



Dancing Lessons A Novel by Olive Senior

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Shortlisted, 2012 Amazon.ca First Novel Award

Shortlisted, 2012 Commonwealth Writers Prize

When her house in the Jamaican countryside is damaged by a hurricane, Gertrude Samphire is sent by her estranged daughter Celia to Ellesmere Lodge, an assisted living centre. Gertrude is unimpressed with her new wealthy neighbours, and spends most of her time alone. It is only through writing that she finds her voice, and she begins to record her life in a notebook: memories of her gothic childhood, impetuous marriage, and struggles with raising a family. Gertrude slowly comes out of her shell, establishing and mending the relationships she has been missing for so long – and comes to realize that she may not be alone as she once felt.

Reviews

“Senior is particularly deft at exploring social class, maternal terrain and distance. The territory she writes about could not interest this reader more ... Senior skillfully depicts the space between mother and children... What’s remarkable at times is Senior’s subtle depiction of family tension, the prodding between mother and daughter, the apprehension of what the one does or mainly does not know of the other.” – *The Globe and Mail*

“As a result of Senior’s feel for Jamaican social types, [the emotional dynamics that drive the plot of this novel] take on a strong local flavour in *Dancing Lessons* ... Senior knows [the speech of inner Jamaica] inside out.” – *National Post*

“Senior’s insights about gender, race, and class in Jamaica reveal her keen eye for details.”
– *Canadian Literature*

The Author:

Olive Senior is the prize-winning author of a dozen books of fiction, poetry and non-fiction. Her short story collection *Summer Lightning* (Longman, 1986) won the inaugural Commonwealth Writers’ Prize for Best Book, and her poetry collection *Over the Roofs of the World* (Insomniac, 2005) was a finalist for the 2005 Governor General’s Literary Award for poetry. Born in Jamaica, she has travelled widely and now spends most of her time in Jamaica and Toronto.



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