



## **El Lector**

*William Durbin*

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This heart-warming story is about Bella, a 13-year-old girl in Tampa, Florida, in the 1930s. Her grandfather is a *lector* at a cigar factory, which means he reads fiction, newspapers, and union news to the workers as they roll cigars. Being a *lector* is an important role in their Cuban American immigrant community. But the hard times of the Depression mean that Bella must go to work in the factory. Her hope of getting the education a *lector* needs seems impossible.

## El Lector Details

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Author : William Durbin

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## **From Reader Review El Lector for online ebook**

### **Jean says**

The author does an excellent job of leading the reader into a time and place that has not been addressed in children's lit. The cigar factories in southern Florida were an entree into the US for many new immigrants, but the working conditions were hard for many. The idea of having a "lector" or a person who keeps the factory workers entertained and enlightened while they are working is a wonderful image. This story is set when radios are being introduced and the labor movement is becoming more active. We see these changes through the eyes of Bella, who hopes to be a lector like her grandfather. The characters are well drawn, particularly her aunt and her grandfather. This is well worth reading.

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### **Laura says**

El Lector brings to life Ybor City, Florida, 1931. The author's research is evident, as he paints a picture of a family struggling to manage after a number of hardships. Bella, who finishes eighth grade during the novel, is smart and caring. Her grandfather is a man of honor, and el lector that Bella hopes to someday be.

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### **Julie says**

It was interesting to learn more about what life was like in Ybor City back in the heyday of the cigar factories, but the book lacked real suspense and intrigue.

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### **Anne McLeod says**

I liked El Lector better than the 3 star rating might suggest, mainly because it takes on labor issues and that is apparently a tough topic to write about for children without sounding too strident. Or too ambivalent. This book veered a bit toward the didactic before reining in.

The character of Tia Lola was wonderful. There is such a tendency to characterize female workers during the Depression as downtrodden drudges in sunbonnets, but in fact, many of the younger ones were thoroughly modern with bobbed hair, lipstick, and a pretty darn insouciant attitude toward the opposite sex. Lola let the reader see what that might look like.

It was refreshing to read a book set in Florida during the Great Depression, and Durbin did a wonderful job of explaining the culture of the tobacco workers and the practice of el lector. Like the main character, Bella, I want to be el lector!!

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### **Krista says**

El Lector means the reader in English. Bella and everyone else in Ybor City Florida love to hear her grandfather read books. He stands at a lectern in a cigar factory to read to the workers. This book really captures life in 1931 Florida. I can't do this book justice with my review, just read it, you'll love it too.

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### **Salsabrarian says**

In 1931 Ybor City, FL, 13-year-old Bella wants to be a respected lector like her grandfather. He is a lector at the cigar factory, reading aloud to the workers from the newspapers, literary classics and union news. Bella knows she must be educated to be a lector and she hopes to attend high school with her best friend Mary. But with her father dead and her mother supporting the family with laundry jobs, Bella ends up working in the cigar factory stripping room. Change is afoot; the union and the workers are agitating for better pay and working conditions. Bella's Tia Lola tries to get her involved. At the same time, the radio is making inroads in the community and factories, threatening grandfather's livelihood. Bella comes to make her peace with the changes: the union is working for the good of the workers and she gets grandfather a job at the radio station presenting its Spanish story hour.

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### **Terri Pray says**

Not something I'd have picked up and read unless it had been 'forced' on me by the library as a challenge book for Hot Reads for Cold Nights.

But, well written and it deals with a part of twentieth century history I had very limited exposure to.

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### **Ken Yliniemi says**

Another good book from Will Durbin. Set in Tampa Bay FL in the early 1930s in the cigar rolling factories and the labor movement taking place. A YA novel with a great historical setting. Not sure about some of the Spanish in the book, as my Spanish speaking friends had no idea what some of the Spanish words were. Perhaps they were from old Spain? I have no idea, neither did they.

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### **Tiffany says**

I read this with my students for a field trip we're going on. It's set in historic Tampa (Ybor City). Very interesting young adult novel.

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### **Danna Acosta says**

It was a pretty good book if you're not into much suspense and action. Personally I felt there were places where the writer could have added a bit more action. Thought the last two-thirds of the book there was a little more of a want to keep reading. Still recommend reading if you're into historical fiction.

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## **Dolcie says**

It was interesting to read about the lectores and what life was like for cigar rollers in Florida back in the day; but the story was boring. I don't know why I torture myself and keep reading a book to the end even if I find it boring, but I just have to, hoping a book gets better. The story just lacked the intrigue to make me want to keep turning the pages. Finally, the last three chapters were interesting enough to help me finish the book. We all dream of writing a book that will make it big and make us rich, but this is probably what most of us would end up writing. Somehow, this one got published.

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## **Cathie says**

middle grades

third person POV

AR test

Set in Ybor City (outside Tampa) in 1931, tells the story of 13-yr-old Bella's Cuban family who work in the cigar factories, and Bella's dream of continuing her schooling and becoming a lector like her grandfather.

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