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## Author Isabelle Allende Addresses Illinois Wesleyan President's Convocation

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September 13, 2002

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### ***Author Isabelle Allende Addresses Illinois Wesleyan President's Convocation***

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. — Acclaimed Latin American novelist Isabel Allende will present the President's Convocation address at Illinois Wesleyan University on Wednesday, September 25, at 7:30 p.m. in Westbrook Auditorium of Presser Hall.

The University will present Allende with an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree.

Since her first book, *The House of the Spirits*, was published in Spain in 1982, Allende's work has received international recognition. Allende's latest novel, *City of Beasts*, will be published in October by HarperCollins as the first in a planned three-book series. This will mark the first time in her career that one of her books is being released simultaneously in Spanish and English in the United States. Allende, 59, writes in Spanish, combining sometimes harsh, realistic, and political fiction with the surreal in the tradition of magical realism.

Born in Peru in 1942, Allende has risen from political exile to international critical acclaim. The niece and goddaughter of former Chilean President Salvador Allende, she fled Chile in 1973 during a bloody coup that killed her uncle. She resettled in Venezuela and spent nine years there as a newspaper journalist.

*The House of Spirits* began as a long letter from Allende to her dying grandfather in Chile and evolved into a three-generational saga of the Trueba family, interwoven with the history of Chile. *The New York Times* hailed it as "possible allegory of the past, present and future of Latin America."

In 1994, she published *Paula*, which she started as a memoir to her 28-year-old, terminally ill daughter and which became a meditation on a mother's life and a daughter's death. *Aphrodite: A Memoir of the Senses* won the 1998 Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize. In addition to her novels, Allende has written children's stories and plays for the Chilean theatre. She has hosted television shows in Santiago and taught literature at the University of Virginia and the University of California-Berkeley.

She has been named author of the year or had one of her works named book of the year in Germany, Chile, Switzerland, and Mexico. Allende herself has received honorary doctorates from Bates College, Dominican College, New York State University, Columbia College, and Lawrence University.