

## BOOK REVIEW: HOUSE OF SPIRITS BY ISABEL ALLENDE

House of Spirits by Isabel Allende was her first novel. The book's main character Clara has supernatural powers where she is able to move things with her mind, see events before they occur and predict the future.

I've read several of her books and I'm amazed at the English translation. How could a Spanish speaking person who writes in Spanish capture the beauty of the English language in such a way as she does? Some of the words in English I've never heard before and at times must look up their meaning. What in the world does antediluvian mean?

The book reveals something central to Isabel and that is her belief in the spiritual world and the supernatural. That is a definite theme of her books. She also writes about love, deep devotion to a lover and of course great sex. She includes violence, fierce tempers and ranges of emotions in her characters. She delves deeply into her characters so that the reader has a very clear sense of the characters' personality and physical characteristics. You grow to love some and hate others.

She moves the book through time so that you follow the lives of the characters. This book spanned three generations. It seems as though the reader moves in time with the characters in a way that what happened at the beginning gets dissolved and you only focus on what is happening now. In this book I was not drawn to one particular character as in several of her other books. What I enjoyed was her deep portrayal of each character. And my loyalty to the characters fluctuated throughout the book.

A movie of the same title was produced in 1993 with some big name actors & actresses. It starred Glenn Close, Winona Rider, Meryl Strep, Antonio Bandaras, Vanessa Redgrave and Jeremy Irons . The book was 368 pages so there was no way to capture all the mini-stories within the book. The movie focused on one of the mini-stories with the main characters of the book, Esteban Trueba (Jeremy Lyons), his wife Clara (Meryl Strep), his sister Ferula (Glenn Close) and their daughter Blanca (Winona Rider).

September 2010 I saw Isabel Allende do a short lecture at the Library of Congress Book Fair in Washington D.C. I waited afterwards in the hot, hot sun to get her autograph. It was one of the highlights of my year. She did not disappoint. She pointed out that she has a passion for writing about the underdog woman and bringing to light political issues. The House of Spirits centered about the political fight between the Left and the Right. The Right had been ruling for years oppressing the working class people and the peasants. Isabel was born in Peru but grew up in Chile. Her family fled Chile in the 1970s because of the political uproar.

Her books have been translated into numerous languages, she has won numerous awards and she continues to write, travel and lecture. If you have never read one of her books you are in for a literary treat.