



Inés of My Soul

By Isabel Allende
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Introduction

In the early years of the conquest of the Americas, Inés Suárez, a seamstress condemned to a life of toil, flees Spain to seek adventure in the New World. As Inés makes her way to Chile, she begins a fiery romance with Pedro de Valdivia, war hero and field marshal to the famed Francisco Pizarro. Together the lovers will build the new city of Santiago, and they will wage war against the indigenous Chileans—a bloody struggle that will change Inés and Valdivia forever, inexorably pulling each of them toward separate destinies.

Inés of My Soul is a work of breathtaking scope that masterfully dramatizes the known events of Inés Suárez's life, crafting them into a novel rich with the narrative brilliance and passion readers have come to expect from Isabel Allende.

Questions for Discussion

1. Describe the dichotomy that is created between Spain's extravagance and excess and Chile's starvation and starkness. What does this say about the broader civilizations, and describe the transformative influence that each culture has on the other.
2. What is your opinion of Pedro de Valdivia? As a husband? As a lover? As a military and community leader? Do you agree with the decisions that he makes, and ultimately, do you believe he is a positive or negative influence on the foundation of Chile? Is he, as Inés alludes to on pg. 141: "*The worst was surely his excessive hunger for fame, which in the end cost him, and many others, their lives.*", fatally flawed?
3. Inés is presented as a strong female character in many situations throughout the book. Discuss the many ways in which she holds power as a female in a patriarchal society, in terms of her sensuality, her physical/military presence, and cleverness. In what ways does she defy the traditional attitudes towards women of her time? In what ways does she confirm them?
4. Discuss the differences and similarities between the war tactics employed by the native Indians and the Spaniards in the struggle to colonize Chile. What do these tactics say about these cultures?
5. The concept of colonization has been a heated topic for centuries, and Inés laments on how the Indians feel when she says: "*What must the Indians have felt when they saw us arrive, and later, when they realized that we intended to stay?*" How does this sympathetic statement to the Indians stand up to the actions that are taken against them in the fight to found Chile?
6. How is the female form as a source of power and powerlessness embodied in the character of Inés?
7. How does the theme of punishment present itself throughout the novel? Do you think the punishments, whether given to prisoners of war, to Inés by Pedro de Valdivia, to traitors, and lastly to Pedro by the Indians, fit the crime?
8. How is the concept of destiny, duty, and fate present throughout this story? Do Pedro de Valdivia, Rodrigo de Quiroga, and Inés carry out their destinies?
9. Felipe/Lautaro becomes a highly influential leader for the Mapuche tribe. Compare and contrast his rise to power with that of Pedro de Valdivia's. Are both leaders, ultimately, so different?
10. Inés has three great loves throughout the novel: Juan de Malaga, Pedro de Valdivia, and Rodrigo de Quiroga. What roles do each of these men play in her life, and how does her love for each of them differ? Do you agree or disagree that a person has only one true love in their lifetime?

Author Bio

Born in Peru and raised in Chile, Isabel Allende is the author of eight novels, a collection of stories, three memoirs, and a trilogy of children's novels. Her books have been translated into more than twenty-seven languages, and have become bestsellers across four continents. In 2004 she was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Isabel Allende lives in California.