucía? If you were Ivette?
5. What does Manuel say to Lucía when she accidentally kicks him? (p. 85) What does this say about Manuel's character?
6. How does Ivette respond when Lucía tells her what happened with Manuel? (p. 86) What does this say about Ivette's character?
7. What do you think the last sentence of the chapter ("How could this night get any worse?") is foreshadowing? Predict what will happen next.

Chapter 11:

1. What does Lucía find when she arrives at her house? (p. 88)
2. What does the officer accuse the family of doing? (p. 88)
3. Who does Lucía think told about the jewelry in the floor? Do you think she's correct? (p. 89) Ivette claims she didn't do it, do you believe her?
4. What happens to Lucía's father? (p. 91)

Chapter 12:

1. Who is helping to get Mr. Álvarez (Papá) back home? (p. 92-93)
2. What is the one thing that the soldiers didn't confiscate? Why didn't they take them? (p. 93)
3. Why does Lucía think that it was Ivette who betrayed the family? What is her reasoning? (p. 95)

Chapter 13:

1. What happened as a result of Mr. Álvarez's arrest? What is going to change for the family? (p. 98-100).
2. What is expected of Lucía and Frankie? (p. 99-100)
3. What do we learn about Tio Antonio? Did you expect this? (p. 100-101)
4. Do you agree with Mr. Álvarez's statement: "From now on, we have to expect the worst and hope for the best. We can't count on anyone, anymore" (p. 101). Do you think this is best for the family? Why or why not?

Chapter 14:

1. Frankie wants to go outside, but Lucía doesn't want to go away from the house. Why? Lucía's behavior and attitude has changed a great deal from the beginning of the book—how has it changed? Why do you think it has changed? (p. 102-103)
2. Mrs. Álvarez is waiting for Alicia Milian, Laura's mother. She says nothing is wrong, but Lucía believes she is acting suspicious. Why do you think Mrs. Álvarez is meeting with Mrs. Milian? (p. 103-104)
3. Why do Mr. and Mrs. Álvarez decide to send Lucía and Frankie away? What do they think is going to happen if they don't? (p. 105-107)

Chapter 15:

1. What organization is helping them in Miami? Who are they supposed to say is meeting them in Miami? (p. 110)
2. How did they pay for the airline tickets for Lucía and Frankie? (p. 111)
3. What does Lucía find out while talking to Laura Milian? (p. 115-116)
4. How does Mrs. Álvarez let her children know she's watching their flight leave? (p. 118)
5. How would you feel if you were Frankie and Lucía and you had to go to live in a different country without your parents?

Chapter 16:

1. Lucía says "I'd always wanted my parents to give me a little more freedom. Now I was about to experience complete independence" (p. 121). Do you think Lucía still wants that freedom? Why or why not?
2. Who meets Lucía and Frankie at the airport? Do you think he is trustworthy? Why or why not?
3. Where will Lucía and Frankie be staying? Is this what they expected?

(p. 126-127).

Chapter 17:

1. What does Lucía learn from Angela about camp and what happens to many of the children there? (p. 129-131)
2. What is Frankie's biggest complaint about the camp? (p. 133)
3. How does Lucía try to cheer Frankie up? (p. 135)

Chapter 18:

1. After 5 days at camp, how is Lucía feeling? (p. 136)
2. What does Angela save for Lucía? How would you describe Angela? Do you think she is a good friend to Lucía? Why? Who does Lucía compare Angela to? (p. 137)
3. What does Lucía find in her bed? (p. 138)
4. Why do you think Lucía only sends the one letter that tells her parents everything is okay? Would you do the same?

Chapter 19:

1. How many times has Frankie tried to sneak out? (p. 143)
2. How does Mr. Ramirez know Mr. Álvarez? What did Mr. Álvarez do for Mr. Ramirez? Why does Mr. Ramirez make an exception to help out Lucía and Frankie? (p. 144-145)
3. Who are Frankie and Lucía going to live with? Where does their foster family live? (p. 146)

Chapter 20:

1. Why does Lucía think they are moving to an island? Do you think Nebraska will have the "sea air, sand and small fishing boats" that Lucía imagines? (p. 149)
2. What would you think of Mrs. Baxter if you were Frankie and Lucía and had just met her?
3. Lucía is thinking about a number of questions at the end of the chapter—what do you think? Will they ever go back to Cuba or will they be stuck in the U.S. forever? (p. 154)

Chapter 21:

1. What does Lucía think of the things she's given at the Baxters? What does Frankie think? (p. 156-157).
2. How is the food in the U.S. different from the Cuban food the children are accustomed to? (p. 157-158)
3. What does Lucía choose to tell her parents about? (p. 161-162)
4. What will Frankie and Lucía be helping with in the morning? Do you think they've ever done that before? (p. 163)

Chapter 22:

1. Does Lucía think they'll still be in Nebraska for winter? Do you think

- she's correct? (p. 165)
2. What does Mrs. Baxter give Frankie and Lucía for their eggs? Do they like it? (p. 167)

Chapter 23:

1. What is Lucía so tired from? (p. 168)
2. Does Mrs. Baxter get upset with Frankie and Lucía for playing in the mud? What does she do? How do you think this makes Frankie and Lucía feel? (p. 171).
3. Does Frankie think he will need to know English? What do you think? (p. 172)

Chapter 24:

1. What do Frankie and Lucía finally get to do at the beginning of the chapter?
2. What is the phone call to their parents like? What does Frankie have to try hard to do?
3. What does Mr. Álvarez tell the children to think about their time in the U.S. as? (p. 177)

Chapter 25:

1. What surprises Lucía about the papers in the U.S.? (p. 180)
2. Do Lucía and Frankie get to leave the farm often? (p. 180)
3. What does Lucía think about the other teenagers at church? Has she made any friends yet? (181-182)
4. What does Lucía learn about Mr. Baxter while listening to Mrs. Baxter's conversation? Does this surprise her? (p. 183-184)
5. What does Mamá warn Lucía about? How does it make Lucía feel? (191)
6. Why do you think Lucía asks Mrs. Baxter to cut her hair? (p. 193)

Chapter 26:

1. How does Lucía and Frankie's first bus ride go? How is it different for Frankie? (p. 195-195)
2. What does Betty do to make Lucía feel bad? Why do you think she does that? (p. 199)
3. What does Mrs. Brolin do that embarrasses Lucía? (p. 202-203)

Chapter 27:

1. Why is Lucía having such a hard time with her homework? Did she have the same problem in Cuba? (p. 204-205)
2. Lucía thinks about giving up and just letting her teachers think she's not that smart—have you ever felt that way before?
3. How does Mrs. Baxter help Lucía feel better? (206-207)

Chapter 28:

1. Who is the one person who seems to go out of her way to make Lucía feel unwelcome? Why do you think she acts like that? (p. 209-210).
2. What does Betty say that really upsets Lucía?
3. Lucía is starting to change and adjust to life in Nebraska, how do we know this? What clues does the author give? (p. 210, 212)

Chapter 29:

1. How would Lucía have celebrated her quinces in Cuba? (p. 214)
2. What do Frankie and Lucía get to see for the first time on her birthday? (p. 215)
3. What does Mrs. Baxter give Lucía for her birthday? Why do you think it means so much to Lucía? (p. 218-219)
4. What does Mr. Baxter give Lucía for her birthday (p. 220).
5. What surprise letter does Lucía receive on her birthday? (p. 221)
6. What does Lucía learn about her parents from Ivette's letter? (p. 222-223).
7. What impression does Ivette have about the United States? (p. 223-224)

Chapter 30:

1. How is Christmas Eve in Cuba different from Christmas Eve in the U.S.? (p. 226-227)
2. What does Mrs. Baxter do to make Christmas Eve more like a Cuban celebration? (p. 228-229)

Chapter 31:

1. What do Lucía and Frankie get for Christmas? (p. 231-233)
2. What do the gifts tell us about Mr. and Mrs. Baxter?

Chapter 32:

1. Lucía receives a letter from Ivette that shows how much Ivette has changed. In what ways is Ivette different now, since she's become involved in the revolution? (p. 236-238).
2. What does Lucía learn has happened to her father? (p. 238)
3. When Lucía finally talks to her mother, what does she find out? (p. 240-241)

Chapter 33:

1. What does Lucía realize that high school revolves around? (p. 243)
2. Mr. Álvarez writes that Lucía wouldn't want to see Cuba now that it was a changed place. Why do you think Lucía believes she would still like to see it? (p. 244)

Chapter 34:

1. What special event is the town getting ready for? What project does Lucía's class have to create for the event? (p. 277-248)

2. What connection does Lucía have to the bird she decides to research? (p. 251)
3. How has Ivette changed during the time that Lucía has been in the United States? (p. 253)
4. What does Ivette's letter to Lucía say? (p. 254)
5. How does Lucía respond to Ivette? Do you think she'll ever hear from Ivette again? (p. 255)

Chapter 35:

1. What does Eddie do so that he'll be able to dance with Lucía?
2. Why do you think Lucía is apprehensive about the dance? Think back to what happened at her last dance.

Chapter 36:

1. What does Mrs. Baxter say that Mrs. Álvarez also says? (p. 263) Compare and contrast Mrs. Baxter and Mrs. Álvarez. How are they alike? Different?
2. Who calls when Lucía and Mrs. Baxter are about to leave? What does Lucía find out (p. 264)
3. What do you think—should Mrs. Álvarez come to the United States even if they won't approve Mr. Álvarez's visa? What would you do?

Chapter 37:

1. How does the community help to provide what the Álvarez's will need? (p. 267)
2. Why is Lucía nervous about seeing her mom? (p. 268-269)
3. What surprise do Lucía and Frankie receive at the airport? (p. 271)

**Reflective
Writing
Questions**

1. What role does the red umbrella play in the book? What do you think it symbolizes? Why do you think the author chose to name her novel *The Red Umbrella*?
2. Think about Lucía and her best friend Ivette. How are they alike at the beginning of the story? What kinds of things were they interested in? What did they talk about? They both change a great deal by the end of the novel. How do they change? Are they very similar anymore? How would you describe each of them at the end of the book? Do you think they will remain friends?
3. How do Lucía's feelings about the revolution change over the course of the book? Cite examples from the beginning of the novel and her letters to Ivette to support your answer.
4. Reading the first half of the novel, we learn about what Lucía's life in Cuba was like. When she and Frankie move to the United States, we see what life in the U.S. is like for someone who didn't grow up here. Think about how different everything was—the food, the music, school, friends, the weather, the language, being away family. Imagine you had to do what Lucía and Frankie did, but instead you are moving to Cuba from the United States. Think about the Cuban life that

- Lucía describes, then write a diary about your feelings and experiences as you start your new life in Cuba.
5. Look back at the newspaper headlines reprinted at the beginning of each chapter. What do they tell us about how the U.S. media felt about Castro? Why do you think that?

ABOUT THIS GUIDE



The Latin American & Iberian Institute (LAI) receives resources from the U.S. Department of Education to support K-12 teachers teaching about Latin America. Our goal is to provide a supportive environment for teachers across grade levels and subject areas so they can bring regional and linguistic knowledge of Latin America into their classrooms. For more information and materials that support teaching about Latin America in the classroom, visit our website at <http://laii.unm.edu/outreach>

Written by staff at the LAI, **Vamos a Leer Educator's Guides** provide an excellent way to teach about Latin America through literacy. Each guide is based upon a book featured in the Vamos a Leer book group. For more on Vamos a Leer, visit our blog at bit.ly/vamosaleer. This guide was prepared 12/ 2012 by Katrina Dillon, LAI Project Assistant.