# The Line of the Sun Short Guide

## The Line of the Sun by Judith Ortiz Cofer

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.



The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". 

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". 

BOOKRAGS

# Contents

# Overview

The Line of the Sun is the fictionalized epic tale of Marisol and her Puerto Rican heritage. Set in the 1940s and 1950s in the small Puerto Rican village of Salud, the first half of the novel centers on the life of Marisol's maternal uncle, Guzman, his parents, and his siblings. It also details the life of Marisol's father, Rafael, and includes shorter vignettes that profile the lives of many other Salud residents. The second half of the novel begins shortly after Marisol is born, when she and her mother have moved to Paterson, New Jersey, and continues throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. Marisol comes both to appreciate her Puerto Rican background and to learn to live in the Caucasian-dominated culture of the mainland.

# About the Author

Judith Ortiz Cofer was born in the small town of Hormigueros, Puerto Rico, on February 24, 1952. Her Puerto Rican heritage flavors her poetry and prose, as does her later life as a Puerto Rican American living on the mainland. She moved to Paterson, New Jersey, when she was two years old, and much of her work is set in New Jersey Puerto Rican neighborhoods.

Even as a young child, Ortiz Cofer knew she wanted to work in a creative field when she matured. She dreamed of being a dancer or a musician, but it was listening to the many stories that her grandmother told her, including traditional folklore and fairy tales, that helped Ortiz Cofer come to the realization that she could become a teller of tales herself one day. She kept notebooks during her youth, recording her daily life and creating stories to tell her younger brother.

Ortiz Cofer and her family moved to Augusta, Georgia, in 1968, and she eventually received a master of arts degree from Florida Atlantic University in 1977. After she completed graduate school, she began to consider writing for publication. The Line of the Sun was her first novel, before which Ortiz Cofer had already published two volumes of poetry.

In her amazingly versatile body of published work, Ortiz Cofer shows talent as a poet, novelist, essayist, and short-story author. Although she spoke only Spanish as a child, she writes in English, calling English her "literary language" and Spanish her "familial language."

Ortiz Cofer has received many awards for both her fiction and nonfiction. The Line of the Sun, the first original novel published by the University of Georgia Press, was selected in 1989 by the New York Public Library as one of twenty-five Books to Remember, and it was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. Her collection of autobiographical essays entitled Silent Dancing: A Partial Remembrance of a Puerto Rican Childhood won the 1990 Pushcart Prize for nonfiction, and in 1994 "Nada," from The Latin Deli: Prose and Poetry, won the O. Henry Prize for Short Story. An Island like You: Stories of the Barrio was awarded the first American Library Association Pura Belpre medal in 1996. Ortiz Cofer has also received fellowships from both the NEA and the Witter Bynner Foundation for poetry. She teaches at the University of Georgia in Athens, where she is an associate professor of English and Creative writing.

# Setting

Two primary settings dominate the novel, the village of Salud, Puerto Rico, and the tenement of El Building in Paterson, New Jersey. A third setting plays a secondary role, non-Puerto Rican mainstream urban New Jersey. These three cultures often clash throughout the book. In fact, it is cultural incongruity that leads to the tragic El Building fire. Uneasiness that stems from living in a foreign culture, as well as fear of impending widespread unemployment and civil strife, leads the El Building women to turn to their cultural roots for comfort. They decide to hold a spiritualist meeting to ask the dead for help in dealing with their problems, a common Puerto Rican reaction to unhappiness and fear. Lacking any such tradition in their own cultural backgrounds, the Paterson police assume the spiritualist meeting is a meeting to plan civil disobedience, or even violence. Understanding this cultural disconnect, Marisol and Guzman attempt to save Ramona (Marisol's mother) from the danger of the meeting, managing instead to start the devastating fire.

The clash of cultures also defines Marisol's character. Marisol is caught between two cultures, between the family culture of the Island and the mainstream culture of New Jersey. Because her family is wealthier than most living in El Building, and because she and her brother attend St. Jerome's, El Building residents view her as belonging more to mainstream Paterson culture than to their expatriate Island culture. As the only Puerto Rican children at St. Jerome's, Marisol and her brother remain misfits in the eyes of the students and faculty, serving as representatives of Puerto Rican culture. Eventually, the exigencies of daily survival force Marisol to become more American than Puerto Rican, as she navigates the American bureaucratic system for her ever-sheltered mother and ever-absent father: "I learned something during those days: though I would always carry my Island heritage on my back like a snail, I belonged in the world of phones, offices, concrete buildings, and the English language." Marisol even becomes embarrassed to live in El Building.

All three settings share at least one defining characteristic, societal standards that differ radically for boys and girls and for men and women. On the Island, unchaperoned Salud girls cannot talk to Salud boys without risking serious damage to their reputations, but no such danger exists for the boys. Married men's transgressions with girlfriends are tacitly ignored, but a woman who strays is outcast. Only men are allowed to frequent the local gambling house, even though it is owned and run by a woman. When Guzman goes to live with Rosa, Salud society blames her, even though he initiated the affair.

Nonetheless, Salud society does not always treat males with a gentler hand than it treats females. Carmelo's close relationship with the young priest and his passion for reading arid poetry are viewed as evidence of his homosexuality, resulting in endless gossip. Were he female and in close contact with a female friend, it is likely that he would have avoided such suspicions. And although he is not blamed for initiating his affair with Rosa, Guzman does not escape with impunity. He loses what little respect society had left for him and becomes an outcast himself in the eyes of Salud society.

For both the men and women of Salud, life is work. The men labor in the fields, their skin burning in the intense heat; the women work from dawn until dusk, raising children, keeping house, and always cooking. Few avenues are available for escaping this pattern of constant work. For the men, drinking and gambling act as temporary escape; for the women, only prostitution provides work relief. The prostitutes who lived in Dona Lula's attic room "did not rise as Mama Cielo did, as all the married women in town did, at five in the morning to cook for the day, to sweep their yards, to iron in the smoldering heat, and then at night to wait for sons or husbands, and if they were still desired as women to continue giving of themselves."

These differing sex roles are carried over to El Building society, where women who are forced to work to supplement their husbands' meager wages are still expected to cook and keep house without assistance from their men. Only men and boys are allowed in El Basement after dark, and the gang that patrols El Basement is comprised exclusively of male members. Most of all, men maintain the nearly absolute familial power that they held on the Island, as is seen in the near house arrest that Rafael imposes on Ramona and that she chooses to accept, as well as in Ramona's reluctance to make major household decisions although her husband is rarely ever at home.

Mainstream Paterson culture is also subject to this sex-based societal bifurcation.

Each classroom at St. Jerome's is divided down the middle into a girls' side and a boys' side. The boys and girls even play separately on a playground that "had an imaginary line right down the middle, where the assigned nun of the day would stand guard at recess and lunchtime." Only for romantic coupling purposes do the boys and girls unite, a cultural trait shared by the youth of mainstream Paterson culture and of the young who live in El Building.

# Social Sensitivity

Ortiz Cofer weaves her tale with the impartial style of a historian. She does not judge her characters' actions, merely relating their decisions and offering proof as to how they decide to take the actions they take. For instance, when she tells the story of baby Josefa, given away by her father to his American boss for increased job security, the narrator never moralizes; she merely tells. Similarly, Ortiz Cofer describes the cockfight with graphic detail, with blood and feathers flying, men screaming and panting, yet she remains impartial to the men's reactions and to the fight itself. She presents the fight as an aspect of rural Puerto Rican culture, neither reprehensible nor commendable.

Ortiz Cofer maintains this storytelling objectivity when her characters move to the mainland. She treats racial prejudice with sterility, explaining that the "good" Paterson hotels do not accept African American or Puerto Rican guests, but she does not condemn the restriction. Ortiz Cofer portrays the Red Cross volunteer worker as snobbish and disapproving of El Building culture, but she does so only through the Red Cross worker's actions and comments, not through narrative commentary. In the same way, Ortiz Cofer does not judge the Island women or the El Building women for believing in spiritualism, nor does she deride Rosa's use of spiritualism to veil her prostitution. The author shows that religion and spirituality are central to Puerto Rican and Puerto Rican American culture, but she withholds personal judgement. As an author, Ortiz Cofer is there to relate events, not to moralize about them.

While Ortiz Cofer refrains from judging her characters, their actions, and their environments, the characters themselves each hold strong opinions about the cultures they encounter. Ramona and Guzman both consider the American city environment to be dangerous and evil. Guzman uses his years as a subway drifter to learn to survive in the city danger; Ramona turns to spiritualism in an effort to protect herself and her family from the evil of the dark world of non-Puerto Rican Paterson. Rafael, on the other hand, views the United States as an avenue for providing his children with a better future than they would have in Puerto Rico. He sacrifices himself, his cultural comfort, and his time with his family for his children's futures.

The author also emphasizes how skin color expresses social and class differences in both the Island and mainland cultures. In Salud, skin color reveals a person's social status. Laborers have darkened skin, burned by the sun; overseers and administrators have paler skin, protected by roofs and walls. When each major character is introduced, skin color is almost always included in the physical description.

Skin color is also used to present certain characters in an angelic light. Kind and loving Rosa has pale, luminescent skin, and she often looks like an angel in her flowing white dresses. Rafael, too, with his light hair and fair skin, is often described as angelic. Indeed, Ramona is attracted to Rafael largely due to his light skin, which reminds her of her first romantic encounter when she kissed a fair-haired American soldier.

Thus, pale skin serves as an angelic symbol, as in Rosa's and Rafael's cases, or as a symbol of mainstream American culture, as in Ramona's first kiss. Pale skin also serves as a symbol of pity. Guzman pities his neighbors, whom he thinks of collectively as "pale, desiccated-looking people," and Carmelo is born "cursed with the light olive skin of his father's family, skin that would keep him from doing a man's work in a cane field."

Skin color is of equal importance on the mainland. Pale-skinned Rafael largely escapes the prejudice that darker-skinned Hispanic residents encounter in light-skin-dominated Paterson. But to non-Puerto Rican Paterson residents, Ramona looks like a recent immigrant even years after her arrival in New Jersey, and she does not escape discrimination.

# Literary Qualities

In many ways, The Line of the Sun is actually two novels combined into one. The first half of the book, characterized by dreamlike, fluid, third-person storytelling, is primarily the story of Guzman and secondarily the story of other village personalities.

The second half of the book, with its more traditional autobiographical tone and use of first person, is primarily the story of Marisol's cultural limbo between her mother's Island and the America into which her father wants so desperately for her to fit.

Even the meaning of the title seems to change between the two halves of the book.

In Guzman's Puerto Rico of the 1940s and 1950s, the sun is a symbol of the Island itself, with its ubiquitous hot rays and sparkling light. As the Puerto Ricans themselves are born of the sun (of their Island's culture), the title seems to refer to the line of Mama Cielo's family, from Mama Cielo and Papa Pepe, to Guzman, Rafael, and Ramona, and finally to baby Marisol. When the residents of Salud envision the mainland, they usually imagine it enshrouded in snow—white, cold, and void of the yellow sun. The lottery agent even refers to the mainland as "the land of the snow."

Later in the novel, the title takes on a new meaning, as Blanquita reads Marisol's palm and announces that she has a strong line of the sun running across her hand. The line of the sun, a deep wrinkle that cuts across Marisol's palm, indicates that she has an artist's soul, or a natural gift for creativity.

Thus the title refers, in the El Building context, to the autobiographical influences on the novel, which Ortiz Cofer modeled after her family and herself. Ortiz Cofer and Marisol must express themselves creatively in order to achieve contentment in life.

Marisol becomes a writer, echoing the actions of Ortiz Cofer, on whom Marisol's character is based.

The Line of the Sun also refers to the journey that thousands of Puerto Ricans made from the Island to the mainland during the 1950s and 1960s. Thus, the novel is the story of Marisol's family, but more importantly, it is the story of the Puerto Rican experience in the United States.

Related to the title and its theme of familial heritage are the themes of birth and blood, themes carried throughout the book.

The book begins with an introduction to Guzman's character, calling him a "difficult pregnancy," and when Guzman runs away as a boy, he is found "curled into a dirty brown ball, like a fetus," much to the relief of the again-pregnant Mama Cielo.

Mama Cielo and the other married women of Salud are fountains of birth, each producing baby after baby for years on end.

When Ortiz Cofer describes the many births that take place throughout the novel, blood figures prominently. Mama Cielo repeatedly experiences excessive bleeding in childbirth, and baby Marisol nearly bleeds to death at her birth. Blood is as prominent in death as it is in birth. The cockfight, in which a half-blind cock is pecked to death, overflows with blood. Don Juan chooses slitting his wrists as his method of suicide, dying in a pool of his own blood. When Rafael carries Don Juan's death bed out of the house, the mattress had "absorbed what life [Don Juan] had left coursing through his veins .. . measured in equal portions of alcohol and blood." The members of the line of the sun are born in blood and die in blood.

Throughout the book, Ortiz Cofer's literary beginnings as a poet are evident in imagery and language. For example, "the square box of a house on stilts with the white boat underneath looked like a brown hen sitting on an egg," and "Carmelo fought the pull of the soft mud on his ankles, which like an insistent mouth tried to suck him down to the bottom." This use of poetic language is much more prevalent in the first half of the book than in the second half, reflecting the more poetic style of spoken Spanish than of spoken English.

In the first half of the book, Ortiz Cofer uses a chatty, conversational tone. It is almost as if the author is sitting at her kitchen table, coffee mug in hand, telling favorite stories to a visitor (the reader). Reviewers have pointed out that the language in the first half reads almost as if it were translated from Spanish into English, whereas the language in the second half reads more as if it were composed originally in English.

Indeed, Ortiz Cofer has said that when she was writing the Salud scenes, she thought out much of the material in Spanish, especially the dialogue, translating the Spanish in her head into the English she placed on paper.

Ortiz Cofer's style changes to a more traditional autobiographical tone in the second half of the book, as Marisol tells her own story from her own point of view.

Ortiz Cofer switches from mainly third person to first person when the action moves from Puerto Rico to the U.S., and Ortiz concludes her use of omniscient narrator at the end of the first half. For example, in the first half, the narrator explains that "Guzman felt as if his bones were liquefying." Even the thoughts and feelings of more secondary characters are apparent, as when Guzman arrives at Rosa's doorstep to stay with her for the second time. As they embrace in the entryway, Rosa "could feel the anxiety of her desire for him. She tas Once on mainland soil, only Marisol's thoughts and feelings are exposed. The thoughts and feelings of the other characters are apparent exclusively through Marisol's observations of their actions and reactions. Even Guzman's thoughts and feelings, previously so exposed to the reader, are now apparent only through the filter of Marisol. A case in point is the reader's learning of Ramona's desire for her brother to leave the apartment after he is stabbed. The reader only discovers Ramona's wishes through a conversation that Marisol overhears at night between her mother and uncle.

The Line of the Sun is fiction, yet it is closely modeled after Ortiz Cofer's own family history. She interviewed many relatives about their lives for the book, and she chose to write it largely as a method for coming to better understand her own cultural heritage. She changed many characters' names and places, such as calling the character modeled after herself Marisol and situating the Paterson scenes around El Building, even though she herself never lived in a similar environment, but the autobiographical significance of the work cannot be overstated.

Since Ortiz Cofer's Spanish is exclusively an oral language, she uses very few Spanish words in the text. When she does use Spanish, she almost always provides in-text translation. "To Guzman his sister was acting 'boba,' retarded or something"; "Guzman heard Franco mutter, 'Bailaremos, bailaremos hasta que el gallo cante.' He wanted to dance until the cock crowed at dawn."

Two other interesting literary techniques that Ortiz Cofer uses are nonsequential plot hints and cliffhanger section and chapter endings. Both techniques serve to increase the reader's interest in her story. For example, the author mentions early in the novel that Guzman was stabbed as an adult, the victim of a love triangle, but she does not detail the incident until the final third of the book, creating a sense of doom surrounding Guzman's character.

Another example of Ortiz Cofer's nonsequential plot hint technique occurs when young Guzman and Rafael discuss their plans to move to the U.S. The two friends ingenuously predict lives of ease and wealth for themselves, to which the narrator responds, "What they did not consider were the years likely to pass between that day when they were standing on the dirt floor of the cockfighting pit, and the day when the long black car of their dream would pull up in front of Dona Amparo's little store, blocking almost all of the street."

Ortiz Cofer creates tension between the innocent dreams of her characters and the harsher truths of their lives to come.

Ortiz Cofer's use of cliffhanger sentences is equally effective, propelling the plot from chapter to chapter, from event to event.

When introducing Rosa's eviction from Salud, Ortiz Cofer ends chapter two with the following ominous sentence, "It was, they say, the beginning of the last witch hunt in Salud." The reader gains an idea of Rosa's fate before Rosa herself does and before the author describes even the initial steps in the upcoming test of wills and strength. Another example of the author's masterful use of cliffhangers appears at the end of chapter six, two sentences after Marisol is born. Ortiz Cofer ends the chapter with the simple sentence, "I was two years old before I saw my father," foreshadowing Rafael's secondary parental role.

# Themes and Characters

On many levels, Guzman is the protagonist of the novel, a protagonist who undergoes dramatic change from youth to adulthood while still maintaining a consistent character. Throughout his life he suffers, both physically (initially from Mama Cielo's constantly slapping hands, and later from the pain of his stab wound) and mentally (from his painful yearning for Rosa, lasting for most of his life, and from lifelong inability to please Mama Cielo and the other members of his family).

Guzman is a dreamer, forever dreaming of escape. As a child, he frequently runs away from home, only to be found a few hours or days later and beaten soundly by Mama Cielo. On the threshold of adulthood he dreams of moving to the U.S. to escape his trouble-filled childhood and the scorn that the villagers hold for him after his affair with Rosa and near-affair with Rosario.

After fleeing to the mainland, however, he comes to view the U.S. as dark and dangerous, and his thoughts turn to escaping back to the Island. Guzman refuses to return until he can save enough money to show that he achieved some form of success during his life in the States, success that always alludes him. When he finally does return to Salud, a physically and mentally broken man, Guzman continues to dream of escape, searching for happiness in Sarita and ultimately escaping to the one place where he experienced true joy in his life, Rosa's house.

Although Guzman figures the most prominently in the first half of the book, it is Marisol who dominates the second half.

She is a typical adolescent, searching for her identity, a search complicated by her living "in a state of limbo, halfway between cultures." Through Marisol, Ortiz Cofer creates a storytelling theme. Marisol learns of Guzman initially only through stories, and she finds in herself a blossoming talent for telling tales. She finds escape from her cultural limbo in the fairy-tale collections she checks out from the Paterson library, tales she retells to Gabriel and weaves into her own life, as in transforming the branches outside her bedroom window into the fingers of a witch. As an adult storyteller relating the story of her Island heritage, Marisol offers evidence that although she has become predominately American in personality, she will forever be partially Puerto Rican.

Ortiz Cofer also uses periodic similes to evoke common fairy-tale motifs independent of her characterization of Marisol. For example, the carnival in Salud was "seducing the faithful like the hag in the fairy tale who turns into a beautiful woman just long enough to trick a prince into making love to her." When thinking of Rosa, Guzman decides that "all the girls he knew seemed like tadpoles in comparison with the radiant mermaid of his memory." Likewise, Mama Cielo's letters to Ramona "started coming in like installments in a biography" as if "to encourage us to continue with our thousand and one nights."

Ramona is another main character who dominates the second half of the novel.

Perhaps the action that most deeply reveals Ramona's character is her return to Puerto Rico after her husband's death. Living in El Building, she and her women friends recreate their Island culture, and Ramona rarely strays outside the edges of her transplanted Island world. Living in her own house in the suburbs, Ramona never fully adjusts to mainstream American life, retreating into stories of her childhood and letters from her mother. Thus, Ramona never really leaves Puerto Rico emotionally, despite living in New Jersey for more than two decades. Ramona's return to the Island is a return to herself, fully in line with her character.

Ramona is a tragic figure who never fully achieves happiness or emotional security during the course of the novel, suffering from lifelong deprivation and loneliness. As a girl she is deprived of a childhood, forced to play mother to her younger siblings. As an adult she is deprived of a normal married woman's life, forced to live as a single mother, a foreigner in her own country. Above all, Ramona represents motherhood, at times appearing even Madonna-like, with her fragile beauty and flowing dresses. Marisol even calls her "the most feminine woman I ever knew."

Rafael is much less prominent in the novel, acting as a secondary character in both the first and second halves of the book.

He, too, never finds happiness, living a life of disappointment, from the embarrassment of having an abusive, drunken father, to the death of his dream of becoming a doctor, to his distant relationship with his own children. He retreats into himself, rarely speaking, the victim of a hard, lonely life.

Rafael's secondary role in the novel reinforces another major theme: absentee fathers. Most of the fathers in the novel are absent in some form. The father of Rosa's child has left her. Papa Pepe is so dominated by Mama Cielo that his children often forget they have a second parent. Rafael's father drinks himself into a de facto absenteeism, until his suicide makes his disappearance permanent. Even Rafael, who expresses such fierce opinions about his children's upbringing, is rarely home, and he is a relative stranger to both Marisol and Gabriel. In fact, when two-year-old Marisol first sees her father, she refuses to let him hold her or take her hand. Traditional Puerto Rican society may view the father as the head of the household, but in reality, it is the mothers who play the dominant familial roles.

# Topics for Discussion

1. How does Gabriel and Rafael's relationship differ from Ramona and Marisol's? To what extent are these differences due to the characters' genders? To what extent do these differences stem from their cultural heritages?

2. How does life differ in Salud from life in El Building? From life in a nonPuerto Rican neighborhood on the mainland?

3. Why did Guzman leave Rosa? Under what circumstances, if any, would the outcome of their relationship have been different?

4. Why did Sarita agree to marry Guzman?

Why did Guzman agree to marry Sarita?

After marrying Sarita, what was Guzman's life probably like?

5. Characterize Carmelo. If he had survived the Korean Conflict, would Guzman's life likely have turned out differently?

6. How would the novel be different if it were told completely in third person, instead of a mixture of third and first person? How would if be different if it were told completely in first person?

7. How did the residents of Salud view life on the mainland? How realistic was this view?

8. For most of his life, Guzman dreamt of escape. What was he trying to escape?

Did he ever successfully escape? Do any of the other characters in the novel dream of escape?

9. Why did Ramona return to the Island after Rafael died? At various points throughout her life, what places did she consider to be home?

10. Why did Ramona plan to have only one child? How did she treat her children?

11. Where did Rosa probably go? What likely happened to her after she left Salud?

12. Why does Rosa talk so much? Why does Gabriel talk so little? Why does Rafael talk so little? What role does talking play in the lives of the various characters in the book?

13. How does Marisol view life in Puerto Rico? Is it likely that she would ever visit the Island?

14. Papa Pepe, Don Juan, and Rafael are largely absentee fathers. How do their roles as fathers differ? How are they the same? How does Rafael's role as a father differ from or correspond with that of his father?

# Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. How does Ortiz Cofer weave the theme of storytelling and storytellers into her novel? What are some of the sociocultural and literary implications of this theme?

2. How does mysticism and spiritualism affect the lives of the women in Salud?

Of the men? Of the women in El Building? Of the men?

3. How is life in Salud different for boys and girls? For men and women? How is life in El building different for boys and girls? For men and women?

4. Other than the changing point of view (from largely third person to first person), how does the writing style change from the first half of the book to the second half? How are these stylistic changes significant?

5. How does the author use dialogue to develop the relationships among characters?

6. Was Guzman really a nino del diablo (demon child)? How much of the trouble he experienced in his life did he actually cause? To what extent was he a victim of circumstances?

7. How did Ramona's physical beauty affect her life? Her view of herself? Her view of others?

8. How and when does Ortiz Cofer use Spanish words in the novel? How would the tone of the novel change if she had included either more or fewer Spanish words?

9. Consider the term "El Building." How does this term, and the author's description of El Building itself, characterize and reflect its culture?

10. How does their moving to the mainland change the members of the Santacruz family (Marisol, Ramona, and Rafael), if at all?

# For Further Reference

Acosta-Belen, Edna. "A MELUS Interview: Judith Ortiz Cofer." MELUS 18.3 (fall 1993): 83. The author discusses the autobiographical influences and the symbolism evident in her work.

Bruce-Novoa, John D. "Ritual in Judith Ortiz Cofer's The Line of the Sun." Confluencia: Revista Hispanica de cultura y literatura 8.1 (fall 1992): 61-69. A detailed literary analysis that proposes ritual (religious, cultural, familial, etc.) as a major theme in the novel.

Kallet, Marilyn. "The Art of Not Forgetting: An Interview with Judith Ortiz Cofer."

Prairie Schooner 68.3 (winter 1994): 68-75.

Kallet and Ortiz Cofer discuss the concept of "not forgetting" as central to the author's work. Ortiz Cofer also traces her storytelling ability to her mother and maternal grandmother, avid storytellers themselves.

Oboler, Suzanna. "Narratives of National (Be)longing: Citizenship, Race, and the Creation of Latinas' Ethnicities." Social Politics 3.2-3 (summer-fall 1996): 291-315.

Analyzes a group of works by various female Hispanic authors, including The Line of the Sun. Oboler proposes that Ramona is an exile in Paterson, hiding from American culture in the familiar culture of El Building.

Ocasio, Rafael. "The Infinite Variety of the Puerto Rican Reality: An Interview with Judith Ortiz Cofer." Callaloo 17.3 (summer 1994): 730. An interview with Ortiz Cofer in which the author discusses her writing style, the influence of Spanish and English writers and poets on her own writing, and the importance of autobiographical themes in her work.

Ocasio, Rafael, and Ganey, Rita. "Speaking in Puerto Rican: An Interview with Judith Ortiz Cofer." The Bilingual Review/La revista bilingue 17.2 (May-August 1992): 143-46. Covers Ortiz Cofer's poetry, as well as her mixing of fact and fiction in The Line of the Sun.

"Puerto Rican Literature in Georgia?" The Kenyan Review 14.4 (fall 1992): 43-50. In a very informative interview, Ortiz Cofer identifies the theme of spirituality in The Line ofthe Sun as crucial because "being a Puerto Rican is living in this dimension where the spiritual and the real are one."

# Related Titles/Adaptations

Readers who enjoy The Line of the Sun are sure to appreciate Ortiz Cofer's other books.

For example, An. Island Like You: Stories of the Barrio showcases the author's talent for short stories, and The Latin Deli: Prose and Poetry introduces the reader to her essays and poems as well. Both books focus on Puerto Rican American culture and emphasize the themes of cultural background, love, family, and young adulthood, themes Ortiz Cofer first introduced in The Line ofthe Sun.

The works of various other young adult authors are also likely to interest readers of The Line of the Sun. With humor and affection in a series of fine story collections, Nicholasa Mohr presents stories of hardship and triumph, disappointment and success, loss and discovery in Puerto Rican New York. Perhaps her finest work is El Bronx Remembered: A Novella and Stories, in which Mohr tells stories of a group of Puerto Rican immigrants living in the South Bronx of the 1940s and 1950s. Their lives are not unlike the lives of Marisol and the other young El Building residents.

Esmeralda Santiago, another Puerto Rican American writer, has also written an impressive body of work heavily influenced by her bi-cultural background. Of special note is her two-volume memoir, When I was Puerto Rican and Almost a Woman. These two volumes chronicle the author's childhood in Puerto Rico and her young adulthood in New York. Similarly, Alma Flor Ada offers memories of her childhood in rural Cuba in Where the Flame Trees Bloom, emphasizing the importance of family and of Cuban culture on her personal development.

# Copyright Information

**Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction**

Editor
Kirk H. Beetz, Ph.D.

Cover Design
Amanda Mott

Cover Art is "Pierrot," 1947, by William Baziotes Oil on Canvas, 42 1/8 x 36 Donated by the Alisa Mellon Bruce Fund, ©, 1996 Reproduced with Permission from the Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction

Includes bibliographical references and index

Summary: A multi-volume compilation of analytical essays on and study activities for the works of authors of popular fiction. Includes biography data, publishing history, and resources for the author of each analyzed work.

ISBN 0-933833-41-5 (Volumes 1-3, Biography Series)
ISBN 0-933833-42-3 (Volumes 1-8, Analyses Series)
ISBN 0-933833-38-5 (Entire set, 11 volumes)

1. Popular literature□Bio-bibliography. 2. Fiction□19th century□Bio-bibliography. 3. Fiction□20th century□Bio-bibliography. I. Beetz, Kirk H., 1952-

Z6514.P7B43 1996[PN56.P55]809.3□dc20 96-20771 CIP



Printed in the United States of America First Printing, November 1996