

## WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT ANGIE CRUZ



Angie Cruz is a novelist and editor. Her most recent novel *How Not To Drown in A Glass of Water* (2022) was a finalist for the 2024 Neustadt International Prize for Literature, shortlisted for The Aspen Words Literary Prize, winner of the Gold Medal, Latino Book Award/The Isabel Allende Most Inspirational Book Award, longlisted for the Joyce Carol Oates Literary Prize, and chosen for *The New York Times* 100 Notable Books of 2022 and *The Washington Post* 50 Notable Works of Fiction. Her novel, *Dominicana*, was the inaugural book pick for GMA book club and shortlisted for The Women’s Prize, longlisted for the Andrew Carnegie Medals for Excellence in Fiction, a RUSA Notable book, and the winner of the ALA/YALSA Alex Award in fiction. It was named most anticipated/best book in 2019 by *Time*, *Newsweek*, *People*, *Oprah Magazine*, *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and *Esquire*. Cruz is the author of two other novels, *Soledad* and *Let It Rain Coffee* and the recipient of numerous fellowships, residencies, and awards including the 2025 USA Fellowship, The Poets & Writers/Writers For Writers Award, and the John Dos Passos Prize for Literature.



## QUESTIONS: HOW NOT TO DROWN IN A GLASS OF WATER (2022)

- Cruz depicts several parental relationships in the novel. What informs Cara’s parenting style? What beliefs about motherhood does she hold? How does her attitude about parenting change by the end of the story?
- How do you interpret Cara constantly being thirsty and drinking water during her sessions? What is the novel’s title referring to?
- Are the results of the “Career Skills Matcher” at the end of Session Four accurate to Cara’s character? Why or why not?
- What do we learn about Cara’s job counselor throughout the book?

How do these insights contribute to the book’s reflections on nationality and identity?

- How do the book’s interstitial sections between Cara’s sessions contribute to its social commentary and Cara’s characterization?
- How do you explain Alicia the Psychic’s predictions coming true?

## MAKING CONNECTIONS

- Cruz’s book is set in the aftermath of the Great Recession, which threw millions of Americans into financial precarity. What does Cruz suggest as the best ways to deal with such difficult circumstances?
- Cruz’s books often focus on the immigrant experience, much like the works of Cynthia Kadohata. How do Cara’s experiences compare to those of the protagonists in books like *Kira-Kira* and *A Place to Belong*?
- A major component of the novel’s style is Cara’s idiosyncratic narration. What other books use subjective narrators to gradually reveal aspects of their characters?

## LITERATURE AS PRAXIS

- How can we address the prevalence of gentrification? What can we do to protect an area’s established residents and prevent cultural erosion?
- What are ways to address the difficulties faced by immigrants today? What resources are currently available to them, and what kinds of support do they still need?
- What major systemic failures are depicted in this book? In what ways do these remain today, and how can the system be reformed to better serve people?
- What resources can be provided to single parents or those who otherwise lack additional familial support?
- How can we help individuals who feel ostracized from their family due to their sexual or gender identity?
- How does the novel highlight the challenges of finding stable work and housing later in life, and what can communities do to support people in similar situations?

## COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- [Family Acceptance Project](#)
- [USCRI](#)
- [Single Parent Project](#)
- [Migrant Clinicians Network](#)
- [Eviction Defense Collaborative](#)
- [Find Community Land Trusts near you](#)

## ADDITIONAL READINGS

- Junot Díaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007)
- Lee Isaac Chung, *Minari* (2020)
- Cynthia Kadohata, *Kira-Kira* (2004)
- Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon* (1977)
- Peter Moskowitz, *How to Kill a City* (2017)