

Gonzalez Diaz, Christina. **The Red Umbrella.** 275p.

Recommended for grades 6-9

Historical Fiction

Hard times call for desperate measures in Cuba in 1961 when Fidel Castro is in control of the government. One family that he affects is Lucia and her family. She's a 14 year old girl who is forced to live indoors when things get out of hand with the government and soldiers. Right before her eyes she sees who her real friends are. When things start to happen to her family and her neighbor the parents have to make a decision to send their kids to help with the revolution or go to the United States until things get better in Cuba. They sacrificed everything and send their kids to the United States. Then the kids are living in separate buildings and get to see each other every afternoon and get on the verge of being kicked out. They then get adopted into a nice family that lives in Nebraska. Lucia knows a little English but her 7 year old brother Frankie has to learn. They face school and try to make the best out of it and actually make new friends.

The author expresses feelings into the characters so that you can't help feeling sorry for them. The suspense builds on whether Lucia and her brother Frankie will ever see their parents again. She presents details on what it was like to live during Castro's rule. This book is broken up into months and each month it tells what is happening with the government and what Castro is up to next. The dialogue that the author uses by combining English and Spanish takes the book to a new level. This story will most likely appeal to readers in middle school and junior high and also to readers who like historical fiction.

The Red Umbrella expresses a compelling story of how important family is. Their experiences living with their foster family, the Baxters, shows how people are willing to take strangers in so they can have a better life. Gonzalez created a picture of what was life living in Cuba was like and what people did to others if they didn't approve of the Revolution. This book is a must have book to read.

- *Gabriela*