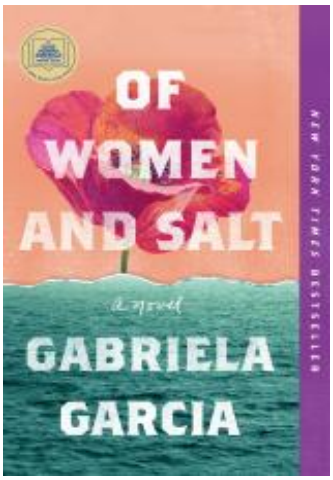
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# Of Women and Salt

by Gabriela Garcia




## About the Book

**A sweeping, masterful debut about a daughter's fateful choice, a mother motivated by her own past, and a family legacy that begins in Cuba before either of them were born.**

In present-day Miami, Jeanette is battling addiction. She is determined to learn more about her family history from her reticent mother, a Cuban immigrant named Carmen, and makes the snap decision to take in the daughter of a neighbor detained by ICE. Still wrestling with the trauma of displacement, Carmen must process her difficult relationship with her own mother while trying to raise a wayward Jeanette. Steadfast in her quest for understanding, Jeanette travels to Cuba to see her grandmother and reckon with secrets from the past destined to erupt.

From 19th-century cigar factories to present-day detention centers, from Cuba to Mexico, Gabriela Garcia's OF WOMEN AND SALT is a kaleidoscopic portrait of betrayals --- personal and political, self-inflicted and those done by others --- that have shaped the lives of these extraordinary women. A haunting meditation on the choices of mothers, the legacy of the memories they carry, and the tenacity of women who choose to tell their stories despite those who wish to silence them, this is more than a diaspora story; it is a story of America?s most tangled, honest, human roots.

## Discussion Guide

**1.** The novel begins with this sentence: ?Jeanette, tell me that you want to live.? How did this intimate direct address from mother to daughter set the tone for some of the themes that we encounter in the following pages?

**2.** María Isabel loses two of the most important people in her life and gives birth to her daughter, Cecilia. In what way does the concept of loss continue to impact/inform the decisions these women make?

**3.** The story exposes the flaws and inequities in the immigration system. How did Gloria?s deportation become a catalyst

for this story?

**4.** Compare and contrast the mother-daughter relationships in this novel. What are some of the differences? And what are the similarities?

**5.** The first edition copy of LES MISÉRABLES appears in multiple scenes; the first time we see it is in Cuba in 1866, and the last time we see the book is in present-day Miami. What do you think the author is trying to say about the way stories transcend generations?

**6.** Which chapter surprised you the most? And why?

**7.** How did you feel about jumping through time and place in this novel? Discuss the importance of narratives that defies chronological/sequential order.

**8.** What is the significance of the recurring phrase, ?*We are force*??

**9.** Think about the sections where the character is speaking from their first-person point of view. Why do you think the author allows certain characters --- like Gloria and Maydelis --- to tell us their stories in their own voices, instead of narrating from a distant third-person narrator?

**10.** What did you think of the novel?s ending? Could things have turned out differently for Jeanette? How?

## Author Bio

Gabriela Garcia is the recipient of a Rona Jaffe Foundation Writer's Award and a Steinbeck Fellowship from San Jose State University. Her fiction and poetry have appeared in *Best American Poetry, Tin House, Zyzzyva, Iowa Review* and elsewhere. She received an MFA in fiction from Purdue and lives in the Bay Area. OF WOMEN AND SALT is her first novel.


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