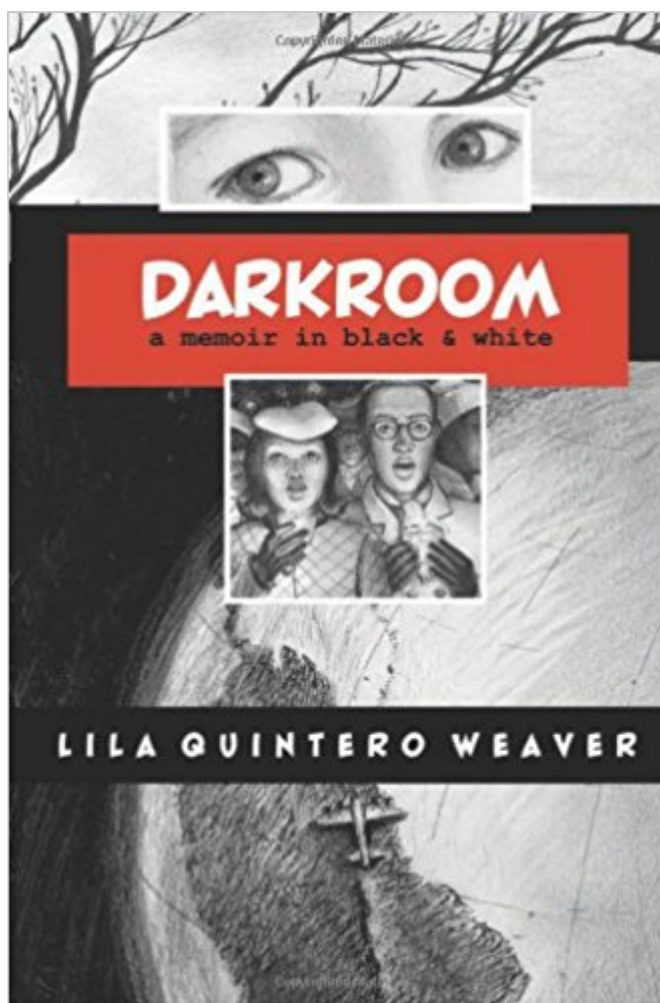


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Darkroom: A Memoir In Black And White



Synopsis

Darkroom: A Memoir in Black and White is an arresting and moving personal story about childhood, race, and identity in the American South, rendered in stunning illustrations by the author, **Lila Quintero Weaver**. In 1961, when Lila was five, she and her family emigrated from Buenos Aires, Argentina, to Marion, Alabama, in the heart of Alabama's Black Belt. As educated, middle-class Latino immigrants in a region that was defined by segregation, the Quinteros occupied a privileged vantage from which to view the racially charged culture they inhabited. Weaver and her family were firsthand witnesses to key moments in the civil rights movement. But **Darkroom** is her personal story as well: chronicling what it was like being a Latina girl in the Jim Crow South, struggling to understand both a foreign country and the horrors of our nation's race relations. Weaver, who was neither black nor white, observed very early on the inequalities in the American culture, with its blonde and blue-eyed feminine ideal. Throughout her life, Lila has struggled to find her place in this society and fought against the discrimination around her.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"A vivid, insightful, and moving illustrated graphic memoir by Weaver, who emigrated from Argentina to the American South as a young girl in 1961, recounting her impressions of her family's new and unexpected life in racist, rural Alabama during the civil rights movement. In beautiful gray-shaded drawings, Weaver depicts the reality of the segregated and newly integrated South and her struggle to position herself as an ally to her black classmates, only to find

that it's a path fraught with pitfalls from both sides of the divide. Publishers Weekly "Darkroom: A Memoir in Black and White is remarkable for its truth-telling about two important issues concerning Alabama's past and present: the civil rights movement and immigration. These stories, rendered through the words and eyes of a young Latina girl who came from Argentina to Marion, Alabama, are made vivid and immediate through Weaver's highly accessible drawings and dialogue. This is a book about maturation, family, education, and social change—every schoolchild, parent, and citizen should experience it." Sena Jeter Naslund, author of *Ahab's Wife*, *Four Spirits*, and *Adam & Eve* "A truly incredible look at the civil rights movement. Darkroom offers a double view of that movement. A gem." Nikki Giovanni, author of *Gemini* and *On My Journey Now*

Lila Quintero Weaver received her BA from New College at The University of Alabama. She and her husband, Paul, live in Northport, Alabama. *Darkroom* is her first book.

Weaver's memoir combines powerful memories with stunning artwork. Weaver was the child of Argentinian immigrants who grew up during the 1960's in a small Alabama town. She witnessed the injustice of segregation as an outsider herself. Weaver captures the perspective of a young person struggling to find her own way in a world she knows should change. Her story should be shared in school libraries everywhere. No one will put down this book unmoved.

Darkroom is not your usual female graphic memoir. Quintero's Memoir deals with immigration, race, social upheaval and identity. Not white, neither black, the Quinteros arrived from Argentina in 1961 and settle in the Alabama Black Belt area, in a time when segregation and Civil Rights libertarians were going to change the course of History in America. Lila and her family view and dealt with Segregation in a way that was not what was expected from them, but they could not but be appalled by the reality of Segregation and life conditions of Afro-Americans but also were supportive of the Civil Rights movement. *Dark Room* is both a personal and family memoir. It is also a memoir about the troubles of immigration, of being always The Other. The book is perfect to illustrate Alterity processes. In a way, it is just normal that the Quinteros would see "the others" in American society, the Afro-Americans, with empathy and humanness. They themselves were "the others" to both white and black people. This gave them an unique vantage point, and also created troubles for them in their personal relationships. I also like the fact that we witness the different fortunes of the

Quintero's siblings, as immigration affects differently to the members of the same family because people are, after all, individuals. *Dark Memoir* is a lovely Memoir that goes from the personal to the familiar, stopping at the historical. Quintero herself reveals at the that memory is not the only source of her Memoir, as an historical approach is given to the narration of some of the horrific events happened in Alabama during the 1960s. Moreover, she was academically advised and supervised to produce a Memoir that is clear about the value of our personal memory in a Memoir, especially when dealing with historical events. I think that shows. There is some sort of detachment in the narration at times, that comes from there. Despite being barely present, Argentina is never forgotten, especially because Lila's mother would recall her beloved Buenos Aires and infuse their American children with a taste for their country of origin. Argentina or Argentinean culture were not imposed on the children, and Lila has ended being very much in touch with her Argentinean family and keeping Argentina culture close to her heart even though she progressively assimilated into America. .Beyond the narrative, the book is wonderfully drawn, with a precise use of ink pen drawing, a great use of chiaroscuro and portrait, and an elegant use of white space. The number of vignettes per page is small, favouring big sized detailed ones, sometimes with barely any text; other times the narration and text is the focus and just a few elements of drawing are present in the page. Generally speaking, the book is visually interesting and varied. This being the case, the book reads quickly, and feels shorter than the 200+ pages that the book has. In fact, was about 60 of the book inn my Kindle and the book was already finished, just the long heart-felt acknowledgements at the end of the book occupying the rest of the book. What the heck?!

I grew up in the Sixties and spent time in the small Alabama town where the author lived. It was a time and place where teenage white boys addressed middle-aged black men by their first names and middle-aged black men addressed teenaged white boys as "siree." The author draws readers in with stark details. She pulls no punches while avoiding a temptation to throw stones. I've known all the types of people she described, in Marion and throughout the world. I've often reflected on those times, that little town, in my formative years thinking I should write a book to try and explain it as much to myself perhaps as to my grandchildren. Reading *Darkroom* has helped me process my experiences from a unique perspective, neither that of a white person entrenched in the status quo, nor a black person struggling with American apartheid, but an embedded immigrant observer bearing witness to the darker side of our human condition.

This is an excellent book written and illustrated in the style of the graphic novel. The drawings are

beautifully rendered charcoals drawn from 1st-hand experiences. Lila's spellbinding story and masterful drawings of her childhood in the Jim Crow south make the book difficult to put down. While the reading level would be appropriate for children in 4th-8th grade, it is also a great read for any adult or young adult. I highly recommend this book. As an educator, I feel books like Darkroom should be required reading during the middle grades.

I saw this book last month while visiting the Levine Museum of the New South in Charlotte, NC. If I hadn't been there with a group, I'd have stood there the whole day, reading the entire thing. It was that intriguing. I ordered a copy from through my phone before I left the museum. Interesting memoir. Unique perspective. Brilliant illustrations Should be required reading in the U.S. Maybe everywhere.

I grew up in the same small town as the author. As an immigrant, Lila has a unique "outsider" perspective on the civil rights conflicts of the 1960's in the deep South. But her own personal story of trying to "fit in" within a small town that knew only black and white is what really makes this memoir compelling. I do not recommend that anyone try to read this book on a regular Kindle as I did. You are not able to see the graphics well enough, and that is part of the book's unique perspective.

This graphic novel should be in every school and city library! It is so beautifully illustrated and her personal account is so relevant to our times. The current issue of immigration has deep roots and Ms. Weaver explains them so well as she takes us back in time to the civil rights movement through the eyes of a young Hispanic woman growing up in the Black Belt. Her illustrative talent is marvelous and I look forward to her next venture.

This book is exactly as advertised. I bought it because of a class which I am taking and found myself unable to put it down until completion. It seems simple but the message is powerful. I would recommend it to anyone who is interested in learning the American experience, in the South, through the eyes of a young immigrant girl.

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