

Diario a dos voces

Diary in Two Voices



UK panel's choice Year 2013

Author: [Manuel Lamana](#) [1]

Publisher: [EDITORIAL SEIX BARRAL, S.A.](#) [2]

Language: Spanish

Year of Publication: 2013

Pages: 288

Spanish Retail price: 18.00€

ISBN: 978-84-322-1546-9

Genre: Literature

SPRING

2013

Season: Year 2013

Spain, winter 1939. Among the hundreds of thousand of people crossing the border seeking refuge in France, the Lamana family get separated, hoping to be reunited in the neighbouring country. A shocking, real account, these diaries recount the experiences of a father and son in various concentration camps and French villages; the terrible conditions they suffer in Argelès-sur-Mer, the confusion of a refugee in Ornans and lives in suspense, the search for help to be reunited once more, anger at the fall of Madrid... the uncertainty of the future.

UK panellists opinion:

According to our Panellists, *Diario a Dos Voces* sounds like a very enjoyable novel about refugees. This novel becomes even more appealing, as neither much blood nor violence beclouds the story. They also mentioned that the author's biography contributes to this interest in the book and they agreed that his other two novels, *Otros hombres* and *Los Inocentes* are worth a look.

Diario a Dos Voces is a work of non-fiction. As the title suggests, it contains two diaries written by a father (José María) and son (Manuel), each providing an account of the same period between the 3rd of February and the 27th of April 1939 (...)

I really enjoyed this book. I found that the juxtaposition of the two narratives complemented each other extremely well, giving a valuable account of what for readers in English is likely to be a forgotten pocket of history. Simple things such as the free use of the term 'concentration camp' without the terrifying associations it would come to have in a just a few years, French hostility and indifference to the sudden influx of socialists, the heavy use of colonial forces (Algerians as well as Senegalese) and the portrayal of the last embers of hope of the Republican side, all make up a fascinating portrayal of the brief period between the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War. I also found Manuel's psychological drama fascinating – his own coming of age, marked not only by being asked to be a schoolteacher but even more significantly to him, by his mother asking him to revise a letter of hers, which she'd never done before, presented in contrast to a group of grown women and their children with nowhere to go, waiting for news that never seems to arrive and the associated pressures that brings. There is also of course an analogy to how we tend to treat refugees today, which doesn't seem to have changed very much.

Having said that, this is a fairly gentle story compared to what we've come to expect from concentration camp memoirs. There's not much sex or violence to get excited about, but I wonder whether that actually makes it more valuable – exposing new aspects to the suffering that comes with war and forced exile. (From the reader report by Kit Maude)

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