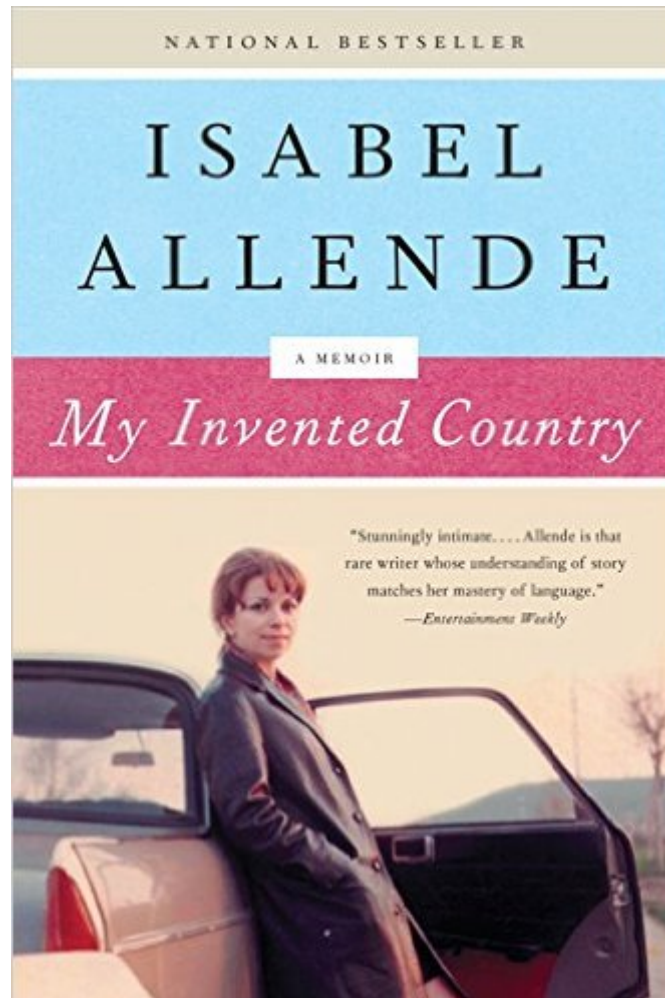


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My Invented Country: A Memoir



Synopsis

Isabel Allende evokes the magnificent landscapes of her country; a charming, idiosyncratic Chilean people with a violent history and an indomitable spirit; and the politics, religion, myth, and magic of her homeland that she carries with her even today. The book circles around two life-changing moments. The assassination of her uncle Salvador Allende Gossens on September 11, 1973, sent her into exile and transformed her into a literary writer. And the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, on her adopted homeland, the United States, brought forth an overdue acknowledgment that Allende had indeed left home. *My Invented Country*, mimicking the workings of memory itself, ranges back and forth across that distance between past and present lives. It speaks compellingly to immigrants and to all of us who try to retain a coherent inner life in a world full of contradictions.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Readers should not be misled by the title, referring to a journey through Chile. Certainly, this book is about Chile. And the first ten pages lay out the physical landscape, quoting the country's most famous poet Pablo Neruda, and referring the reader again to him for a soulful appreciation of the landscape: "To see my country with the heart, one must read Pablo Neruda...who in his verses immortalized the imposing landscapes, the aromas and dawns, the tenacious rain and dignified poverty, the stoicism and solitude.." But this book is not a travelogue. Nor is it a deep historical or sociological analysis of Chile. Rather, it is an intensely personal and autobiographical view of the country through the eyes of one of its best known novelists, and partly from the vantage point of San Francisco, her adopted hometown in an adopted land. The theme of displacement and identity

recurs throughout the book, and very powerfully in the symbolism of the two September 11 dates which deeply marked the writer's life - the one in 1973 when her uncle Salvador Allende was overthrown and died in a violent CIA-backed military coup, and the other memorable date in 2001. Allende writes: "By a blood-chilling coincidence - historic karma - the commandeered airplanes truck their U.S. targets on a Tuesday, September 11, exactly the same day of the week and month - and at almost the same time in the morning - of the 1973 military coup in Chile, a terrorist act orchestrated by the CIA against a democracy." If you have read *House of the Spirits*, *Eva Luna*, or other novels by Isabel Allende, this book will bring out many of these fictitious characters and place names in the context of a very real history and social setting.

The terrorists attacked on Sept. 11, 2001, a traumatic day for the United States. In the same month and on the same day (Sept. 11) in 1973, Isabel Allende's Chile experienced its own trauma. On that day almost thirty years ago, a CIA-engineered military coup brought down the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende, a cousin of Isabel Allende's father, and installed General Augusto Pinochet, a dictator whose reign of terror lasted for 17 years (1973-1990). Isabel Allende has never forgiven Nixon, Kissinger & Co. for what she describes as an arrogant and brutal attack on human rights. Nor was Chile an isolated case of America's bungled foreign policy. "The United States," she Allende, "has had a shameful record of overthrowing legally elected governments and of supporting tyrannies that would never be tolerated in its own territory: Papa Doc in Haiti, Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, Somoza in Nicaragua, and many others." But the news is not all bad. In Allende's opinion "the United States is beginning to realize that its policy of supporting tyranny does not solve problems--it merely creates new ones." Born in Peru in 1942, Isabel Allende was reared in Santiago, Chile. Her new work, *My Invented Country*, is a memoir of her life as an exile and immigrant, wanderer and outsider. "I never fit in anywhere," says Allende, "not into my family, my social class, or the religion fate bestowed on me. . . . When I was fifteen, I left the church forever and acquired a horror of religions in general and monotheistic faiths in particular. . . . My religion, should anyone be interested, can be reduced to a simple question: What is the most generous thing one can do in this case?" At age 35, Allende became a divorcee.

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