



Zorro

By Isabel Allende
ISBN: 9780060779009

Introduction

Born in southern California late in the eighteenth century, Diego de la Vega is a child of two worlds: his father is an aristocratic Spanish landowner; his mother, a Shoshone warrior. From this diverse ancestry, Diego learns the ways of the tribe along with fencing and cattle branding. Over the course of Diego's childhood, he witnesses the brutal injustices dealt Native Americans by European settlers and first feels the inner conflict of his heritage.

At the age of sixteen, Diego travels to Barcelona for a European education. In a country chafing under the corruption of Napoleonic rule, Diego follows the example of his fencing master and joins La Justicia, an underground resistance movement devoted to helping the powerless and the poor. In Barcelona, Diego falls in love, saves the persecuted, and confronts for the first time a great rival in the form of Rafael Moncada. As Diego forms the persona of Zorro, a great hero is born, and the legend begins.

Questions for Discussion

1. How would you characterize Diego's relationship with Bernardo, his "milk brother," and why does their connection persist despite prevailing social attitudes about class and race?
2. How do the five basic virtues of *okahué* and the spiritual guidance of White Owl inform the development of Bernardo and Diego as adolescents?
3. Where does Diego's sense of justice come from, and how would you characterize his methods of meting out justice over the course of the novel?
4. To what extent does Bernardo's "loss of voice" diminish or augment his influence in the novel?
5. How does Diego's indoctrination into La Justicia enact his transformation from a boy into a man?
6. How does Diego react when achieving justice requires the death of another, and what do his reactions reveal about his character?
7. What accounts for Juliana's attraction to Jean Lafitte instead of Diego or Rafael Moncada?
8. From what source does Bernardo, whom Diego perceives as wise, derive his wisdom, and how does he demonstrate it at the novel's end?
9. How does the narrator portray class and race divisions in *Zorro*, and in what ways are these divisions related to the novel's theme of justice?
10. How did the revelation of the narrator's identity at the end of the book affect your appreciation of the novel?

About the Author

Born in Peru and raised in Chile, Isabel Allende is the author of six other novels, including, most recently, *Portrait in Sepia* and *Daughter of Fortune*. She has also written a collection of stories; three memoirs, including *My Invented Country* and *Paula*; and a trilogy of children's novels. In 2004, she was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She lives in California.