

"...Papá and Mamá told me and Roberto, my older brother, that someday we would take a long trip north, cross *la frontera*, enter California, and leave our poverty behind."

Francisco Jiménez



The Circuit

Francisco Jiménez

University of New Mexico Press 1997

Grade Levels

6-8

Curriculum Area

Language Arts • Social Studies

National Language Arts Standards

NL-ENG.K-12.8

DEVELOPING RESEARCH SKILLS

Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

Objectives

To provide a range of culturally diverse literature meeting students' needs to understand themselves, understand worldviews and other cultures.

To provide meaningful, authentic opportunities to read vocabulary in a variety of contexts; language in a cultural context.

Overview

The dream of this family from rural Jalisco, Mexico is to go north, cross *la frontera* and leave poverty behind. Papá, mamá and two young boys make the long journey and cross the barbed wire barricade without being spotted by *la migra*. In California, they join "the circuit" of migrant workers following the crops to be picked: strawberries, cotton, carrots. The author poignantly weaves the family's customs, beliefs and hopes with the

cruel reality of never ending migrant labor camps from which escape is nearly impossible. The family's culture, rich in stories, love, and endurance nurtures its growth to ten members in the new environment where the dream is nearly lost. The independently told stories lend themselves to being read out loud to a wide range of audiences.

Activity

Discussion questions can be found at several websites, listed below, particularly: 1) the Francisco Jiménez Study Guide; 2) Scholastic; and 3) Tolerance.Org.

Activity

Middle school students who read *The Circuit* and discuss migrant labor, can then pair with elementary school children by sharing two of Jiménez's picture books, based on stories from *The Circuit: La Mariposa* (Houghton Mifflin, 1998) and *The Christmas Gift* (Houghton Mifflin, 2000).

Internet Websites

Francisco Jimenez

<http://www.scu.edu/SCU/Programs/Diversity/rjim.html>

Francisco Jimenez-Biography

<http://www2.scholastic.com/teachers/authors/andbooks/authorstudies/authorhome.jhtml?authorID=207&collateralID=5196&displayName=Biography&requestid=121463>

Francisco Jimenez-Study Guide

<http://www.scu.edu/ethnicstudies/fjimenez/study/thecircuit.cfm>

Scholastic Discussion Guide

http://content.scholastic.com/browse/collateral.jsp?id=669_type=Book_typeId=1207

Tolerance.Org, Southern Poverty Law Center

http://www.tolerance.org/news/article_tol.jsp?id=1024