

Isabel Allende receives National Book Award

This Chilean-American author writes in Spanish.

BASIC

The woman pictured here is Isabel Allende, author of over 20 books. Recently, she was honored by the National Book Awards. These are a set of U.S. literary awards that are given every year. **Have you heard of them?** Allende immigrated to the U.S. in 1987. Before that, she lived in the three different South American countries highlighted on the map. **What are they?** (*Peru, Chile, and Venezuela.*) Allende was born in Peru in 1942. When she was very young, her family moved to Chile. But in the 1970s, that country went through a terrible crisis. Isabel Allende was related to Chile's then-

president, Salvador Allende. But he was pushed out of power, and the military

took over the country. The man who took charge was brutal. The country became so unsafe that Allende and her family fled to Venezuela. **What must that have been like?** Allende draws on many of her life experiences when writing her books. **Do you know of other authors who do that?** NEXT



GENERAL

Each year, American authors are honored with National Book Awards in various categories of literature. **Which categories might this include?** (*Fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and so on.*) One of these awards is the Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters. This goes not just to a single book, but to an author whose work has influenced American literature for many years. This year, the award went to the woman shown here. Her name is Isabel Allende, and she has written more than 20 books. **Have you ever heard of her?** Allende is the first Spanish-language author to win this award. Allende is from South America, and writes all of her books in Spanish. They have been translated into many languages, including English.

Do you think Allende was a good choice for this award? What other authors do you think deserve this honor?

Isabel Allende was born on August 2, 1942, in Lima, Peru. When she was very young, her family moved to Chile. In the early 1970s, Chile went through a terrible crisis. Salvador Allende, who was Isabel's cousin, was the president of Chile. But he was forced out of office, and a military general named Augusto Pinochet took over the country. Pinochet was a brutal leader. Chile was no longer safe for Isabel Allende and her family, so they fled to the third South American country highlighted on the map. **What is it?** (*Venezuela.*) Allende lived there for many years. In 1987, she immigrated to the United States, where she has lived ever since. NEXT

ADVANCED

Each year at the National Book Awards, one author is awarded the Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters. This year, Isabel Allende won the award. **Have you heard of her?** This choice was significant, because it is the first time that a Spanish-language author has won this award. Allende is also one of just two winners who were born outside the U.S.

Isabel Allende was born on August 2, 1942, in Lima, Peru. When she was very young, her family moved to Chile. In the 1960s and 70s, Allende worked as a journalist in Chile. But in the early 1970s, political turmoil forced Allende to leave the country. **Do you know what was happening in Chile at this time?** (*General Augusto Pinochet led a coup that toppled the country's government and installed a military junta.*) The deposed

president, Salvador Allende, was a cousin to Isabel's father. At first, Allende and her family stayed in Chile to help victims of Pinochet's repressive regime. But soon the situation became unsafe, and Allende and her family fled to Venezuela. This experience — as well as her childhood in Chile — informs much of Allende's work. Allende writes in Spanish, but her work has been translated into many languages, including English. **Have you ever read a book in translation? How was it different from books written originally in English?**

In 1987, Allende immigrated to the United States. She became an American citizen in 1993, and has lived for many years in California. **Do you think Allende is a good choice for this award? Why or why not?** NEXT

Isabel Allende receives National Book Award (cont'd)

Allende's work includes novels, memoirs, and essays.

BASIC Isabel Allende's first language is Spanish. This is also the language she writes her books in. However, her books are popular all over the world. They have been translated into many other languages — including English. Her first book was a novel called "The House of the Spirits," pictured here. It was published in 1982. It follows a Chilean family over many decades. Although the family is similar to Allende's in many ways, it is still a work of fiction. But Allende wrote nonfiction, as well. Several of her books are memoirs. **What is a memoir?** (A book in

GENERAL This quote comes from the speech Allende gave at this year's National Book Awards. **Who can read it aloud? Do you agree or disagree? How is this relevant to things that are happening in the country and the world today?**

Allende's experiences in South America greatly influenced her work. Her first book, "The House of the Spirits," came out in 1982. This novel follows a Chilean family over many decades. Although the family is similar to Allende's in many ways, it is still a work of fiction. Like many of Allende's novels, this book has elements of magical realism. Books with magical realism are mostly realistic, but contain some surreal or fantastic elements. For example, one of the characters in Allende's novel can predict the future and speak to spirits. The other characters in the book treat this

ADVANCED So far, Isabel Allende has published more than 20 books. These include novels, memoirs, and essays. **Which of those do you prefer reading, and why?** Allende's first novel was "The House of the Spirits." It was a sensation when it came out in 1982, and continues to be a significant part of her legacy. **Have you read this book, or any of Allende's other books? What do you think of her writing?** Although it is fiction, this novel mirrors Allende's own life in many ways. It follows a Chilean family through three generations, from the 1920s until the 1970s. The book contains many elements of magical realism. **Who can define this term?** (Fiction that is mostly realistic, but contains some surreal or fantastic elements.) **Can you think of specific examples of magical realism in literature?**

which an author remembers an important part of his or her life.) Her best-known memoir is pictured here. **What is it**

called? ("Paula.") Allende wrote it in the form of a letter to her daughter, Paula. **Who can read this quote aloud? Have you ever read a book that showed you how similar you were to someone from a different country or culture?** END

as completely normal. **Can you think of other examples of magical realism from books you have read?**

Allende has also written works of nonfiction, as well. Several of her books are memoirs. **What is a memoir?** (A book in which an author remembers an important part of his or her life.) **Do you enjoy reading memoirs, or biographies about real people? Why or why not?** Allende's best-known memoir is pictured here. In "Paula," Allende documents the story of her life in the form of a letter to her daughter, Paula. Paula was very ill for most of her life, and died when she was only 29 years old. Several years after Paula's death, Allende started a foundation in Paula's honor. The foundation supports organizations in California and Chile that benefit women and girls. END

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Allende has received many accolades besides this year's National Book Award. She received Chile's National Literature Prize. In 2014, she was given the Presidential Medal of Freedom. **What do you know about this award?** (It is the highest civilian honor given in the United States.) **Who can read this quote aloud? Do you agree? Can you think of a book that illustrates this statement?** END

