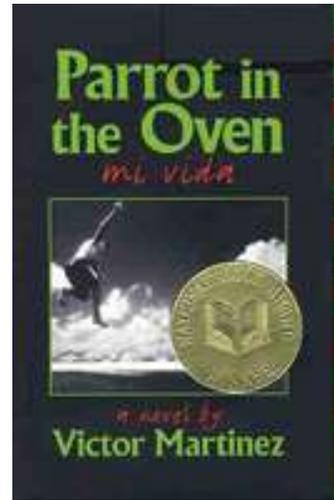


"Perico, or parrot, was what Dad called me sometimes. It was from a Mexican saying about a parrot that complains how hot it is in the shade, while all along he's sitting inside an oven and doesn't know it..."

Victor Martinez



**Parrot in the Oven: Mi Vida**

Victor Martinez  
HarperCollins 1996

**Grade Levels**

9-12

**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 story of Manny Hernández propels readers into the heart of a Mexican American boy "who trusts too much." Using fresh, metaphorical language, Martínez captures Manny's tests of courage and masculinity, and his sense of self and place as he works alongside migrant workers in a chili pepper field, drives through an upperclass neighborhood with his teacher, and tends his grandmother's garden. Yet the central setting for the story is Manny's home, where, amidst his family's love, fear and loyalties he is most able to reflect and begin to

build a future. His vision, relationships, and judgments will enable young adolescents and their teachers to explore the social and personal complexities of finding a place for oneself that is spacious enough to hold the myriad, precise insights and experiences of Latinos in the United States.

**Author's Background**

Victor Martinez grew up in California in a family of twelve children. His parents were migrant laborers from Mexico. Their experiences inspired his writings. Victor Martinez says that his background "makes up the stuff of his work." Mr. Martinez has also worked as a field laborer, welder, truck driver, firefighter, teacher, and office clerk.

Victor Martinez's poems, short stories, and essays have appeared in such prestigious publications as *Si*, *El Andar*, *The Bloomsbury Review*, and the *High Plains Literary Review*.

Victor Martinez lives with his wife in San Francisco. *Parrot in the Oven: mi vida*, winner of the National Book Award the *Américas Award* and the *Pura Belpre Award*, is his first novel.

**See HarperCollins Readers Guide for discussion points.**

<http://www.harperchildrens.com/rgg/rggparrot.htm>

**Urban Dreams Project, Oakland Unified School District** provides an extensive lesson plan menu with activities developed by L. Delaney: Skyline High School

<http://urbandreams.ousd.k12.ca.us/lessonplans/parrot/index.html>

### **Resources**

Martinez, Victor. *Loro En El Horno: Mi Vida*. New York: Lectorum Publications, Inc. 1997.

Martinez, Victor. *Parrot in the Oven: Mi Vida*. New York: Harper Collins. 1996.

### **Internet Websites**

HarperCollins Readers Guide  
<http://www.harperchildrens.com/rgg/rqgparrot.htm>

Parrot in the Oven Lesson Plan  
<http://urbandreams.ousd.k12.ca.us/lessonplans/parrot/>

Farnsworth, Elizabeth. National Book Award-Victor Martinez Online Newshour Transcript #7  
[http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/entertainment/november96/martinez\\_11-7.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/entertainment/november96/martinez_11-7.html)