



Nilda

Nicholasa Mohr

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"Damn you bastards, coming here making trouble. Bunch of animals." The two police officers responding to a call about an open fire hydrant lash out furiously at the Puerto Rican residents of New York City's El Barrio neighborhood. It's the summer of 1941, and all ten-year-old Nilda wants to do is enjoy the cool water with her friends. But the policemen's curses end their fun, and their animosity is played out over and over again in Nilda's life. She is repeatedly treated with contempt and even disgust by adults in positions of authority: teachers, nurses and social workers.

At home, though, she is surrounded by a large and loving--if somewhat eccentric--family that supports and encourages her artistic abilities. She experiences the onset of World War II and watches anxiously as several brothers go off to war; her stepfather's poor health means he can't work, causing serious financial difficulties for the family; one brother slinks off to the underworld, leaving behind a pregnant girlfriend, adding two more mouths to feed to the family's already dire situation.

Named an "Outstanding Book of the Year" by *The New York Times* and one of the "Best Books of the Year" by the American Library Association in 1973 when it was first published, Nicholasa Mohr's classic novel about life as an immigrant in New York City offers a poignant look at one young girl's experiences. Issues of race, religion and machismo are realistically and movingly depicted in this groundbreaking coming-of-age novel that was one of the first by a Latina author to be hailed by the mainstream media.

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