



The Red Umbrella

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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.

The Red Umbrella Details

Date : Published May 11th 2010 by Knopf Books for Young Readers (first published January 1st 2010)

ISBN : 9780375861901

Author : Christina Diaz Gonzalez

Format : Hardcover 284 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Young Adult, Fiction, Childrens, Middle Grade

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From Reader Review The Red Umbrella for online ebook

Becca says

What a cute story! It reminded me of The War That Saved My Life. It was interesting to read about Cuba and Fidel Castro's "Revolution." I would definitely recommend this book, and especially the audiobook.

Steph Su says

I have never read a novel like Christina Gonzalez's debut, THE RED UMBRELLA. This is a necessary story about an aspect of Cuban American history that has not received enough attention in YA literature—and best of all, it's extremely well written and engaging!

Gonzalez writes convincingly of all her characters. Lucia is partly your average teenager, desiring friendship, love, acceptance, and pretty things. Her parents are a believable blend of loving, strict, and worried, and Frankie is a cute and appropriately occasionally annoying younger brother. The way the story follows Lucia through this difficult time in her life, however, is a miraculous achievement: my heart ached as I read about the difficulties she faced, and I saw a distinct, yet subtle, growth in her as she realizes the extent to which Castro's takeover would affect her life.

The pacing and plot were a little uneven, though, and thus not as fulfilling as it could've been. The first two-thirds of the book takes place within a few fast and furious months in Cuba, as the revolution starts taking over Cubans' lives. This part of the book is great, as we see Lucia and her family struggling to remain true to themselves in the face of so much propaganda and pressure. However, when Lucia and Frankie spend time with the elderly white couple in Nebraska while they await news of their parents, time sees to stop and go in choppy bits, covering more than half a year in just a few dozen pages. As a result, I felt that Lucia's adjustment to American life and subsequent maturation were rushed, and that the characters in this section of the book were underdeveloped.

Pacing aside, this was a fantastic read, great for everyone. The Alvarezes are a family to cheer for throughout the whole story. Never before have I seen this aspect of Cuban American history discussed in such an approachable and sympathetic manner. I am thankful for this book, hope others will strongly consider reading it when it comes out, and definitely look forward to anything Christina has next for us!

Andrea says

There was an immediate disconnect and I couldn't warm up to Lucia or her life and world. She was so distant. I couldn't put my finger on it but for some reason I couldn't get it into it. It was like the writing was hands-off; even though it was first-person it felt like third person for all that I felt like I knew her.

It wasn't the best introduction to Lucia that she couldn't concentrate on anything the teacher said in class because of a cute boy. I also didn't like the scene the next day after she's seen the army trucks, where she wakes up contemplating the yellow headband that goes good with her dark hair or the green and white that matched perfectly with her starched outfit.

When she got mad at her mom for not letting her hang out with her friend because things were dangerous, I was so irritated. I know she's only 14 but that didn't lessen my irritation. There are army trucks and communists and school's been closed and everything else, so for her not to see the danger in that and get all upset annoyed me.

It was interesting that there were rebel meetings and people wore brigadista uniforms. Her friend Ivette told her the boy she liked from school was there and he was going to teach peasants, because the government called on students over 13 to go to the countryside and teach the peasants for 3 months. The book should've started out with this and it would've captured my interest.

When Lucia got mad at her mom for taking the red umbrella out to get groceries with I almost lost it. Red brought them attention and she wondered why her mom insisted on embarrassing her with it. A terrible time to be in the POV of such a bratty little teenager.

I was so irritated that Lucia refused to see reason about Castro. No matter what she heard her dad and mom talking about, no matter what he said, she took the government's side and didn't see what the big deal was. Seeing her dad's boss tied up and hearing him be shot, her dad saying he was given the job and told to spy on people, saying their money and valuables would be taken. None of that clued this idiot in to the fact that the government was bad. No, she thought her parents were paranoid and that Cuba would do so good under Castro's communism. I think your parents know a little something more about how politics work than a 14 year old spoiled brat. Fool.

The way she treated her mom, saying "Okay, sure" when her mom said there would be extra money after she bought the medicine and that Lucia would buy some face powder or nail polish, she deserved to be smacked. She was only nice to her mom when she was told she could go to the dance. And the way she went on and on about that truly perfect shade of nail polish annoyed the crap out of me. I want a character that doesn't obsess over clothes and looks. Materialistic ppl make me sick. And I don't think the bottle of nail polish would break just from falling on the ground. That's hard glass and doesn't break very easily.

At least she finally saw the danger of going out when she saw the doctor's body hanging from a tree. She sobbed into her mother's chest like a baby and said she was never leaving the house again. Serves her right for being such an idiot.

On cloud 9. Seventeen Magazines. Miss High Fashion.

I hate when characters make such stupid mistakes that are going to come back and cause trouble. She knew Ivette's family was with the revolutionary, they're not on their side and have been brainwashed by the government along with everyone else. So, her parents said they would have to make an effort to go with the flow and not cause suspicion or get in trouble. That's why her mom invited Ivette and her mom over. So what does Lucia of the one brain cell do? She tells Ivette that her dad hid her mom's jewelry in the floor. What a colossal idiot! When will she ever learn? And you can see what Ivette thinks of it when she says isn't that what the government told them not to do? They're supposed to have everything in the open so the government can determine if there's a better use for their things. Way to go, Lucia. Ivette isn't on your side and she's going to rat you out. I hate stupid characters.

When she referenced Sandra Dee's dresses I was like are you kidding me? Grease came out in 1978 and this was in the early 1960s. Wtf is this author thinking?

The lie she pulled to her mom made me so fed-up with her. I wanted nothing more to do with her as the main

character. She overheard her dad and his brother arguing and knew it was a big deal, but the night of the dance her dad was running late and her mom couldn't leave Frankie home alone, so when her uncle pulled in the driveway she lied and said her mom would be okay with him chaperoning her at the dance. She then lied to her mom and said her uncle was there to apologize to her dad. Where does she get off meddling with adults like that?

It got steadily worse. She asked what he was fighting about with her dad and he said her dad needed to learn some hard lessons. She doesn't even comment, react or act like she even heard it. Who could hear someone say their dad needed to learn a hard lesson and not get upset? Then she asked him what patria postestad meant, a phrase she heard her parents talking about. Why does she keep telling on her parents to revolutionaries?!? This girl doesn't have two brain cells to work with.

Lucia finally got to dance with her crush Manuel. At least she could shut up about it and we could get on with business. I found myself staying removed from him because I already knew, thanks to the plot spoiler summary, that her parents were going to send her and her brother to the U.S. so nothing would come of it. That ruined the time spent in Cuba because I was just waiting for it to come to an end. After they danced and went to get drinks, he dropped her hand to get them and she said she had never hated cups so much in her life. What a ridiculously stupid and immature thing to say. That was so stupid.

In typical book fashion it turns out Manuel isn't a nice guy. Not only is he a steadfast revolutionary and thinks people should die that don't support it, he tries to force himself on her. I was so irritated at that. Of course he has to do that. It's too much trouble to make him be nice, much easier to ruin his character completely and get him out of the way. So overdone.

The really annoying part was Lucia's reaction after. She thinks she acted like a little girl in front of him and is humiliated, all because she couldn't handle a boy kissing her. So now she's reached a new low of idiocy. She doesn't know the difference between a kiss and sexual assault.

Pg 139 Telling them it'd been a mistake to send us here.

It'd is it and would combined, not it had. If would been a mistake. Come on.

Obviously there was something wrong on the author's part that I couldn't grasp the gravity of the reality of communism and kids having to leave their parents. It was so unemotional. The author can't convey emotion. She's writing that Lucia's thinking about her parents but I don't feel it and I don't buy it.

At the facility I found it highly convenient that Frankie just guessed which bunk Lucia slept in. He found her suitcase at the bunk bed and just guessed that she was on the top, avoiding a scene where he could've really scared the girl on the bottom. The boy should play the lotto with luck like that. And I thought it was weird how Angela, the girl on the bottom, gave her a cookie and milk and Lucia tossed hem up on the bed, before Frankie ever ate the cookie. That was a weird thing to do to throw a cookie up on your bed. Convenient setup for Frankie eating it.

And so convenient that the director of the boy's facility knows their dad. He recognized the town she was in, a big stretch if you ask me, then put together their last name to produce a connection to the man who is the sole reason he took this job. Their dad helped Mr. Ramirez out when he didn't have money and got medicine for his kid. Some story.

The author kept referencing things from American culture that I just don't think Lucia had access to. She referenced Grease which didn't come out until over a decade after this, then she referenced Seventeen magazine and I wondered how American magazines made their way to Cuba. When she said she had seen movies about Al Capone I was like what movie hasn't this girl seen that relates to what she's going through?

So convenient. And there again, I wondered if she would've had access to an American movie, how long it takes a movie to make it to other countries and whatnot.

"I heard *blah, blah, blabbity, blah*, Cuba, then some more *blabbity, blah*.
How immature.

I thought they had been speaking English the entire time, because only a word or two here and there would be in Spanish, and everything else would be in English. Then suddenly when they met their foster parents Lucia said "I sorry. I no understand." And I thought she was doing it as a joke to get the woman to slow down as she talked so they could understand the English. But then she kept it up. "We happy to be here." And I was like why is she talking like that? It didn't work. I know the book had to be in English so English-speaking readers could read it but since it was, that meant I thought the characters were speaking English the whole time. Poor writing that it wasn't made clear to readers that they were speaking in Spanish. And a terrible decision to have a few words Spanish to make me think they were only saying those words in Spanish, when everything else was written in English even though it too was Spanish.

It was funny how Mrs. Baxter asked Lucia about where she was for and she said Puerto Mijares was on a bitch and Mrs. Baxter said never say that and told her how to pronounce beach. The book could have used some humor.

Mrs. Baxter gave her Tabasco sauce to put on her eggs and it was so hot she had to drink half of her juice. She thought they ate spicy food because they do in Mexico and Lucia had to tell her in Mexico yes, Cuba no. Another humorous situation. And when she said there will be snow in the winter Frankie ran to the window expecting there to be snow out, bcuz he can't understand English well.

At least Lucia finally saw the light once she was of of Cuba and had a mature thought. She read the newspapers about the bad things happening in Cuba, and knew that when Fidel Castro had said he was going to help out the poor and losing some freedoms to do that didn't seem like too high of a price. She saw in newspapers that people outright criticized President Kennedy and she knew if anyone did that to Castro that they would be branded a traitor.

When anyone was jailed or threatened or forced to leave their homes she thought they did something to deserve it or didn't love Cuba enough, which I guess showed how powerful Castro's brainwashing was.

Lucia was out carrying the bag of chicken feed to the barn and Frankie wanted her to jump puddles with him, so when he took the bag from her it fell and dumped out and Lucia started a mud fight with him. Mrs. Baxter caught them and I thought she'd be so mad but she only sprayed them with the hose when they got close and they had a little water fight. A nice moment if unexpected. Her history showed that she would get mad bcuz they didn't have money to waste with her husband being laid off and having to work at the store.

It was also unexpected that when a lady at church said she should get one, as in a child from Cuba, Mrs. Baxter said they're not pets, because she struck me as having ulterior motives. Like having them work on the farm or something, and her husband had nothing to do with them and never spoke to them. And she wanted them to learn English and to me spoke to them in a condescending way.

At church when Frankie came back with 3 donuts after eating some himself Lucy was upset thinking what would people say. But he comes up and says "for you and you," giving them to her and Mrs. Baxter and the woman at church says "so cute." That was so out of character it wasn't even funny. Trying way too hard. And if that wasn't enough he went up to Mr. Baxter as he talked to a group of men, tapped him on the arm and

gave him the donut. They all stopped talking and Mr. Baxter smiled and patted him on the back Make me gag.

I hated that the first introduction to the boy was him mistaking her for another girl and tickling her under her ribs. Whoa. Sucks that he touches another girl like that. And he didn't even apologize to her. All he said was he thought she was someone else and then said sorry to the other girl! What a jerk.

It was such a copout and bad writing that time was skipped over. She would write she liked going to church and in to town grocery shopping but we didn't get to experience that. And that she had made two other friends at school, but we didn't get to see that either. Or that Mr. Baxter would drop her off at Jennifer's house on Saturdays. I just didn't like the things that were left out. And I was so irritated that all the guys at school liked her. A football player in 11th grade that the mean girl Betty likes. Thought she liked the guy from the bus, but I guess she's like most popular girls in high school and had to have them all. And Eddie, a guy in one of her classes. Like come on. I'm so sick of the heroine having all the guys fall over her.

When Ivette wrote back to her saying that America was such a dangerous place and the people were so bad, it was upsetting to know someone painted a free country in such a bad light. And she alluded to the fact that she had been raped but the word itself wasn't used. And she just considered herself unlucky, held no ill will to the soldiers or the revolution. A brainwashed idiot for sure.

It was sweet of the Baxters to celebrate Christmas on Christmas Eve like they do, and she made food they have. It was cute how she told them the gifts were from Santa and that theirs were more practical because they couldn't be extravagant like Santa.

It was a nice touch how they were in the library choosing a bird for the school project and started laughing about Betty being crapped on by a bird once and they had to cover their faces with their books. They were laughing so hard all people would see was their books bouncing up and down. Jennifer told her to close the book and open it to a random page and that would be her bird, and it happened to be one she saw in Cuba and it migrates to the U.S.

She went on to skip time, focus on some things but then skip over others I would have liked to read, such as the basketball game they were going to. I expected so much more out of the school dance. She thought it was clever of Eddie to ask to dance with Jennifer first and then say to Nathan, who was dancing with Lucia, that they would switch after. I didn't. I thought he should've just asked her in the first place. I was hoping for a kiss or something, but she wanted to keep it friendly which disappointed me. She asked why he didn't call her a nickname and he said she's different, it's hard to think of one word to describe her and she slugs him in the arm bcuz things got uncomfortable. She was so worried about what happened with Manuel happening again. Please. She ruined the dance bcuz of her fear.

The good thing is that there's a happy ending. Her mom applied for an exit visa and was granted leave, but her dad was denied so he bribed an official and was able to travel too. Mrs. Baxter's friend set them up in the carriage house on her property.

Something about it was just off. There wasn't any emotion, only about 4 humorous or cute things. The writing was too simple and therefore didn't convey the gravity of the situation. I didn't believe the feelings Lucia had about anything. When she said she wondered if her parents would be killed, not in those words, but like silenced in a more fatal way or something, I didn't believe she even cared, because she didn't say she was scared, or cried for them, or wanted them to leave Cuba, or anything. Hello, you just said your parents might be killed, can we get some thoughts on that? The only thing I can say is that I now know about communism in Cuba and kids being sent to the U.S. without their parents. But it wasn't really worth reading.

♥Marie Gentilcore says

I enjoyed the Red Umbrella very much. It was really good historical fiction and I learned a lot about this period of history. It is the story of the Alvarez family and is told by 14-year old Lucia as she and her family live through Cuba changing from a democracy to an authoritarian state in 1961. It also tells about a program called Pedro Pan where child refugees of Cuba were placed with American families until they could be reunited with their own families. It is sad what happened in Cuba over 50 years ago but it was interesting to watch the character grow as she became aware of the political changes taking place in Cuba and then following her journey in America.

Brittany Cuenin says

The Cuban history of the past 40 years tends to be glossed over and not taught about in schools. Gonzalaz does a really great job of creating a young adult novel which answers those historical questions while creating an interesting plot. The characters are very relatable and the reader gets caught up in the tragedy of the two children, Lucia and her brother, being transported to America - not sure if they will ever see their home or parents again. Gonzalez does a nice job of giving the readers a look into Cuba: What Cubans love about their country and how many were forced to leave their home under the regime of Castro. It is an important history lesson and Gonzalez weaves it so that the reader is immersed in Lucia's world.

My favorite genre of literature is children's, and, as I began this course, I finished a "young adult" novel by Christina Gonzalez: The Red Umbrella. The book outlines the historic migration of children from Cuba to the United States in the 1960s. As Castro began to take over Cuba, many parents worked with and through the Catholic church to send over their children to the United States (mostly Miami) in an operation called Pedro Pan. I loved how the book opened up this part of history that was unknown to me (and many of my students). The main character is Lucy, who is 14, and it follows her fictional path through Castro's takeover and her parents' decision for her future. Each chapter is framed with a real New York Times headline during the period.

The book is one of my favorites, and I thought it might work well in an ESL reading course. My students, many of whom had only recently immigrated from Latin American countries, were fascinated with how Gonzalez was able to capture the emotion of leaving one's home country and family behind for new and better opportunities. The book is for a younger crowd, so it isn't gory; however, it certainly doesn't shy away from describing how frightening and brutal Castro and Che Guevara were. My adult students, overwhelmingly, loved the book.

A lovely, shy girl in my class spoke up as we had our final discussion. She hated public speaking, but I was excited to have to add her opinion. Originally from Venezuela, she had immigrated to the US based on several events in her high school years, including the rule of Chavez. Her mother made plans for her after she almost witnessed a brutal massacre (one, she told us, she later saw on tv.) She left behind everyone in her family to escape the same fear described in the book; this girl's story in her broken English sent chills up my spine. Even though she talked about being grateful for education and opportunities, she hadn't seen her family in a year, and their future was unknown. It was a sobering moment for the rest of us in the class - in 2012, not 1963.

The Red Umbrella would be great for parents or teachers who want to introduce this part of history to intermediate (middle/high school) readers. It opens up to discussing history, communism, socialism.

Pamela says

Such a great coming-of-age/immigration story. Tightly and suitable written in clear, clean language, it was an absolute joy to read. The targeted audience may be for young adult readers, but anyone with an appreciation for a well crafted, simply told story that is historically relevant, captivating and entertaining will surely enjoy this wonderful book.

The story opens in Cuba. And follows the ups and downs of fourteen-year-old Lucia during a critically pivotal time in Cuban history as Castro begins his communist revolutionary reign of totalitarian control and violence. Lucia's parents, fearing for their children's lives and their ability to remain free-thinking individuals, make the heartbreaking decision to send both Lucia and her brother to the United States (Nebraska to be exact). In actuality, this became known as "Operation Pedro Pan." It was the largest exodus of children from any one country in the history of the world; over fourteen-thousand children were sent to safe haven countries such as the United States.

Gonzalez did an exceptional job honoring her parents, as this story is loosely based on their experiences as Pedro Pan children. In all honestly, she honors all who took part in Pedro Pan - evacuees and host families alike. Plus, she brings alive the richness of Cuban culture - sans Castro.

The Red Umbrella has creative magnetic appeal, yet maintains historical authenticity and integrity in a general sense. Nothing about the story felt over-sensationalized. It was heartfelt and real. There were a couple instances depicting a bit of violence, as one might expect where Castro is concerned. Dramatic - yes. Hyped-up with overwritten melodrama - No. Just simply good, well-balanced writing.

FIVE **** Simply and Exceptionally Good, Historically Sound **** STARS

Tara Chevrestt says

This was great!!! It was a wonderful look at the early days of Castro's revolution and Cuban and American relations in 1961. The story is told from a 14 year old girl's point of view, Lucia.

Lucia has normal 14 year old growing pains. She likes boys, wants to wear make up, is irritated by her younger brother, Frankie, but instead of having a normal teenager's life, Cuba, her country and home, goes into turmoil. When Castro and his revolutionary followers take over the government, not only is there soldiers everywhere, but also people being branded as traitors to the revolution. Unfortunately, because her parents believe it's ok to have a different opinion from Castro, Lucia's family is branded as traitors. To save her, Lucia's parents send both her and her brother to the United States.

Lucia and Frankie go to live with a foster family in Nebraska until her parents can join them or the revolution ends. Lucia must learn a new language, eat new foods, and make new friends. She adjusts rather well, but all the time she worries about her mother and father back in Cuba and wonders if she will ever see them again because the revolution doesn't seem to be ending and American/Cuban relations are getting very tense...

The first half of the book takes place in Cuba and offers an amazing look into life in Cuba during Castro's early days and the fear or fanaticism some people felt. The second half of the book is about Lucia adjusting to American life and presents an idea of what it was like to be a Latina immigrant in 1961.

Superb. The ending brought tears to my eyes. I really connected to Lucia. This is a book I will read again.

Alicia says

I bought this book for my 10 yr old granddaughter. I always read any book I buy for the Grands before I give it to them. I bought this one because I thought it would make her understand what it was like to leave Cuba at 13 without my parents...it was wonderfully written & very factual. Many tears later, I decided to save it until she is 13.

Ofilia says

This historical fiction about Castro's take over of Cuba and the subsequent exodus of Cuban children to the U.S. is not well represented in kid lit. Lucia is very well drawn and goes through several universal experiences (first dance, bratty brother, confusion of growing up). The other characters can be a bit one dimensional, but they are all likeable. There were lots of touching moments like the incident with the red umbrella. While the writing is interesting, it is clearly a first novel with a lot of "telling" instead of "showing." However, it did pique my interest in Cuban history, so I think it is certainly worthy.

Kristi says

The Red Umbrella is a fantastically written debut that had me on the verge of tears on several occasions.

I have to admit I was a little apprehensive to read this novel at first... I do enjoy reading historical fiction, but I knew this story would waken emotions that I'd have to deal with long after the book was over. To know that people struggled in the manner that Lucia and her family did, and I'm sure there were families who struggled much more, is utterly heartbreaking.

The first part of the novel takes place in Cuba. It's soon after Castro has taken over and you see the subtle changes that the country begins to undergo. Watching it change through the eyes of Lucia was even more powerful. She's so wrapped up in her life that she fails to see those changes happening around her, until she has a rather rude awakening. Not to mention losing her closest friends and even family because of the revolution. I can't imagine what the real families living during the revolution went through during these times. It made me extremely thankful and humble to live in the country that I do.

The second part of the novel takes place in Nebraska. This part of the novel fell a little bit flat for me. It just seemed that Lucia's adaptation into the American lifestyle from her Cuban one was a bit understated. It happened so fast and so smoothly. I guess I was expecting more of a struggle. Not that I wanted to see Lucia and Frankie struggle anymore after everything they had been through, but it just didn't seem very realistic.

Overall the novel was very engaging, I sat down to read a few chapters and ended up finishing the novel in a

matter of hours. Although the subject matter of The Red Umbrella isn't the happiest.... I'd say this is a novel about hope, love and courage. I'm looking forward to more novels from Christina!

Cara says

Ok, so I have to admit that when I started reading this book I wasn't clicking with it the way I wanted to. Looking back the problem was that I had an expectation of how the tone of the book should be like, but that's unfair to the book. I let my expectations fall to the wayside and I'm so glad I did.

Our protagonist, Lucia Alvarez, is living in Cuba at turbulent times when Fidel Castro is rising to power and families, friendships, and a sense of country are rapidly falling apart. Lucia though is focused on how her parents are being too overprotective, wishing she could dance with the boy of her dreams, and how big her quinceanera is going to be. Sure enough, Lucia starts seeing how wrong things truly are. When things seem like they couldn't get worse, they do. Her parents decide that she and her brother Frankie need to leave Cuba and go to the land of prosperity, the United States.

The contrast of cultures is what really impressed me. Though I'm not Cuban, I did appreciate some of the references made that reminded of things that are part of the Hispanic culture. Since the story is set in two different countries naturally we see how Lucia and Frankie cope with the change. I just laughed to see how they went from Cuba to Miami to a farmtown in Nebraska. Talk about a culture shock. I really could sympathize with Lucia. It would be beyond hard to be pushed to leave the only home you have ever known, and all the people and things that you connect with who you are. The author gives the reader a strong sense of the seriousness of the situation without it being too overwhelming for younger readers, which was essential so it could be enjoyable for the targeted audience. Mission accomplished.

In the beginning I couldn't grab a hold of who Lucia was, but having to witness her being brave because she had no other choice really gave me the chance to see the core of her character. Definite props to the author because I hadn't heard too much about Operation Pedro Pan before reading this book. Only misgiving I have is that I wish that the story and some of the characters had been more fleshed out.

The title, *The Red Umbrella* , is quite fitting. The part where we see the correlation made me tear up just a little bit. A book filled with fortitude, and the sense of what home is.

Kay Cassidy says

I've been wanting to read The Red Umbrella ever since I saw the deal announced and was lucky enough to get to read an ARC. There was something about the premise that struck a chord with me from that first announcement, and I knew it would be special. I just didn't realize why until I started reading.

I'm a second generation American. My grandparents immigrated just in time for the Great Depression (not great timing, to be sure). The Red Umbrella made me appreciate my own heritage in ways I haven't thought of since my grandma passed away almost 10 years ago. But more than that, I connected with Lucia and Frankie and their parents and everyone who played a role in helping them through a difficult time. I felt like I was part of the story, and that's a very rare thing indeed.

The Red Umbrella is a wonderful, thoughtful book with a story and characters so compelling you can't help but cheer for them--and worry about them--every step of the way. But for me, it was even more than that. It was personal and meaningful and unforgettable. I laughed, I cried... one of my favorite books of the year.

Raul says

One of the most amazing and beautiful stories I've ever read! This is an instance where I wish a book was longer so that can experience it more. Heartbreaking and beautifully told, combines family, loss and hope into an amazing story that is sure to make anyone shed a tear. I know I shed many throughout my read. Ultimately giving us a story of what parents would do in a desperate act of love for their children. Simply amazing!!!

Terris says

I very much enjoyed this book, recommended for Grades 6-9, about a family affected by the 1961 revolution in Cuba led by Fidel Castro. Lucia, the 14-year-old girl who narrates the story, tells the details of how her family had to make big changes in their lives when they didn't go along with the revolution. Lucia and her 7-year-old brother, Frankie, were sent to the United States to live because their parents feared for their safety. As she tell each step of the journey and their new lives in Nebraska, you can feel what the children of that era must have felt. The author did a good job of writing about the emotions of a young teenage girl being separated from her family.

I thought this story was well written, and I learned a lot about the beginning of the Cuban revolution. I did not know much about it and was glad to learn through this very interesting story. I would recommend it to you and your middle grade children/grandchildren -- or read it together so that you can discuss it with them!

Valerie says

Good old historical fiction never fails. Lucia is our girl of interest. Time period is the 1960s however this isn't about the civil rights movement it's about Operation Pedro Pan because of the Communist Movement going on in Cuba.

Lucia seems to be average but spoiled in the beginning of the book. This annoyed me. I guess it's realistic since she is fourteen and basically has had (up until now) a fairly carefree life but it was still off putting. Once problems start arising and Lucia starts to realize the seriousness of the 'Revolution' Lucia takes things as best as can be handled. She matures exceedingly throughout the book.

I liked that the story was serious and gave a fairly good overview of what was happening without it being too dark for younger readers. Lucia's voice rang true the more I read. Almost half the book goes by before Lucia and her brother reach Nebraska so a good amount of the book is dedicated to Cuba. Once Lucia reaches Nebraska the culture shock kicks in. The different food, the different language, and the homesickness all seemed realistic.

The book is written in English of course but there were times that a Spanish word was said. Other books I've read do this but not as often. This was fine with me because I can understand Spanish fairly well, but I can't

help but think that I would've been annoyed if I didn't. There is a glossary in the back but I didn't realize this until half-way through the book. Maybe it was to remind the reader that they were talking in Spanish but I can't be sure.

But anyways, it was a good story, good writing, and I gained some knowledge about something I only heard about in passing during history.
