



Portrait in Sepia: A Novel

By Isabel Allende

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"*Portrait in Sepia* is the best book Allende has published in the United States since her first novel of nearly two decades ago, *The House of the Spirits*."
—Jonathan Yardley, *Washington Post Book World*

"*Portrait in Sepia* tightens the weave of a multigenerational fantasy as complete and inspiring as the real world it parallels ... Allende's enchanting historical universe keeps expanding and *Portrait in Sepia* is a new galactic jewel."
—*Chicago Tribune*

A richly imagined historical novel about memory and family secrets from the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Island Beneath the Sea*, *Inés of My Soul*, *Daughter of Fortune*, *Zorro*, and *House of the Spirits*.

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Portrait in Sepia: A Novel By Isabel Allende Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Isabel Allende has established herself as one of the most consummate of all modern storytellers, a reputation that is confirmed in her novel *Portrait in Sepia*. Allende offers a compelling saga of the turbulent history, lives, and loves of late 19th-century Chile, drawing on characters from her earlier novels, *The House of Spirits* and *Daughter of Fortune*.

In typical Allende fashion, *Portrait in Sepia* is crammed with love, desire, tragedy, and dark family secrets, all played out against the dramatic backdrop of revolutionary Chile. Our heroine Aurora del Valle's mother is a Chilean-Chinese beauty, while her father is a dissolute scion of the wealthy and powerful del Valle family. At the heart of Aurora's slow, painful re-creation of her childhood towers one of Allende's greatest fictional creations, the heroine's grandmother, Paulina del Valle. An "astute, bewigged Amazon with a gluttonous appetite," Paulina holds both the del Valle family and Allende's novel together as she presides over Aurora's adolescence in a haze of pastries, taffeta, and overweening love.

One of the most interesting aspects of the novel is Allende's decision to turn her heroine into a photographer: "through photography and the written word I try desperately to conquer the transitory nature of my existence, to trap moments before they evanesce, to untangle the confusion of my past." There is little confusion in Allende's elegantly crafted and hugely enjoyable novel. --Jerry Brotton, *Amazon.co.uk*

From Publishers Weekly

In this third work concerning the various and intertwining lives of members of a Chilean family, Allende uses the metaphor of photography as memory. "Each of us chooses the tone for telling his or her own story; I would like to choose the durable clarity of a platinum print, but nothing in my destiny possesses that luminosity. I live among diffuse shadings, veiled mysteries, uncertainties; the tone for telling my life is closer to that of a portrait in sepia," declares Aurora del Valle, protagonist of the tale. Here, Allende picks up where 1999's *Daughter of Fortune* left off, and, in the course of her chronicles, mentions personages who were realized in her 1987 masterpiece, *House of the Spirits*. Like her other novels, *Portrait in Sepia* spans nearly 50 years and covers wars, love affairs, births, weddings and funerals. Rich and complex, this international, turn-of-the-century saga does not disappoint. The book opens as 30-year-old Aurora remembers her own birth, in the Chinatown of 1880 San Francisco. She tells of those present: her maternal, Chilean-English grandmother, Eliza; her grandfather Tao (a Chinese medic); and her mother, Lynn, a beloved beauty who dies during Aurora's birth. Realizing she is getting ahead of herself, Aurora backtracks, inviting the reader to be patient and listen to the events surrounding her life, from 1862 to 1910. Through Aurora, Allende exercises her supreme storytelling abilities, of which strong, passionate characters are paramount. Most memorable is Aurora's paternal grandmother, Paulina del Valle, an enormous woman who eats pastries and runs her trading company with equally reckless abandon. Like Paulina, Allende attacks her subject with gusto, making this a grand installment in an already impressive repertoire. Major ad/promo; 7-city author tour.

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From Library Journal

Allende's new novel may center on Aurora de Valle, born in San Francisco's Chinatown and raised in Chile by her domineering grandmother, but it is really a group portrait of three generations of Aurora's family

including her grandmother, Eliza Sommers, whom readers will remember from *Daughter of Fortune*. In fact, though Aurora's squalling birth opens the book, she doesn't figure prominently in the proceedings until about halfway through, when her grandmother gets custody of her and we learn of a trauma that will shape the rest of her life. Aurora is born to Lynn, daughter of Eliza and Chinese physician Tao Ch'en. A gorgeous but slightly dim girl, Lynn has fallen for the son of redoubtable Chilean matriarch Paulina de Valle and gotten herself pregnant. Much woe follows the birth of little Aurora, including the death of her mother and her mysterious kidnapping when she is only a few years old, and plenty of intrigue awaits her in Chile. The result is a polished, charming, if somewhat soap operaish tale that will please Allende fans. For most libraries.

- *Barbara Hoffert, "Library Journal"*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Alice Bowers:

The actual book *Portrait in Sepia: A Novel* has a lot of information on it. So when you check out this book you can get a lot of gain. The book was written by the very famous author. The author makes some research prior to write this book. This particular book very easy to read you can find the point easily after perusing this book.

Christen Arnold:

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Renee Wood:

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