



# The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao

by Junot Díaz

Published 2007  
335 pages  
2008 Pulitzer  
Prize for Fiction

## Characters

Oscar de León  
Lola de León  
Belicia Cabral de León  
La Inca  
Abelard Luis Cabral

## Setting

New Jersey  
Dominican Republic

## Point of View

Third person – Yunior  
First person – Lola, Yunior

## Author Info

Junot Díaz was born in the Dominican Republic in 1968 and immigrated to New Jersey in 1974. He earned a BA in English from Rutgers University and an MFA from Cornell University. Díaz has authored and published numerous short stories including his collection, *Drown*. He now teaches creative writing at MIT and is the fiction editor of the *Boston Review*.

## Related Websites

[Junot Díaz](http://www.junotdiaz.com) www.junotdiaz.com

[Interview–Díaz](http://bostonist.com/2007/09/10/bostonist_inter_1.php) http://bostonist.com/2007/09/10/bostonist\_inter\_1.php

[2008 Pulitzer–Fiction](http://www.pulitzer.org/words/2008,Fiction) www.pulitzer.org/words/2008,Fiction

[NYT Review](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/30/books/review/Scott-t.html) http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/30/books/review/Scott-t.html

## Plot Summary

First Line: “They say it came first from Africa, carried in the screams of the enslaved; that it was the death bane of the Tainos, uttered just as one world perished and another began; that it was a demon drawn into Creation through the nightmare door that was cracked open in the Antilles.”

Oscar is an overweight nerd. His mother, a dominicana, immigrated to the U.S. prior to his birth. He, despite his famed Dominican macho blood, cannot find reciprocated love. Tales of his, his sister’s and his mother’s childhoods, steeped in Dominican lore and culture, along with a third-person recounting of Oscar’s attempts at love, illustrate the brief and wondrous life of Oscar Wao.

## Discussion Questions

- What role does the fukú play? Do you think the de León family really was cursed? Is it just a way to explain way their difficulties?
- Members of the de León family have several encounters with the Trujillo regime in the novel. How do these experiences shape the entire family?
- Why does the title of the book refer to “Oscar Wao” rather than “Oscar de León”?

