

A GIRL LIKE CHE GUEVARA

Readers Guide

1. What is the role of Santería in Lourdes's life? Does it empower or weaken her? Is this practice uniquely Cuban or does the like exist in other cultures? What does the ending suggest about Lourdes's belief in the orishas?
2. How do Lourdes's grandmothers influence her life and her view of the world? Who do you think has the strongest effect? Why? In what sense are Grandma Gloria and Grandma Ines symbolic characters?
3. How are Ernesto's and Lourdes's experiences different when dealing with racism? Why are the achievements of Ernesto's father disregarded? What kind of boyfriend does Lourdes's mother want for her daughter, and why? How does Lourdes finally come to terms with her mixed heritage?
4. Having big buttocks is considered a mark of feminine beauty in Cuba. Lourdes often refers to her frustration with her "assless condition." She also complains of being "way too skinny." What do you think of such statements? Compare the standards of beauty in Cuba and in the United States.
5. Why does Lourdes want to be like Che Guevara at the beginning? Which are the main political influences in her life? A series of real revolutionary slogans are used throughout the novel. What role do they play? Whose voice do they represent? Does Lourdes agree with all of them? How does the Che Guevara dream fail her? What does the ending suggest about her trust in communist values?
6. How does Lourdes's exploration of her own sexuality take place? Why does she decide to become Ernesto's girlfriend though she really doesn't like him? Why does Aurora encourage her to accept him? Why doesn't Ernesto ever try to make love to Lourdes?
7. How would you characterize the relationship between Lourdes and Aurora? How does Aurora's affair with Juanito Lopesanto affect Lourdes? Why does Lourdes hide her feelings for Aurora until the end? How is the relationship between Marisol and Fat Olga presented? In what way is it different from the liaisons between Ernesto and Berto and between Aurora and Juanito Lopesanto? In what way are they similar?
8. Does the novel offer a true portrait of life in Cuba during the 80's? Do you think that Lourdes's voice conveys it accurately? In what ways is it different from an adult's voice? Is Lourdes a reliable narrator?
9. Most of the action takes place at a school-in-the-field camp, in Pinar del Rio—a closed space. How does the camp resemble the entire Cuban society? Which characters can be considered symbolic—or stereotyped?
10. At the beginning of the novel Lourdes still plays with dolls and is afraid of the darkness. Has she lost her innocence by the end of the book? Has she matured? Are all the changes in her personality positive?