

The House of the Spirits

1. The way in which Allende writes about the women gives this novel an extraordinary power. In what ways does Allende explore the evolution of the feminine consciousness over the generations (beginning with Clara, and ending with Alba) throughout the novel and how does she express her concern for the position of women in Latin American society?
2. 'I wanted to show that life goes in a circle, events are intertwined, and that history repeats itself - there is no beginning and no end'. How do Allende's comments shed light on this novel?
3. Are you able to feel any sympathy for Esteban Trueba despite his boorish tyrannical ways? Do you see him as a despicable monster or as a product of his time and social class?
4. Although **The House of the Spirits** is a profoundly political novel, Allende's narrative voice and characterization is so rich that it never reads like a political tract. Would you agree with this and, if so, how do you think Allende achieves this?
5. What other books have you read that explore political events and social injustice, using metaphor and allegory in a similar fashion?
6. The novelist Barbara Trapido wrote 'Alongside the grim "outer" narrative of power struggle, corruption and brutality, it presents an alternative "inner" version of history: a feminine sub-culture of extrasensory understanding. If this sounds a shade polemical it is wholly redeemed by a fine humour in the telling'. Does this strike you as an accurate assessment of this novel?
7. What other elements of this novel struck you as particularly effective and moving?

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