



Queen of America

Luis Alberto Urrea

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At turns heartbreaking, uplifting, fiercely romantic, and riotously funny, QUEEN OF AMERICA tells the unforgettable story of a young woman coming of age and finding her place in a new world. Beginning where Luis Alberto Urrea's bestselling *The Hummingbird's Daughter* left off, QUEEN OF AMERICA finds young Teresita Urrea, beloved healer and "Saint of Cabora," with her father in 1892 Arizona. But, besieged by pilgrims in desperate need of her healing powers, and pursued by assassins, she has no choice but to flee the borderlands and embark on an extraordinary journey into the heart of turn-of-the-century America.

Teresita's passage will take her to New York, San Francisco, and St. Louis, where she will encounter European royalty, Cuban poets, beauty queens, anxious immigrants and grand tycoons-and, among them, a man who will force Teresita to finally ask herself the ultimate question: is a saint allowed to fall in love?

Queen of America Details

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From Reader Review Queen of America for online ebook

Lindsay says

Real talk: it's been long enough since last reading *The Hummingbird's Daughter*, so I've lost a little of the plot. I also listened to this over the course of a cross-country move and packing/unpacking, so I've been a little distracted to say the least. But I did enjoy it and it kept me company during many ordeals, and for that it will hold a special place. The descriptions of Teresita's travels are what grounded me every time, and that ending is gorgeous.

Kalen says

I'm not entirely sure where to start here, but I loved this book and devoured it, as I do all of Urrea's books. He's definitely become one of my favorite authors and one I can always recommend without hesitation.

Queen of America is a sequel to the epic *Hummingbird's Daughter*, and they can definitely be read out-of-order, but I recommend reading them in order. The characters are all so colorful and so full of life that you'll want to get to know them in the first book.

Urrea's storytelling is magical. I'm a page counter and never once stopped to see how many pages were left, which is a compulsion of mine, even with the best books. I just kept drinking his prose. What I love about both of these books is that the story is based on the real life of Urrea's great aunt Teresita, the "Saint of Cabora."

This second volume doesn't feel as big as the first one, but the storytelling is still pitch-perfect, filled with humor and warmth. This is published on 11/28, so you've still got time to read *Hummingbird's Daughter* before it's released.

switterbug (Betsey) says

Dickensian in scope, this ribald novel is peopled by the humble and the haughty, the meek and the mighty--pilgrims, prostitutes, yeoman, warriors, cowboys, vaqueros, royalty, revolutionaries, financial exploiters, gamblers, tycoons, corrupt politicians, drunks, rogues, and outlaws. It's gritty, bawdy, tender, and tumultuous, and sometimes turgid, as it meanders down several long and winding paths. When it stalls at intervals, patience and the love of prose and colorful character will keep the reader fastened. This will appeal to fans of high adventure, mixed with folktale wisdom and mystical fantasy. Big, vast skies and rough and tumble travel, this is an unforgettable story of love, purpose, and redemption.

This is the last paragraph of my review. Full review is on [MostlyFiction--
http://bookreview.mostlyfiction.com/2...](http://bookreview.mostlyfiction.com/2...)

Distant Sounds says

This was as magical and wonderful as the first book, 'The Hummingbird's Daughter.' Urrea is so poetic, so mystical, and so beautiful with his language. His descriptions are so vivid, like paint being splashed across a vast canvas. He is also a masterly storyteller. His characters are deep and profound, drawing on your emotions as the long journey unwinds. He is easily one of my favourite writers.

Cassandra says

I've been waiting for this to come out for over a year! The prequel, "The Hummingbird's Daughter" is one of the best books I've ever read. And I have yet to find a Urrea book I dislike. Needless to say, I have high hopes for this.

Post-reading: happy to report this book did not disappoint me. I loved watching Teresita become a wife & mother, and try to figure out her role in the U.S.

drey says

I loved Luis Alberto Urrea's *Into the Beautiful North* so when I found out about the opportunity to review *Queen of America*, I jumped.

drey's thoughts:

Queen of America is a long and rambly story of Teresita Urrea – the Saint of Cabora – after she escapes Mexico and lands in the United States – and chronicles her journey from healer to wife to mother.

As you follow along on her travels, you often forget that Teresita is only barely out of her teenage years. She learns that fame is fleeting – wealth and love as well, and family ties can bind you tighter and longer than you may want. And everybody wants to use you.

The storytelling lulls and rocks you as it takes Teresita from coast to coast – much like the trains she rode on. Her emotions are hidden but her thoughts are frequently entertaining, especially in her conversations with Huila, her old mentor. One of my favorite passages is when Huila scolds Teresita for moping:

“You have learned you are not perfect. You are no different from any other person. But God still pours His power into you. No one can know why. Frankly, I am irritated with you. But God believes. He's strange that way. God believes in you. So wake the hell up and go forward. There is no time left for lazy moping. Not now. Child! If you were born to be a flood, you cannot insult Heaven by insisting you are a drought.”

Some parts of *Queen of America* went by slowly, but overall this is a lyrical story of a young woman trying to figure out her way in a strange new world – one of America in the late 1800s where the Mexicans living along the southern border were as proprietary of their America as the gringos. Take your time with this one, it's a perfect read to curl up with on a cold dark winter evening.

drey's rating: Excellent!

Paula says

Don't tell my husband but, ever since reading "The Hummingbird's Daughter" earlier this year, I have a major crush on Luis Alberto Urrea. I was so enthralled with that book that I immediately read his maybe autobiography "Nobody's Son" and followed that up with the chilling "Devil's Highway" (highly recommend). When I heard that a sequel to "Hummingbird" was due in late 2011, I went on a mad search for an ARC copy and did find one, which I just managed to finish as he is starting the book tour for "Queen of America."

But "Queen" is a very different book. Not better, not worse but definitely not as magical. And perhaps that is part of the point. In "Queen of America," Teresita Urrea is older and certainly frayed around the edges after her exodus from Mexico and pursuit by all manner of nefarious characters bent on her destruction. Tomas, her father, is a bit at odds and ends without his beloved consort, Gaby. He drinks too much, is getting older and less vibrant, but the charm and mischief-making are still evident.

With her maturity, Teresita's thoughts turn to the opposite sex and, like many of us, she makes her fair share of mistakes. It is perhaps the very human-ness of Teresita that lies at the core of "Queen", giving the book a very different feel. Where "Hummingbird's Daughter" introduces a magical character, filled with the exuberance of learning healing arts and magical cures, "Queen" brings us a wearier soul, who has commercialized her healing powers and seems to be trapped by them. Virtually all her relationships hit speed bumps, some which are irreparable. It would be easy to be disappointed by this turn of events but perhaps that is the message. While we are enthralled by larger-than-life celebrities, it's easy to forget that they really are human, subject to the same mistakes, second guessing and heartaches as the rest of we mere mortals, with the exception of having to live out those dramas for the whole world to witness.

Elizabeth Moran says

I love love love this book which I read slowly because I didn't want it to end. I bought it a couple years ago and have been hanging on to it to read at the "right" time. As someone who usually lives in Tucson (I bought it at the Festival of Books and had it signed by the author who is always so gracious) - this year while I am living in New Zealand seemed like the right time. The descriptions transported me back to the desert southwest, and the characters had me turning to Wikipedia to learn more about the history of the time (ornithopter, victor ochoa, Lauro Aguirre, etc). Page after page filled with the most beautiful lines - "Everyone and everything that had touched her had been only a tide of some unseen ocean" - with a bigger story about the place for magic, miracles, and saints in our world. As an American Cultural Studies major in college, I wrote my thesis on The House on Mango Street and The Last of the Menu Girls, but if I were doing it in 2017 I would put Queen of America front and center. I will read anything by this author (and have), but it will be hard for anyone to write something I will love more than Queen of America.

Catherine says

I didn't love this book as much as it's predecessor, The Hummingbird's Daughter, but it was still very good. It's just such a different book; where HBD was the epitome of magical realism, QoA is more historical

fiction. Perhaps that difference is due to being set in the U.S. instead of Mexico, or to Teresita growing up, or to the increased historical material.

The first third or so of QoA moves very slowly, reflective of how Teresita's life is just treading water at that point, trying to keep ahead of assassins sent by the Mexican government and trying to coexist with her father, Tomas, who has given up everything for her and whose resentment is growing. There are a few bait and switch moments in this first part that add a little excitement, but overall it was almost painfully slow at times...especially since I read this immediately after HBD.

Then things pick up speed and (for Teresita) spin out of control, forcing Teresita away from her home and family. Overall, this book made me really sad -- Teresita lost so much, including herself. Knowing she was a real person just makes it that much sadder.

Kayla greene says

My only complaint: the last hundredish pages felt a bit rushed to me, so much time was covered with not enough attention paid to it. Besides that, I loved it.

Jessica says

Luis Alberto Urrea has done it again.

Urrea has released his new book, *Queen of America* (Little, Brown), the sequel to his brilliant 2005 novel, *The Hummingbird's Daughter*. And while the tone of the books is different, the book is classic Urrea. In *Daughter*, Teresita Urrea (the author's great aunt) discovered her healing powers, earning her the name "Saint of Cabora" and leading an uprising of Mexican revolutionaries that prompted her and her father to escape to the north. *America* describes her journey to the United States, taking her from Arizona to El Paso to California to St. Louis to New York City. Teresita finds love along the way, but she also realizes the negative effects of being a celebrity, such as in this passage when she thinks about how her friends think of her now:

"They had once been her neighbors and friends, and then they become her followers. She felt a small chill of horror. Followers! It was terrible to have followers. But it was more terrible that part of her liked it.

Of course, she could not control her fanatics, only herself. Balance, again. When she had followers, she was watched over by the government and the newspapers. People copied her words in notebooks. She caught herself wondering what she had said and worrying all night if this time her careless utterances would lead to someone's death or some outbreak of madness she could not have foreseen. Sometimes you just want to speak without measuring your words! Sometimes you want to laugh and sing! Sometimes you just want to ride your horse!"

That passage shows why Urrea is such a great writer. He's just so much fun to read. Besides his beautiful descriptions and witty dialogue, he also creates some memorable characters, such as Teresita's father, Don Tomás. His selfishness, arrogance and lack of self-awareness brings some of the biggest laughs in the book. Check out this dialogue between Teresita and Tomás:

" 'I never said I was a saint ... I am a prophet.'

'Oh God, no,' he said. 'What you are is nineteen years old.'"

Or read this conversation between Tomás and a businessman seeking to exploit Teresita:

" 'You will provide for her with your Consortium profits. You incorporate. Partners. But structured so that she can honestly say she took nothing. It will honor her, shall we say, religious beliefs.'

'I love America,' Tomás said."

But Tomas is absent from the last half of the book as Queen focuses mostly on Teresita's journey. And then the book becomes somber, as Teresita realizes that not everyone has the best intentions for her and she yearns to return to her homeland. The reader becomes a bit melancholy, too, as another great book comes to an end.

This review appeared on my blog, <http://hispanicreader.com>.

Susana Olague Trapani says

This review of Queen of America originally appeared in The Washington Independent Review of Books on January 12, 2012. Posted to Goodreads on February 15, 2014, as the link is currently dead.

Queen of America, the long-awaited sequel to 2006's *The Hummingbird's Daughter*, is the culmination of 26 years of research and writing by Pulitzer Prize-finalist Luis Alberto Urrea (*The Devil's Highway: A True Story*). Based on the life of his great-aunt Teresa "Teresita" Urrea, the Saint of Cabora, the novels chronicle her ascendancy as a purported saint, beloved healer, muse of revolutionary fervor and, finally, as a stranger in the strange land of the United States at the turn of the 20th century.

While *The Hummingbird's Daughter* concerns Teresita's life in Mexico, *Queen of America* is an immigrant story, complete with the wistfulness of missing home and the wonder of discovering someplace new. An anticipatory prologue describes Teresita's world, which expands from her family in Arizona and Mexico to the wider United States, from sea to shining sea. It is a fitting analogue to the painful separation that every immigrant experiences, as she leaves the known for an unknown life in a new country.

The novel traces Teresita's adventures from Arizona to Texas, California, Missouri, New York City and back again. Still venerated as a saint, pushed by fellow exiles to inspire rebellion, and subject to the occasional assassination attempt courtesy of Porfirio Díaz's corrupt Mexican government, Teresita struggles to reconcile the life she once had with the life she now must live. Throughout, she is surrounded by the people she counts as family and those who flock to her, drawn by her mysticism and fame. With a large cast of distinctive and enjoyable characters, both historical and fictional, the novel is epic in scope.

What drives this novel are the characters and their relationships, conveyed through funny repartee, exasperated arguments and affectionate recollections of each other. Teresita's father, Tomás, finds living with a saint exhausting even though his love for Teresita dominates all. Lauro Aguirre, friend to Tomás, urges Teresita to lead a rebellion, but only manages to bemuse her with his tirades — or enrage her when he hawks images of her, claiming they are powerful amulets. John Van Order, a romantic interest of Teresita's, is a flawed character whose love and resentment for the saint drive the last third of the novel.

But *Queen of America* is also about Teresita's struggle to grasp control in her new world. While she feels called to help people, she nonetheless wonders what life would be like were she not saddled with this obligation. Teresita's pushing of her sainthood's boundaries, equal parts spirited and tentative, leads to an unhappy break with her father, forcing her out of Arizona to traverse the rest of the country. Believing that she is unable to go home, Teresita instead resolves to "take God's power to all of America."

Teresita's powers, attributed to sainthood, stem from the readily observable: the land, the flora that can be beneficial to health, and her tremendous empathy toward those she encounters. Teresita's magic is less about miracles, and more about understanding the humanity of those who seek her out. She recognizes this and is determined to help to those in need. However, caught up in the dynamic of growth and change at the turn of the century, Teresita loses sight of what's real and important.

Ice cream, the World's Fair, Ambrose Bierce, Geronimo and high-society parties in New York City — Teresita is overwhelmed with these experiences and the immensity of her new country. Her loneliness and unhappiness become proportional to her increasing fame: no matter how she struggles for love and comfort, they are elusive. Separated from her family, unwilling to return out of shame and regret, Teresita epitomizes the uncertainty and difficulty of the immigrant who needs to reconcile and make harmonious the incongruent experiences and values of past and present. Even in the 21st century this question lingers for many.

Urrea is masterful at including funny and true-to-life instances of adaptation to life in the United States. Even small details are simultaneously touching and hilarious. When Teresita's father and friend Lauro sip Arbuckle's Coffee to chase away their perpetual hangovers, Urrea points out the typical "... Mexican spin. They called it: Arr-BOO-kless." It's an affectionate nudge that continues with other instances of Spanglish lexical borrowing. For instance, my grandmother also used "*panquéquis*" for "pancakes." In moments like these, *Queen of America* made me long for what is physically lost but forever captured in my heart.

The novel is brilliant and funny, with biting commentary on turn-of-the-century (and sometimes contemporary) America and the process of adjusting to life in a new country. But the novel also houses a soul exemplified by the love that the characters radiate, the intensity of their memories, and their alternatively exhilarating and confusing new experiences. Forged by Urrea's unflinching imagining of his great-aunt's life, the truth that each character speaks or comes to know weaves a beautiful tale of love, loss and the hope of redemption in a new land.

Sara says

ARC received through the Goodreads First Reads program.

I made a bit of a blunder when I received this book--I didn't immediately find a copy of *The Hummingbird's Daughter* to read first. As a result, I felt like I was plunked down in the middle of a story, and it took a bit of flailing around to find my place and grab hold of the narrative thread. Granted, I still have not read *The Hummingbird's Daughter*, so I can't be certain that's why I didn't enjoy *Queen of America* as much as I expected to.

Teresita is 19 when the story begins. She and her father are living in Arizona, away from their home in Mexico. At the beginning of the story there are assassins after Teresita, but that sort of threat isn't present throughout the whole book. I believe that's a holdover from the first book, but it felt a little disjointed to me.

One device I found interesting was the way the passage of time sped up. At the beginning of the book, Teresita is 19. Time seems to pass slowly through the experiences at the beginning of the book, then speeds up as she travels to San Francisco and beyond under her contract with the Consortium. This seemed to be indicative of both how time speeds up as you get older and how urban America is more of a whirlwind of activity than rural Arizona or Mexico.

I love the way Urrea writes conversations. They're beautiful, and pick up the pace a bit in an often meandering book. The book, as a whole, doesn't seem to follow a well-structured story, but is more of a series of meditations on different episodes in Teresita's life. In this particular case, that style didn't work for me very well.

I wanted to like this book much more than I actually did. I felt lost not knowing the backstory, and although some of the gaps were filled in there were still enough of them for me to really feel I was missing things. The story didn't really grab me, either--largely because I didn't feel strong connections to the characters.

Teresita, the Saint of Cabora, was a real woman. What's more, Urrea is a relative--Teresita was his great-aunt.

Orbs n Rings says

Live, love and laugh along with the Queen of America and her menagerie of characters.

As a first time reader of this authors work, I was quite surprised by Urrea's writing style. His Queen of America is definitely not what I expected, in fact it was better than I expected. The main character of this book, Teresita, on who the story is based, actually existed, although most of the book is fiction. Urrea has a pre-sequel to this book, which I have not yet read, however this did not affect my reading of Queen of America, as it did not read like a sequel. I actually was completely surprised to learn Teresita was actually a real healer in her time back in the early 1900's instead of a fictitious character. This I did not note until after I read the notes and acknowledgement section at the end of the book.

Urrea's quirky style of writing and his list of characters remind me of a western-style movie with comedy scattered throughout. Teresita, her family, and friends are all characters one quickly feels comfortable with and the ongoing saga made it was difficult to put this book down. Being of Hispanic descent but not Mexican, I understood some of the Mexican words scattered throughout the book, while other times I had no idea what the word might mean. However, this did not in any way keep me from enjoying this book and I laughed out loud many times throughout this book. At other times it I was so caught up in the characters it was as if I was family. Teresita seems like the average poor Mexican, however, she also has a gift of what this generation may call healing of the hands. A term that back in the 1900's was considered by some to be witchcraft and at times she is ostracized for it. This book was an amazing adventure of love, laughter, pain and sorrow as Teresita lives her life, at times traveling across the continental United States. Urrea's words seem to carry you, when you feel the heat of the desolate desert or the scraping of the horse between your legs, while winding through the hills of Arizona. At other times you are riding on a windowless, dusty train through hills and valleys of the Old West with awe and wonder at the first glimpse of a creek bed or river, or maybe even the ocean. What may happen next? The wonders seem to never cease for what Teresita's next contingency may be. Yet in the end, Teresita finds exactly what she is longing for.

Carl R. says

You may not have been wondering, as I had, what happened to Saint Teresita after the central figure of The Hummingbird's Daughter saved her fleeing family from extermination by standing atop their train, arms outspread, hair flowing in the breeze, as it chugged through a narrow defile on its way from Mexico to Arizona, escaping attack only because the marauders feared for their very souls to assault the legendary young girl who offered herself in such a sacrificial pose. Then The Queen of America appeared on my Kindle as a birthday gift soon after its publication and wonder replaced the wondering.

We find the Urrea's--not the author, but his ancestors--Teresita and her father, Tomas, ensconced in modest circumstances in Arizona desert mountains. It's a refuge from enemies as well as from Teresita's followers who have exhausted the family seeking healing and blessings. Tomas maintains an income from his Mexican holdings, and they remain in contact with their cousin in El Paso, who makes a living publishing a newspaper devoted to the overthrow on the Mexican dictator Diaz.

The peace doesn't last long. Assassins appear along with pilgrims, and the world returns to essentially the same turmoil they fled from in Mexico. However, they are not in Mexico, they are in turn-of-the-twentieth-

century America, a yeasty mix of new politics, religion, business, and technology. Before long, Teresita's healing turns into a commercial enterprise, and we commence an entertaining and meaningful journey from El Paso to NYC and points in between, during which we experience a host of new-fangled gadgets up to and including a flying machine, hear a montage of popular melodies, and feel what it's like to become a stranger in a strange land.

In many ways, *The Queen of America* is a coming of age story about Teresita's emergence from adolescence to adulthood. Even a saint--a title she constantly denies--is subject to the same errors of passion as the rest of us mortals, and thanks to the power of Urrea's prose--the author's, not his ancestors--we experience the joys and the consequences of her mistakes right along with her. Her father, Tomas, remains his stubborn, stormy self, and the conflict between father and daughter reaches nearly the proportions of Greek tragedy before the book is over.

Together, I see *Queen* and *Hummingbird* as a grand hymn to passion--passion and magic of the spirit of the kind that appears in the person of Huila, a sort of bruja-Virgil who can take us to exotic, dangerous, and joyous realms--if we possess courage and folly enough to follow.
