



# Amigoland

*Oscar Casares*

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## **Amigoland** Oscar Casares

In a small town on the Mexican border live two brothers, Don Fidencio and Don Celestino. Stubborn and independent, they now must face the facts: they are old, and they have let a family argument stand between them for too long. Don Celestino's good-natured housekeeper encourages him to make amends--while he still can. They secretly liberate Don Fidencio from his nursing home and travel into Mexico to solve the mystery at the heart of their dispute: the family legend of their grandfather's kidnapping. As the unlikely trio travels, the brothers learn it's never too late for a new beginning.

With winsome prose and heartfelt humor, Oscar Casares's debut novel of family lost and found radiates with generosity and grace and confirms the arrival of a uniquely talented new writer.

## **Amigoland Details**

Date : Published August 10th 2009 by Little Brown and Company (first published 2009)

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Author : Oscar Casares

Format : Hardcover 357 pages

Genre : Fiction, Contemporary

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## From Reader Review Amigoland for online ebook

### Rachel says

3.5, but I decided to round up. I wasn't the biggest fan of this book most of the way through. What had originally intrigued me from the blurb on the back doesn't really come into play until maybe the last 100 pages of the book (the book is about 400 pages, at least in my edition). The story was intriguing enough, but I found it to be slow paced - probably because I was waiting for something mentioned on the back, which is totally my fault! Looking back, the writing was great. The slowness suits the book and the descriptions and language was wonderful. For some reason, I seemed to rush myself through this book, but even still, I've really come to appreciate this story. I recommend it, but it's not for everyone. And that's okay too! :)

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### Glenn says

3.5 stars for this debut novel by Oscar Casares. It tells the story of two estranged Mexican brothers named Don Fidencio and Don Celestino. Fidencio is a crusty, grumpy and stubborn old man confined to a nursing home called Amigoland, but still trying to hold onto his dignity and live life with humor. Celestino is a recent widower, worked as a barber all his life and has diabetes. He needs home help and hires a Mexican housekeeper named Socorro, who becomes his lover, even though she's 35 years younger than Celestino.

It goes on to tell the story of how the brothers reunite and go on a journey back to Mexico, to the place where their grandfather lived, in El Rancho Capote.

It has moments of humor, but is also a very touching story of family bonds, and maintaining dignity while going through medical issues that many people face as they age.

It reminded me of my Dad, 83, who luckily for now is still able to live at home albeit w/nursing and home aide help. He's had a hip replacement, double knee replacements and has had Parkinson's for more than a decade. In 2002, he had to give up driving and the independence that goes along with that. He uses a walker everywhere he goes and uses a lift chair, which he also sleeps in, as it's too hard to get in and out of bed. He's fallen half a dozen times in the last 3 months, so I can see him failing more and more as time goes on. My Mom was his primary caregiver for a number of years, but is no longer able to do it because of her own health problems. It's difficult seeing your parents go through that, but I think it's better to try and stay in your own home as long as possible rather than be put in a nursing home.

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### Jim says

The horrors of maintaining independence and dignity as you reach the twilight years are well examined in this story of a 91-year-old Chicano man trapped in the "prison" of a retirement/old folk's home, hidden away by family and basically forgotten. Beset with many of the maladies experienced by much-older men, Don Fidencio Rosales dreams of returning to his native Mexico to resist the grounds and tales departed to him by his beloved grandfather. Only one surviving sibling, Celestino, a former barber twenty years his junior, having just lost his wife and entered a new relationship with a younger woman, reunited with his older

brother for a little adventure. This first novel is pretty good, although at times it moved along about as well as an old timer on pushing his walker, and it lacked a bit of passion or mystery, but it was still decent, in a new MFA kind of way. The squabbling is delicious. The story does give nice insights into the long-standing relationship between neighboring countries, and some of what it is like to be caught between two worlds.

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### **barbarafrank says**

This book lingered in my mind for years after first reading it. I couldn't even remember why I loved it but I knew that it touched me deeply so I read it again and it flooded back with full force. If you ever loved an old person or if you are an old person or want to be an old person some day this book will touch you. I loved the old men in this book and cared deeply what happened to them. They and their lives are beautifully depicted by this first time author. My family is from Texas and New Mexico so I felt I knew the setting there and in Mexico. Having been captive of a convalescent hospital I felt that atmosphere was very well drawn as well. The great old men in this book will stay with you I promise.

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### **manatee says**

Perhaps you must be related to a crotchety abuelita to really love this book as much as I did. I really enjoyed the use of language and the point of view in this book. The characters, plotting and pacing are beautiful. I also appreciated the author's use of nuance and detail to bring the story to life. I was hooked from the moment that Casares mentioned that the main character, Don Fidencio, had a warped Narciso Martinez cassette in an old shoe box. That is precisely the kind of music enjoyed by my grandma's generation. I was really taken with the character's names and I thought that the author did an especially splendid job of capturing the rhythm of old people's Spanish without writing in Spanish. This aspect of the book's style was especially fascinating to me.

I have a tooth ache and a stomach ache, yet I was able to forget my woes by reading this book. LOVED IT.

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### **Hillary says**

Since I have been a long-time fan of Oscar Cásares writing, of course I wanted to read his novel...although I must say, the idea that it revolved around two old men didn't pique my interest particularly—I'm quite glad this didn't stop me from picking it up! Cásares's novel is hilarious and touching! Although he is quite young, he recreates the mindsets of these older men in a way that feel authentic, while also being hilarious. In an article he had written "My Name Is Cásares," he discusses a search into a story/mystery of his family's past, which the article leaves unresolved. In the novel, he explores how this story/mystery might have been resolved through fiction.

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### **Kookie says**

Wonderful, high-spirited novel about an elderly dementia patient who manages to talk his brother into breaking him out of his nursing home for a trip over the border to clear up a family controversy. Super

entertaining.

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### **Katy Cesarotti says**

The true success of this work is the compassion and empathy with which the author draws his characters. Don Fidencio and his brother seemed so real, their fears and hopes tangible. Casares transports his readers through foreign worlds with ease and simplicity, and deals with fraught themes like aging, fear of meaninglessness, immigration and class divisions without seeming preachy or overbearing. Amigoland, however, lacked a sense of propulsion or tension. The action builds slowly, and the characters do not embark on their haphazard journey to Mexico until halfway through the novel. Although I was completely enamored with the relationship between the brothers and between Socorro and Celestino, I craved more action. The plot was so delicious when it happened...I just wanted more to happen. The relationship between Celestino and Socorro also could have been fleshed out more. I couldn't exactly figure out why the two were drawn to one another; all of their conversations seemed so relationship-centric, being together by talking about being together. Although Socorro fervently denies her family's claims that Celestino is using her, I couldn't divine the emotional core that attracted them to each other. The relationship seemed taken for granted, as fact, but I needed it to be proven to me.

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### **Lindsey says**

In much the same way that I couldn't get through Confederacy of Dunces until I lived in New Orleans, and the way I swell up with Midwest longing while reading Willa Cather, I'm not sure I'm Texas enough to truly appreciate Casares. Yet.

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### **Kristi Brokaw says**

Amigoland was an absolute joy to read. Casares has captured the sense of place in the border towns of Texas and Mexico perfectly. His characters, from the brothers we get to know well to the strangers in the Amigoland nursing home, are true and lifelike. He takes his time building the place and the people and the pacing feels as important to the story as the plot itself, giving the reader the sense of languishing among strangers for a while before the thrill of escape and adventure.

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### **Kevin says**

Every guy should read this, especially if you have a brother.

This is a book about two elderly brothers, one ancient, and one almost so. Even though they grew up in the same family, the distance in age between the two of them is great. Given the time between them, they grew up in two different cultures and have different values. They go on a quest to find where their father's family had once come.

I found the book to be very funny at times especially the “fights” between the older brother and the nursing home staff – where he points out that he is 91 and won’t live forever. The story had several poignant moments where the brothers bonded, as kids they were so far apart in age they never really bonded. It was also rich in descriptions of the situations they were in when they took their quest into Mexico.

This book is not for everyone, but it should be.

In a small town on the Mexican border live two brothers, Don Fidencio and Don Celestino. Stubborn and independent, they now must face the facts: they are old, and they have let a family argument stand between them for too long. Don Celestino's good-natured housekeeper encourages him to make amends--while he still can. They secretly liberate Don Fidencio from his nursing home and travel into Mexico to solve the mystery at the heart of their dispute: the family legend of their grandfather's kidnapping. As the unlikely trio travels, the brothers learn it's never too late for a new beginning. With winsome prose and heartfelt humor, Oscar Casares's debut novel of family lost and found radiates with generosity and grace and confirms the arrival of a uniquely talented new writer.

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### **May-Ling says**

how could i not pick up a book called amigoland? about halfway through the book, i found out the title is the name of a nursing home. this story is a bit about mexicans in america, somewhat about brotherhood and ambiguous relationships, and mostly about growing old.

the story follows two brothers, almost 30 years apart, as they reconcile after many years and then embark on an adventure (would i call it that after reading along? maybe a small trip?) to mexico where their ancestors were from.

i read casares' book brownsville, which i enjoyed for a collection of short stories. this book is quite good and i think i gave it 3 stars mostly because of the content. it's not a page turner, but like its subject, meanders around at an older pace. would you be flipping pages quickly to find out what happens next at the nursing home? probably not, but casares does an excellent job of capturing the humanity and embarrassment of growing older and the things we must deal with in our daily lives.

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### **Esther says**

I registered a book at [BookCrossing.com](http://www.BookCrossing.com)!  
<http://www.BookCrossing.com/journal/11255678>

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### **Darryl says**

Don Fidencio Rosales, a nonagenarian who has recently been weakened by a stroke, has been condemned by his daughter to a hellish old age home in south Texas near the Mexican border, appropriately named "Amigoland". He rebels against the rules that only serve to take away his remaining freedom, and he despises the staff and his fellow residents, giving them nicknames such as The One With the Flat Face and

## The One Who Cries Like a Dying Calf.

Soon after his internment he is visited by Don Celestino Rosales, his much younger widowed brother, and his even younger girlfriend Socorro, a divorced maid who cleans his house. The two men have been estranged from each other for years after a trivial argument, and Socorro has urged Don Celestino to visit Don Fidencio in the old age home. The two men reluctantly set aside their grudges, and the couple take Don Fidencio on a trip across the border to Linares, Mexico, in order to fulfill a promise he made to his grandfather many years ago.

*Amigoland* is a well written and pleasant novel, but the story and its characters were only mildly interesting to me, which made for a good but not particularly memorable read.

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## Nick says

Oscar Casares is a writer who won't be hurried. It takes "Amigoland" perhaps half the novel to spring one of its protagonists, the 91-year old Fidencio, from the nursing home of the title. The man who springs him is his estranged much younger brother, Celestino, and together with Celestino's even younger Mexican lover, they travel to the rancho in Mexico from which their grandfather was kidnapped by Indians in a horrific raid. It is a pleasant enough trip, as Casares takes the time to observe this slice of northern Mexico closely, with its crammed bus terminals, testy immigration officers, and wandering taxi rides. And, of course, the rituals of courtesy in rural Mexico. Not all of it feels this authentic -- there is a painfully sentimental motif about the young chiclet sellers -- and the brothers' arguments can go on for a while. Atmosphere counts for a lot in this world. The ranch they find is outside Monterrey, in the citrus region of Linares, which is something I find personally difficult for reasons that having nothing to do with this book. At about the time it was published in 2009, Linares was being terrorized by a kidnapping ring allied with the Zeta cartel. On December 31 of last year, the ring's leader, a divorced mother in her early thirties, was publicly executed by a rival cartel on one of Monterrey's main arteries. This is of course just the most deliberately shocking incident in the daily news of gunfights, grenade-throwing, and murders that creeps out of Monterrey. I travelled across Mexico for three years or so, and never felt less than safe, even at 5 a.m. in Mexico City, and it saddens me to have to wonder whether the Mexicans -- some of whom fed me when I hungry, took care of me when sick, and offered me shelter -- will ever be able to recover the kind of instinctive courtesy that Casares demonstrates in this novel.

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