BKLYN BOOK CLUB KIT

OLGA DIES DREAMING

XOCHITL GONZALEZ

2022 BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY BOOK PRIZE WINNER
BOOK SYNOPSIS

It’s 2017 and Olga and her brother, Pedro “Prieto” Acevedo, are boldfaced names in their hometown of New York. Prieto is a popular congressman representing their gentrifying Latinx neighborhood in Brooklyn, while Olga is the tony wedding planner for Manhattan’s power brokers.

Despite their alluring public lives, behind closed doors things are far less rosy. Sure, Olga can orchestrate the love stories of the one percent but she can’t seem to find her own. Until she meets Matteo, who forces her to confront the effects of long-held family secrets.

Olga and Prieto’s mother, Blanca, a Young Lord turned radical, abandoned her children to advance a militant political cause, leaving them to be raised by their grandmother. Now, with the winds of hurricane season, Blanca has come barreling back into their lives.

Set against the backdrop of New York City in the months surrounding the most devastating hurricane in Puerto Rico’s history, Xochitl Gonzalez’s Olga Dies Dreaming is a story that examines political corruption, familial strife and the very notion of the American dream—all while asking what it really means to weather a storm.
Xochitl Gonzalez is the New York Times bestselling author of *Olga Dies Dreaming*. Named a Most Anticipated Book of 2022 by *Time*, *Kirkus*, *Boston Globe*, *Vogue*, *Bustle*, and more, *Olga Dies Dreaming* was a Barnes & Noble Discover Pick, an Indies Introduce Pick, an Indie Next Pick and Amazon's Featured Debut of the month. Gonzalez received her M.F.A. from the Iowa Writers' Workshop where she was an Iowa Arts Fellow and the recipient of the Michener-Copernicus Fellowship for Fiction. She was the winner of the 2019 Disquiet Literary Prize and her work has been published in *Bustle*, *Vogue* and *The Cut*.

Gonzalez is a contributor to *The Atlantic*, where her weekly newsletter "Brooklyn, Everywhere" explores the gentrification of people and places. A native Brooklynite and proud public school graduate, she lives in her hometown of Brooklyn with her dog, Hectah Lavoe.

**AUTHOR BIO: XOCHITL GONZALEZ**

LEARN MORE ABOUT XOCHITL AT XOCHITLGONZALEZ.COM.

BKLYN BOOK CLUB KIT: OLGA DIES DREAMING
BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

WARNING: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS INCLUDE SPOILERS!

1. Olga and Prieto are highly motivated, career-focused people who are invested in their communities. In what ways do the siblings' divergent trajectories reflect their different relationship to their hometown of Brooklyn—or to the values of the society around them?

2. Family is an essential thread in this story—from Olga cunningly providing napkins for Mabel’s wedding to Prieto rooting Olga on from the sidelines. Which of these moments resonated with you and how you show up for your own family? Why?

3. Mateo enters Olga’s life and unapologetically discloses his own backstory. How does their romantic relationship change and influence some of the decisions Olga makes?

4. Evaluate Olga and Prieto’s relationship with Blanca. How do their senses of self change as their relationship with their mother evolves throughout the novel?
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5. The landfall of Hurricane Maria is crucial to the overarching plot, especially as we witness the lack of U.S. intervention in the aftermath. How does Gonzalez bring the discourse around aid and relief to the forefront of this novel through her characters?

6. How important was it for readers to hear Blanca’s voice through her letters to her children? What did the letters reveal about Blanca’s decisions when it came to her family? How did they make you feel about her choices?

7. How do the changes to the neighborhood where Olga and Prieto grew up affect them, their friends and family differently? How does it feel unfair? How does Olga reconcile the transformation of her own life with the gentrification around her? How does her experience differ from Mateo’s?

8. Both Olga and Prieto are children of the diaspora, but they have different relationships to their communities and to Puerto Rico. Does one approach seem better than the other to you? Is it important to feel connected to one’s roots?

THESE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS WERE CREATED BY THE PUBLISHER FLATIRON BOOKS AND ARE NOT AFFILIATED WITH BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY.
This novel has a backdrop of multiple weddings. How does class change the role of weddings for the various characters? How is the culture of wedding planning juxtaposed against everything that’s at stake for Olga and her family?

Share your thoughts on the novel’s ending. Could things have turned out differently for Olga and Prieto? What about Blanca and Mateo?

In the beginning of the novel, Olga sees herself as more successful than Mabel. What do you think has shaped that notion of success and how do we feel that might have changed by the end?

The characters in this novel have all experienced large traumas. What are some of the healthy and unhealthy ways they have moved past them?
INTERVIEWS WITH XOCHITL GONZALEZ

- **WNYC / “All Of It”** - Highlighting Latinx Authors: Olga Dies Dreaming by Xochitl Gonzalez
- **Los Angeles Review of Books** - "Four Questions for Xochitl Gonzalez Regarding Her Debut Novel, Olga Dies Dreaming"
- **Latino USA Podcast** - "Xochitl Gonzalez and the Art of Traversing Worlds"
- **Literary Hub** - "Xochitl Gonzalez on Radical Fiction Packaged as a Trojan Horse"
- **New York Times** - "Want to Be a Writer? Get Your Training as a Wedding Planner"

SEE MORE AT XOCHITLGONZALEZ.COM/PRESS-BUZZ

BKLYN BOOK CLUB KIT: OLGA DIES DREAMING
VISIT AUTHOR XOCHITL GONZALEZ’S FAVORITE SPOTS IN CLINTON HILL

As shared on Curbed.com:

- Irving Place: Fulton St. and Gates Ave.
- Food Center Grocery: 358 Franklin Ave.
- For All Things Good: 343 Franklin Ave.
- Blick: 536 Myrtle Ave.
- Pratt Sculpture Garden: Dekalb Ave. and Hall St.
- Baby Jane: 899 Fulton St.
- Su’juk: 216 Greene Ave.
- Dino: 222 Dekalb Ave.
- Gardel’s Garden: 97 S. Portland Ave.
- The Chicken Coop Victorian: Franklin Ave. & Monroe Ave.
- 21 Tara: 388 Myrtle Ave.

CLICK THE PHOTO TO VIEW THE MAP IN FULL.

BKLYN BOOK CLUB KIT: OLGA DIES DREAMING
BKLYN BOOKMATCH READALIKES

Did you enjoy *Olga Dies Dreaming*? Want to read something similar? Check out these readalike titles below.

- *Black Cake* by Charmaine Wilkerson
- *Crying in the Bathroom: A Memoir* by Erika L. Sánchez
- *How Not to Drown in a Glass of Water* by Angie Cruz
- *When I Was Puerto Rican* by Esmeralda Santiago
- *Velorio* by Xavier Navarro Aquino
- *After the Hurricane* by Leah Franqui

You can access the list and place holds on these titles in multiple formats through the BPL catalog: [Borrow.BklynLibrary.org](http://Borrow.BklynLibrary.org)

In the mood for something else? Get customized reading recommendations from Brooklyn Public Library’s free BKLYN BOOKMATCH service: [BklynLibrary.org/Bookmatch](http://BklynLibrary.org/Bookmatch)