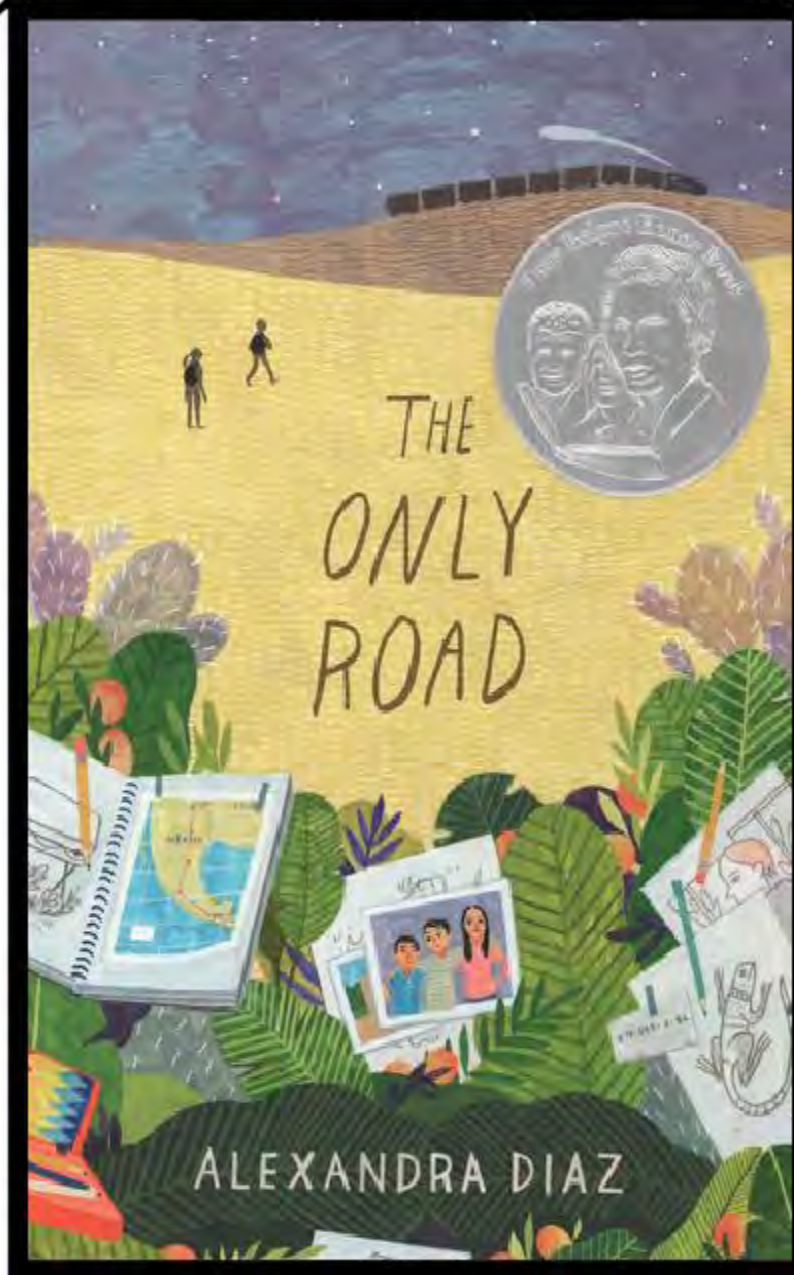


Américas

BOOK EDUCATOR'S GUIDE AWARD



Produced by the Consortium for Latin American Studies Programs
Written by Katrina Dillon



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This educator's guide was written to support using *The Only Road* in middle high school classrooms. Produced by the Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs (CLASP) on behalf of the Américas Award, it was written in 2017 by Katrina Dillon, an educational consultant with the Latin American & Iberian Institute at the University of New Mexico. Editorial support was also provided by UNM graduate assistant Jake Sandler.

ABOUT THE AMÉRICAS AWARD

CLASP founded the Américas Award in 1993 to encourage and commend authors, illustrators and publishers who produce quality children's and young adult books that portray Latin America, the Caribbean, or Latinos in the United States, and to provide teachers with recommendations for classroom use. CLASP offers up to two annual book awards, together with a commended list of titles. For more information concerning the Américas Award, including additional classroom resources, please visit the [CLASP website](#).

The awards are administered by CLASP and coordinated by both Tulane University's Stone Center for Latin American Studies and Vanderbilt University's Center for Latin American Studies. Generous support is also provided by Florida International University, Stanford University, University of Florida, University of New Mexico, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and the University of Utah.

ABOUT CLASP

CLASP's mission is to promote all facets of Latin American studies throughout the world. Its broad range of activities include the encouragement of research activities, funding of professional workshops, advancement of citizen outreach activities, and development of teaching aids for the classroom.

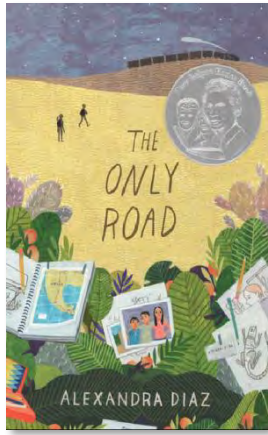


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OVERVIEW



The Only Road

Written by Alexandra Diaz

Published 2016 by Simon & Schuster

ISBN: 9781481457507

THEMES

Youth Immigration, Undocumented Immigration, Guatemala, Central America, Coming of Age, Family, Family Separation, Gender Roles, Gang Violence, Survival

SYNOPSIS

Twelve-year-old Jaime makes the treacherous and life-changing journey from his home in Guatemala to live with his older brother in the United States in this gripping and realistic middle grade novel.

Jaime is sitting on his bed drawing when he hears a scream. Instantly, he knows: Miguel, his cousin and best friend, is dead.

Everyone in Jaime's small town in Guatemala knows someone who has been killed by the Alphas, a powerful gang that's known for violence and drug trafficking. Anyone who refuses to work for them is hurt or killed—like Miguel. With Miguel gone, Jaime fears that he is next. There's only one choice: accompanied by his cousin Ángela, Jaime must flee his home to live with his older brother in New Mexico.

Inspired by true events, *The Only Road* is an individual story of a boy who feels that leaving his home and risking everything is his only chance for a better life. It is a story of fear and bravery, love and loss, strangers becoming family, and one boy's treacherous and life-changing journey.



READING LEVEL

Grades 3 to 7 / Ages 8 to 12

REVIEWS

★ “A deft, harrowing, yet formulaic sketch of a complex subject.” – starred, *Kirkus Reviews*

★ “An important, must-have addition to the growing body of literature with immigrant themes.–Ruth Quiroa, National Louis University, Lisle, IL.” – starred, *School Library Journal*

“*The Only Road* is a very timely and poignant novel, especially with all the talk in Washington about building a southern border wall.” –*Randomly Reading*

AWARDS

- Pura Belpré Honor Book (2017)
- Américas Award Winner (2017)
- International Latino Book Award Finalist
- Bank Street Best Children's Book List
- Action Book Club Selection



APPLICABLE COMMON CORE STANDARDS

K-12 READING

Key Ideas and Details

- Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
- Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Craft and Structure

- Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
- Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.
- Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

- Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.



K-12 WRITING

Text Types and Purposes

- Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Production and Distribution of Writing

- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

- Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.
- Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: ALEXANDRA DIAZ



In describing herself, Diaz writes that all her life she has had “an overactive imagination [which] had her making up stories at an early age and led to getting an MA in Writing for Young People from Bath Spa University. The daughter of Cuban refugees, she is a native Spanish speaker who currently lives in Santa Fe, NM.”

She is the author of several young adult novels which have been well received. Her most recent book, *The Only Road*, was designated as a Pura Belpré Honor Book and an Américas Award Winner in 2017. As the publisher writes,

“Inspired by true events, *The Only Road* is an individual story of a boy who feels that leaving his home and risking everything is his only chance for a better life. It is a story of fear and bravery, love and loss, strangers becoming family, and one boy's treacherous and life-changing journey.” Those familiar with *Enrique's Journey*, will notice similarities between the two books, although the story of Jaime and his cousin, Ángela, travelling northward from Guatemala to escape the violence surrounding his family, is told in such a way as to be appropriate for younger, middle grade readers.

In *The Only Road*, Diaz has accomplished quite a feat – she has taken the harrowing, traumatic experiences of youth migrants and somehow tempered their story for younger readers. In reviewing the book for [Latinxs in Kid Lit](#), Cris Rodes highlights Diaz's decision to write the text for young readers, noting that while its gritty attention to reality may make it difficult for younger readers, they should nonetheless be given the chance to experience this novel. The harsh details of the story are omitted or vaguely referenced. Rodes writes, “with familiar stylistic choices and tropes of children's and middle-grade texts. From its large print and short chapters, to the straightforward, albeit lyrical language, this text remains easily accessible to young readers.”

According to an interview with [KidLit441](#), Diaz acknowledges that the idea for the book came from her editor, writing that “A few years ago there was a huge wave of unaccompanied immigrant children arriving into the U.S. when previously it had been the adults who would immigrate and then send for their families later on. This wave was sparked in part by violent gangs taking over villages in Central America and forcing children into their gangs, or being killed. My editor knew that someone had to write these children's story and I was asked to do it. As the daughter of Cuban refugees, immigration is something that I have grown up with and it close to my heart. Even though my parents' experience was different than what is happening today, at the core the stories are the same—having to leave your home



for a new place because it's the only choice.”

Through her writing, Diaz demonstrates her ability to speak to a sense of shared humanity. *The Only Road* provides a counter story to balance out the apathetic or dismissive news headlines, and instead draws out an empathetic understanding of youth migrants.

IN HER WORDS: THE AUTHOR'S NOTE

“Look out the window because this is the last time you'll see your country.” These were the words my mother heard when she and her family left Cuba in 1960, following the Cuban Revolution and the rise of communism. My mother immigrated to the United States with her parents and her siblings when she was seventeen; my father immigrated at nineteen and had to work hard to save enough money to pay his parents' and siblings' passage. They didn't meet until they got to Miami.

Both of my parents had to leave everything behind: homes, possessions, friends, but mostly family members they thought they'd never see again. In my mother's case, it was the grandmother who had raised her and the aunt and cousins who had lived in the same house she had. They traded everything for an unknown future, a life they had to start new with only two changes of clothes and five dollars in their pockets – the Cuban government didn't allow them to take anything else.

At the time of my parents' immigration, Cubans were allowed to enter the United States legally and were granted residency, then citizenship. Sadly, legal immigration is much harder to come by these days, regardless of which country the person comes from. People desperate to immigrate today face many dangers and expenses, and still run the risk of being sent back home if caught. It's a sad, worldwide conflict that is close to me, one without an easy solution. For me, had my parents not been able to leave Cuba when they did, my life would be very different, and the opportunities available to me in communist Cuba would have been limited.

While Jaime and Ángela are fictitious characters, their story is similar to millions of real immigrants. In recent years there has been a huge wave of children traveling alone from Central America to immigrate illegally into the United States; their parents unable to leave the rest of their family behind. Many are fleeing towns where gangs are terrorizing the citizens and “recruiting” children and teens to join them, or die. To many, leaving is the only choice, the only road. If they stay at home, they will die; if they leave, they might live.



An Educator's Guide to *The Only Road* by Alexandra Diaz

Jaime and Ángela were very lucky on their trip; most people do not have it so easy. Murder, abuse, robbery, drug addiction, loss of limbs, kidnapping, imprisonment, and deportation are all common outcomes. Some give up and return home in worse condition than when they left. Those who continue hold on to the hope of a better life and the prospect of reuniting with family members already there. For so many Latin Americans, whether Cuban or Guatemalan, if there is no family, there is no life.



CLASSROOM RELEVANCE AND APPLICATIONS

Inspired by true events, *The Only Road* tells the story of Jaime and Ángela, two cousins whose families make the incredibly difficult decision to send them unaccompanied on a perilous journey to the United States.

Books like *The Only Road* provide a way to bring a humanizing immigrant narrative into the classroom, and are timely in the face of the increasing severity of the global immigration and refugee crisis. Even as the crisis grows, however, media portrayals remain overly-simplified and one-sided. The familiar rhetoric, with terms such as "alien" or "illegal," remains dehumanizing. For many years, immigrants and their broader communities have been exposed to books in which they did not see themselves accurately represented, with characters and settings rendered through negative stereotypes and superficial depictions. Many of these broad stroke generalizations suggest that the majority of immigrants are violent criminals, drug dealers, or terrorists. By focusing on the emotions and lived experiences of two young immigrants, Diaz's work serves as a powerful counter narrative that better portrays the complexity of undocumented youth immigration.

Jaime and Angela's story humanizes the plight of Central American immigrants, broadening the discussion of U.S. immigration beyond Mexico. In the classroom, it could serve as a catalyst for an in-depth study of immigration. Embedded within the story is an introduction to the push-pull factors of immigration with a focus on the interaction between the US and Central American countries. Through its contextualized plot, readers can begin to understand why the U.S. has seen such a dramatic increase in the numbers of unaccompanied and undocumented youth.

Some may say that it is too gritty for a middle grade novel, while others may argue that it sugar coats an experience that is often dangerous, violent, and traumatic. Diaz acknowledges this in the Author's Note by writing, "Jaime and Angela are very lucky on their trip; most people do not have it that easy" (p. 281). What the book does offer is an age-appropriate resource that introduces a complex subject to younger, middle grade readers. While the cousins' happy ending may not be the reality of many youth immigrants, the books' softening of typical tragic experiences makes it easier to implement in younger classrooms. It is essential that any educator reflect on the life history and background of their class before implementing a book such as this that deals with themes of immigration. For those students who are immigrants themselves, or whose family has immigrated, such a book could be stressful or traumatic to engage with in a group or classroom setting.



An Educator's Guide to *The Only Road* by Alexandra Diaz

The End Matter is an excellent resource, providing more background material and information for further reading and research. Included are additional reading lists for teachers and students. The depth of the End Matter material serves as a model for students to see the role of primary source research in historical fiction writing.

Beyond its usefulness in the classroom, *The Only Road* is also an important read for educators. It is a challenge to the narrative of cultural deficit theory that can easily permeate discussions about academic achievement among students of color, particularly immigrant and refugee youth. In a time when grit and resilience have become popular buzzwords, this book reminds us to recognize the agency, strength, and resilience that undocumented immigrants must practice in order to survive.

While immigrant narratives have an important place and significance in the classroom, it is important to remind ourselves that should not be the only example of Latinx experiences presented in the classroom. The Latinx experience is not limited to immigration, poverty, gang violence, or broken families, and it is essential that the literature we share with our students also include positive and healthy experiences so that our students can learn from a wide variety of histories, stories, and lived realities.



LESSON PLANS AND ACTIVITIES

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Before reading the book with students, you may want to introduce some of the important themes, activate any prior knowledge, and generate interest and anticipation through the following activities and/or discussion questions:

ACTIVITY 1: DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

The Only Road engages with a number of serious themes surrounding the topic of immigration. Educators must consider the backgrounds and experiences of the students they work with when preparing to use such a novel. As evident through media representations and discussions of immigration, this can be a highly charged and emotional topic. Discussion guidelines should be set before beginning the novel. Of great importance is the language that is used to discuss the topic of immigration. Degrading terms such as “alien,” “illegal,” and “deportable” are commonly used, but are inappropriate in a space that is meant to be safe for all students. For more on this, consider reading the following articles, some of which may be useful resources for classroom discussion.

- “[Discussing Sensitive Topics in the Classroom](#)” from Facing History and Ourselves.
- Rethinking Schools: [800,000 Reasons to Teach About DACA](#)
- United We Dream: [#HeretoStay Toolkit for K-12 and Higher Education Educators and Schools](#)
- Rethinking Schools: [Editorial: Defending Immigrant Students in the Street and in Our Classrooms](#)
- Anti-Defamation League (ADL): [What is the DREAM Act and Who are the DREAMers?](#)
- Teaching Tolerance: [An Educator's Guide to the Immigration Debate](#) and other [lesson plans on immigration](#)
- National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE): [Talking Immigration in the Classroom and other lesson plans](#)
- For more on the history of migration from Central America visit Teaching For Changes resources on [Teaching the Truth about Youth Migration from Central America](#)



ACTIVITY 2: OBSERVATION CHARTS

Observation charts are one way to introduce the theme of immigration and begin a classroom discussion.

Preparation:

Find images through an internet search engine, magazines, or newspapers that represent migration and/or immigration that will be thought-provoking and interesting to students. Choosing a variety of images that depict the numerous historical waves of immigration is suggested. Often times, students are only familiar with the contemporary dominant narrative of immigration, the images used here are one way to begin to counter that and broaden their understanding of the history of immigration to the U.S.

Print one copy of each image. Glue each image to the top of a large piece of butcher paper or poster board to create the observation charts. Write the following questions somewhere in the educational space where they can be viewed by all students: “What do you see?” “What do you think is happening?” “How does this image make you feel?”

Process:

Explain to the students that they are going to be working in small groups. Each group will rotate around the room to view and discuss each image. One person will be the secretary at each table. When looking at an image, students will spend at least one minute silently reflecting on what they see and the questions “What do you see?” “What do you think is happening?” “How does this image make you feel?” Then, students will discuss their thoughts in the small group. The secretary will record their reflections and answers to the questions on the observation chart. Sticky notes can also be used to record the group’s thoughts. Explain to students that they will have a set amount of time at each image. When time is up, the teacher will give a signal and each group will move to the next image.

Divide students into small groups. Place an image and marker at various tables or stations in the classroom. Direct each group to the table or station where they will begin. Begin the activity.

Continue rotating groups through the images until each group has seen each image.

Hang up all of the observation charts with comments. As a whole group, discuss each image, giving students time to share and respond to what they posted. Keep the charts posted throughout the reading and discussion of *The Only Road*. Allow students to revisit them, and discuss them as they think more about what the images represent.



ACTIVITY 3: THINK, PAIR, SHARE: MIGRANTS, IMMIGRANTS, AND IMMIGRATION

This activity allows you both assess where students are in their thinking about the topic of immigration and access prior knowledge on the topic.

Process:

1. Write the words “immigrant,” “migrant,” and “immigration” on three separate large pieces of butcher paper. Hang the papers where they can be seen by the whole class.
2. Read each work out loud to the class. Ask students to think about the words.
3. What do they think of when they hear the three words?
4. What pictures or images come to mind?
5. What feelings are provoked?
6. What do they associate with these words?
7. Ask students to write down their thoughts about these questions.
8. Once students have written their thoughts down, have them share at least one of their thoughts with a partner.
9. Ask for volunteers to share their thoughts with the class. As they share, write down their response on the appropriate butcher paper poster.
10. Once the class has read *The Only Road*, return to the posters. Ask students if they would add anything new to the posters now that they’ve read the book. How did their thoughts compare to what was presented in the novel?

ACTIVITY 4: REVIEW OF GENRE

While reviewing the book’s fiction genre with students, note that the book is inspired by true incidents. Depending upon the age of students, use some of the non-fiction resources in the back matter of the book to introduce students to the topic of unaccompanied youth immigrating to the U.S. As students read the novel, note which aspects of the book appear to be non-fictional and which are fictional. Sonia Nazario’s non-fiction account of youth immigration in *Enrique’s Journey* is an excellent complementary resource. If time allows, this would be an excellent follow-up study to *The Only Road*. Nazario’s website for *Enrique’s Journey* has numerous useful resources and can be found at <http://enriquesjourney.com/>. Please note, there are two versions of this book, one is specifically for Young Readers.



ACTIVITY 5: GEOGRAPHIC CONNECTIONS

Ángela and Jaime travel through a number of different cities and countries during their journey. At the beginning of the book, mark on a map where the two cousins begin their trip. As they move through Central America and into the United States, mark their progress on the map. At the end, calculate how far the two teenagers traveled and find a compatible trip from students' hometown to a familiar or known location.



GUIDED READING QUESTIONS

Chapter One | Pages 1- 10

- What event does Jaime flash back to in the opening of chapter one? (p. 2)
- How had Pulguita changed in the last year? (p. 3)
- Make a prediction: What do you think has happened that has upset Mami and Papa so much? (p.1-5)
- Who are the Alphas? What did they do to Miguel? (p. 6-8)
- In what country does the story take place? Locate this on a map. (p. 8)
- What kind of presence does the gang have in Jaime's village? How do they interact with the villagers? (p. 8)
- What position is Jaime in now? (p. 9)

Chapter Two | 11- 20

- What did the police rule Miguel's death? What does this demonstrate about law enforcement in the village? (p. 12)
- Why is Miguel's mother not permitted to attend the funeral? (p. 14)
- What did the Alphas give to Ángela? What does it say? (p. 17)
- What seems to be the only solution for saving Ángela and Jaime from the Alphas? (p. 20)

Chapter Three | Pages 21- 32

- What are some of the dangers in risking the journey to the U.S.? (p. 21-22)
- Where does Tia Rosario hide the money for the Ángela and Jaime? (p. 26-27)
- How will Jaime and Ángela travel out of the village? (p. 31-32)

Chapter Four | 33 - 42

- What does Pancho do to ease his way through the border checkpoint at Mexico? (p. 36-37)
- How do Jaime and Ángela decide to continue their journey? What warning does Pancho give them? (p. 39-41)

Chapter Five | Pages 43 - 52

- Where do Jaime and Ángela spend the day while waiting for the afternoon train? (p. 44-52)
- What is the plan for traveling to the U.S.? (p. 49)
- Who is Benito Juarez? (p. 50) What is his reputation? (p. 51)
- Does it seem likely that Ángela and Jaime will ever return to Guatemala? (p. 52)

Chapter Six | Pages 53-71

- What does the older Mayan woman on the bus want Jaime to do? What does she give him in return? (p. 55-57)



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- What happens at the third checkpoint stop? How would you describe the character of the first guard who boards the bus? Explain citing examples from the text. (p. 60-64)
- What happens when the second guard boards the bus? How does Ángela mislead the guard to believe that they are from Mexico? (p. 68-71)

Chapter Seven | Pages 72 – 78

- What sentiment does the graffiti next to the bus stop communicate? (p. 73)
- What makes Jaime realize that he's going to have to grow up quickly in order to make it the U.S.? (p. 74)
- Where do Jaime and Ángela find the address to the church? (p. 75)
- Describe Padre Kevin. How is he a surprise to Jaime? (p. 77-78)

Chapter Eight | Pages 79 - 97

- What does Jaime realize about the numbers of people trying to immigrate to the U.S.? (p. 80)
- How does the girl convince Jaime and Ángela to eat the food the church is serving? (p. 82)
- Describe the people at the church. What do they all seem to have in common? (p. 83-84)
- How does Padre Kevin respond to the words “El Gordo”? What can you infer from his response? Explain. (p. 86-87)
- Why does the tallest boy look familiar to Jaime? (p. 89-90)
- What are the stories of the three boys? Why are they making the journey to the U.S.? (p. 91-92)
- What does Xavi reveal about the woman who was pulled off the bus? (p. 95-96)
- What is your first impression of Xavi? Support your answer with examples from the text. (p. 89-97)

Chapter Nine | Pages 98 - 108

- Why is the church safe from la migra and gangs? (p. 98)
- What does Xavi find in the bushes? What does he want to do?
- How do they attempt to save the dog? (p. 104-107)
- What do they name the dog? What does it represent? (p. 107-108)

Chapter Ten | Pages 109 - 117

- Describe El Gordo. (p. 110-114)
- What causes Jaime to feel guilty? (p. 115-117)

Chapter Eleven | Pages 118 – 127

- What advice do the veteran train riders give as the group awaits the arrival of the train? (p. 118-119)
- How are Rafa, Xavi, and Joaquín going to continue their journey? (p. 119-122)



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- How does Ángela treat the three boys? What is Jaime's explanation for why Ángela interacts with them in this way? (p. 124)

Chapter Twelve | Pages 128 - 138

- What is the mood amongst the travelers using El Gordo to cross the border? (p. 128-129)
- Describe Jaime and Ángela's experience getting from the church to the train car. (p. 132-138)

Chapter Thirteen | Pages 139 - 151

- What creates panic amongst the travelers once they make it onto the train car? (p.139-140)
- Describe what it is like travelling in the train car. (p. 139-151)
- What do the travelers begin to fear the longer they're in the train car? (p. 146-151)
- Imagine that you are on the train, locked into the car. Describe your thoughts and feelings.

Chapter Fourteen | Pages 152 - 161

- Who finally opens the train car door? (p. 155-156)
- Why do you think the migra officers let them go? Jaime believes that they're being merciful. Do you agree? Why or why not? (p. 156-157)
- What do Jaime and Ángela find at the safe house? (p. 158-159)
- Where do Jaime and Ángela spend the night? (p. 160-161)

Chapter Fifteen | Pages 162 – 170

- What wakes Jaime? Why is this a good sign? (p. 162)
- What information does the group get from the man under the bridge? How does this change their travel plans? (p. 166-169)
- How did the man from under the bridge lose his legs? (p. 170)

Chapter Sixteen | Pages 171 – 184

- What does the group do to get more supplies for the next train trip? How do they fare? (p. 171-174)
- Why did Rafa steal the cigarettes? What does he plan to do with them? (p. 175-177)
- What did Rafa, Xavi, and Joaquín experience on the train? How did they survive the gangs and la migra? (p. 178-180)
- What ethical dilemma is Xavi facing on this journey? (p. 180-181) What do you think you would do if you were Xavi? Explain.
- Who wakes the group? What happens to Rafa? Make a prediction: do you think the group will ever see Rafa again? (p. 181-184)



POST-READING ACTIVITIES

Immigration is a complex subject, and teaching about it can be equally complicated. There are so many different ways one can approach a unit on immigration. The context in which one is teaching is of paramount importance. Not only do we need to consider the age/grade level of the students, but also students' own personal backgrounds and family histories. As with any lesson, it's important to consider the needs of your students and plan accordingly. With this in mind, we've provided a variety of extension activity ideas and resources below that can be used in conjunction with *The Only Road*.

LITERACY CONNECTIONS

To expand the literacy connections made when using *The Only Road*, consider including the readings discussed below.

First Crossing: A Short Story

In "First Crossing" Pam Muñoz Ryan tells the story of a young boy who crosses the U.S. Mexico along with his father using the help of a coyote. The short story was first published in the book *First Crossing: Stories About Teen Immigrants* (Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2004). It is also available in the Rethinking Schools publication *The Line Between Us: Teaching About the Border and Mexican Immigration* (Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools, 2006).

Process:

- Read "First Crossing" either individually, in pairs, or as a whole-class read aloud.
- Compare Marcos' experience with that of Ángela and Jaime. Have students discuss any similarities and differences in the two stories.
- Ask students to imagine that they are Marcos. Then, have students write a journal entry about what it was like to cross the border. They should include all of the things that they observed, thought and felt during the experience.
- As an alternative, use this selection as a read aloud. Before beginning, provide each student with a piece of white paper. Ask them to fold it in half and then in half again, so that they have four squares on each side. Explain that you are going to read a story out loud to them. At different points during the reading you are going to stop. When you stop, the students are going to draw a picture of an image they've imagined based on what you've read in one of the squares. Before beginning the activity, choose up to eight stopping points. This can be a useful way to help students really engage with the story, thinking about what it would feel like to be in Marcos' position.



“Inside Out”: A Chapter from The Circuit

In *The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), Francisco Jiménez tells the story of his own childhood as his family left Mexico to work in California as migrant farm workers. If time permits, the novel in its entirety would be an excellent complementary read to *The Only Road*. A less time consuming extension would be to just use one chapter of Jiménez's memoir. In the chapter “Inside Out,” Jiménez describes his experiences as a student his first year in the U.S. This chapter is a great way to move students beyond the end of *The Only Road*, and to think about what Ángela and Jaime's experience will be like in New Mexico.

There are many other freely available guides that are related to this novel. Below is one example:

- **Discussion Questions for The Circuit**, a guide produced by K. Hanson of LanguageTeach Technologies in Fall 2009

About Francisco Jiménez

To contextualize Jiménez's writing, you might read and/or share his biography with the students. We reprint it here with his permission:

Author and educator, Francisco Jiménez emigrated with his family from Tlaquepaque, Mexico to California and as a child worked alongside his parents in the fields of California. He received his BA from Santa Clara University and an MA and Ph.D. in Latin American literature from Columbia University under a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship. He has served on various professional boards and commissions, including the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (10 years, two as chair), California Council for the Humanities, Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities (WASC), Santa Clara University Board of Trustees and the Far West Lab for Educational Research and Development.

Dr. Jiménez's autobiographical books *The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child* (Cajas de cartón, Spanish edition), *Breaking Through* (Senderos fronterizos, Spanish edition), *Reaching Out* (Más allá de mí, Spanish edition), *La Mariposa*, and *The Christmas Gift/El regalo de Navidad* have won several national literary awards, including the Américas Book Award, the Pura Belpré Honor Book Award, the Tomás Rivera Book Award, the Boston Globe-Horn Book Award, Reading the World Award, and the Carter C. Woodson National Book Award. His books have been published in Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Italian and Spanish. In addition, he has published



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and edited several books on Mexican and Mexican American literature, and his stories have been reprinted in over 100 textbooks and anthologies of literature. His latest work, *Taking Hold: From Migrant Childhood to Columbia University* was published in April of 2015 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

He was selected the 2002 U.S. Professor of the Year by CASE and Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. He was awarded an honorary degree from De Anza College and a doctorate of Humane Letters, honoris causa, from the University of San Francisco. He is currently the Fay Boyle Professor in the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at Santa Clara University.

Process:

- Read the chapter "Inside Out" with students.
- After reading, have students describe what Francisco's experience in school was like. Ask them to compare and contrast it with their own.
- If not already used as an extended response question, ask students to discuss the following and then write their own individual response:
- Imagine that Jaime and Ángela enroll in your school. How would they be treated at your school or in your community? What things may be difficult for them to adapt to? What could you do to make the transition easier?
- How do you think the two cousins would feel their first month in your class, in a new school, and in a new country?



“NAU ENGLISH PROFESSOR MONICA BROWN WEIGHS IN ON THE POWER OF DEHUMANIZING LANGUAGE”: AN ARTICLE FROM KNAU ARIZONA PUBLIC RADIO

In this article, English professor and author Monica Brown discusses the use of language, specifically the word ‘deportable’ to describe human beings. The article is available at: <http://www.knau.org/post/nau-english-professor-monica-brown-weighs-power-dehumanizing-language>

Process:

- Read or listen to the article as a class.
- Discuss Brown’s argument on the word “deportable.” Ask students if they have heard this used before in discussions around immigration. As a class brainstorm other problematic words used to describe people who immigrate to the U.S.
- Individually, in small groups, or as a class write a persuasive essay explaining why language such as ‘deportable,’ ‘illegal,’ or ‘alien’ shouldn’t be used in discussions on immigration.



RETHINKING THE BORDER

The Line Between Us: Teaching About the Border and Mexican Immigration (Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools, 2006)

Published by Rethinking Schools, *The Line Between Us* explores the history of U.S-Mexican relations and the roots of Mexican immigration, all in the context of the global economy. And it shows how teachers can help students understand the immigrant experience and the drama of border life. But *The Line Between Us* is about more than Mexican immigration and border issues. It's about imaginative and creative teaching that gets students to care about the world. Using role plays, stories, poetry, improvisations, simulations and video, veteran teacher Bill Bigelow demonstrates how to combine lively teaching with critical analysis. *The Line Between Us* is a book for teachers, adult educators, community organizers and anyone who hopes to teach, and learn, about these important issues.

Many of the lesson plans and resources included in this publication provide excellent ways in which to expand the immigration discussions that can begin with *Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote*. Section 1: "Teaching about 'Them' and 'Us,'" Section 4: "First Crossing," and Section 5: "Life on the Border" may be of particular interest for integrating into a novel study of *The Only Road*.



BORDERS, BOUNDARIES, AND BALLADS

This activity is inspired by and based on the National Geographic Boundaries XPeditions Activity “[Boundary Ballads](#)”. The following shares the premise of the activity:

“It all probably happened in the guy’s head, but an editor here at National Geographic claims that late one night the boundaries of the world started singing. It began, he says, when he pulled a geography book off the shelf and read its [definition of boundary](#). “The term ‘boundary’ most commonly refers to an imaginary line separating one country from another....”

“Imaginary?!” yelled furious voices that seemed to be trapped between pages of the National Geographic Atlas of the World. “You try keeping two superpowers apart and see just how ‘imaginary’ you feel!” Then came...songs. Weird songs. From the Rio Grande to the Red Sea, from the Pyrenees to the 49th parallel—various geographic features crooned about what it means to be a boundary. The startled guy managed to write a few of them down. Can you help identify the singers of these [boundary ballads](#)?”

Share the premise from above with students. Then, read some of the examples of the provided boundary ballads and see if students can identify the correct [boundary/border](#).

1. As a class, do an internet search for images of the U.S.-Mexico border. Take notes on the geographical characteristics and any other parts of the images that stand out. Next, have students imagine that they are attempting to cross the border. Make a list of the characteristics of the border that they notice. Have students think back to the descriptions provided in *Pancho Rabbit and Coyote*. Last, have students imagine that they are a member of border patrol. Make a list of the characteristics that a patroller would notice.
2. As a class, in small groups or individually have students write a boundary ballad for the U.S.-Mexico border. They can choose to do this from the point of view of the geographical land of the area (as many of the examples do), a migrant, or a border patrol.
3. The premise of the National Geographic lesson suggests the idea that borders and boundaries are just imaginary. Discuss this idea with students. Then, divide students into two groups. Tell them that they are going to debate the question “Should we eliminate all borders?” Assign a position to each group and provide time for them to prepare their argument. Once each group is ready, conduct the debate.



INTERROGATING THE MYTHS AND REALITIES OF IMMIGRATION - FEATURED RESOURCES

Teaching Tolerance: Immigration Myths

In this [lesson created by Teaching Tolerance](#) students will think through 6 of the more common myths about immigration that continue to be perpetuated.

The following from the lesson plan's description explains the objective of the lesson: "A vast debate swirls around the topic of immigration to the United States. Unfortunately, the frustration many have with our immigration system has also caused some people to stereotype all immigrant populations. This lesson helps break stereotypes by getting to the source of the prejudices. But where do stereotypes come from? This is the question students will explore in the following activities. The focus here is on facing some common misconceptions about immigrants as a group. By connecting stereotypes to myths and then dispelling those myths, students will confront the lies that are the foundation of bigotry toward immigrants."

Students work in small groups rotating through six different workstations. This lesson provides a great follow-up to *The Only Road*, as it encourages students to continue to think critically about many of the common stereotypes about immigrants and immigration.

PBS/Independent Lens: Immigration Myths and Realities

As part of [The New Americans Series](#), Independent Lens has created a quiz to draw attention to many of the common misperceptions around immigration and its effects on American society. The quiz is available online for free through the PBS/Independent Lens website.

1. Have students take the quiz either individually or as a class.
2. Discuss the questions and answers and how these draw attention to many misperceptions. What new information was learned from taking the quiz? Were any of the answers a surprise?

The Undocumented

["The Undocumented"](#) is a PBS documentary with an accompanying free video game (see following entry). Marcos Hernandez lives and works in Chicago. He came to the United States from Mexico, after a



life-threatening border crossing through the Sonora Desert in southern Arizona. Each month, he sends money to his mother in Mexico City to buy medicine for his brother, Gustavo, who needs a kidney transplant. *The Undocumented*, by acclaimed filmmaker Marco Williams, is Marcos's story—as well as the story of countless other migrants. Chronicling Arizona's deadliest summer months, award-winning documentary and fiction film director Marco Williams (Banished, Two Towns of Jasper, In Search of Our Fathers) weaves Marcos's search with the efforts of humanitarians and Border Patrol agents who are fighting to prevent migrant deaths, the medical investigators and Mexican Consulate workers who are trying to identify dead border crossers, and Mexican families who are struggling to accept the loss of a loved one. In true cinéma vérité style, *The Undocumented* by Marco Williams reveals the ongoing impact of immigration laws and economic policies on the very people who continue to be affected by them. By going beyond politics, the film also tells a story that is deeply personal.

The Migrant Trail

The Migrant Trail is a video game that introduces players to the hardships and perils of crossing the Sonora Desert. Players have the chance to play as both migrants crossing the desert from Mexico to the United States and as U.S. Border Patrol agents patrolling the desert. As migrants, players are introduced to the stories of the people willing to risk their lives crossing the unforgiving Sonoran desert to reach America. By playing as Border Patrol agents, players see that the job goes beyond simply capturing migrants to helping save lives and providing closure for families who lost loved ones in the desert. Through the use of real-time resource management and by integrating characters, stories, and visuals from the film, *The Undocumented*, with intense gameplay choices, *The Migrant Trail* gives players another way to experience and understand the human toll of our border policies.

Understanding Migration

Created by The University of Texas at Austin's international outreach consortium, Hemispheres, **Understanding Migration** was conceived in response to numerous requests from educators and curriculum specialists concerning the presentation and discussion of issues related to human migration in the social studies classroom. What are the reasons that large groups of people have found themselves moving from place to place? What effects does this movement have? And most importantly, how can such a fluid and nebulous concept be presented in a classroom in an easy-to-follow manner with clear lesson objectives and outcomes? Regional case studies were chosen to address these, and other, essential questions. Where possible, primary source documents were used to present the information in each case study.



The History of Immigration to the U.S.

Numerous Social Studies and English Language Arts textbooks discuss the history of immigration to the U.S. These texts can be the beginning of a class-wide study that analyzes the historical waves of immigration up through contemporary immigration trends. It may be helpful to begin with a short video that traces the history of immigration. YouTube has numerous videos available, one example is *The Daily Conversation's* The Immigration History of the U.S. available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IBJcqxi7kas>. Once students have a basic understanding of this history, they can begin to compare and contrast the different periods: the push/pull factors, the political commentary and discourse, and how these different waves of immigrants were received by the larger public.

COMPLEMENTARY LESSON PLANS AND RESOURCES

- [Guide to Teaching *The Only Road*](#) by Simon & Schuster
- [Reading Group Guide to *The Only Road*](#) by Teacher Vision
- [Teacher's Guide to *The Only Road*](#) by Sarah Coleman



COMPLEMENTARY LITERATURE AND FILM

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

**A Movie in My Pillow/ Una película en mi almohada* written by Jorge Argueta and illustrated by Elizabeth Gómez. Lee and Low Books, 2007.

A young boy with two homelands and a delightful sense of wonder comes to life in Jorge Argueta's first collection of poems for children. Young Jorgito lives in San Francisco's Mission District, but he hasn't forgotten his native El Salvador. He recalls the volcanoes, the tasty cornmeal pupusas, and his grandmother's stories. As he changes from timid newcomer to seasoned city dweller, Jorgito's memories and new adventures form a patchwork of dreams -- the movie in his pillow -- that is perfectly suited to his new bicultural identity. (Grades Kindergarten and up)

Amelia's Road written by Linda Jacobs Altman and illustrated by Enrique O. Sanchez. Lee and Low Books, 1995.

Amelia Luisa Martinez hates roads. Los caminos, the roads, take her migrant worker family to fields where they labor all day, to schools where no one knows Amelia's name, and to bleak cabins that are not home. Then one day, Amelia discovers an "accidental road." At its end she finds an amazing old tree reminiscent of the one in her dreams. Its stately sense of permanence inspires her to put her own roots down in a very special way. The richly colored illustrations bring to life the landscape of California's Central Valley farmland. *Amelia's Road* is an inspirational tale about the importance of home. (Grades Kindergarten and up)

Classroom Resources: [Classroom Guide for Amelia's Road](#) by Lee & Low Books

First Day in Grapes written by L. King Perez and illustrated by Robert Casilla. Lee and Low Books, 2002.

All year long Chico and his family move up and down the state of California picking fruits and vegetables. Every September they pick grapes and Chico starts at a new school again. Often other children pick on him — maybe because he is always new or maybe because he speaks Spanish sometimes. Chico's first day in third grade turns out to be different. When the fourth-grade bullies confront Chico in the lunchroom, he responds wisely with strengths of his own. Readers of all backgrounds will relate to Chico's bravery and the creative way he finds to resolve conflict. This story of personal triumph is a testament to the inner strength in all of us. (Grades Kindergarten and up)

Classroom Resources: [Teacher's Guide for First Day in Grapes](#) produced by Lee & Low Books.



**Friends from the Other Side/Amigos del otro lado* written by Gloria E. Anzaldúa and illustrated by Consuelo Mendez. Children's Book Press, 1997.

Having crossed the Rio Grande into Texas with his mother in search of a new life, Joaquín receives help and friendship from Prietita, a brave young Mexican American girl. Though her friends' first reaction on seeing Joaquín is hostility, Prietita warns them off and befriends him, planning to take him to the herb woman for treatment for the sores he hides under long sleeves. A visit from the Border Patrol hastens the event; the herb woman hides Joaquín and his mother until the danger is past, then shows Prietita how to help her new friend. An authentic portrayal; an excellent basis for discussion of an important issue. (Grades Kindergarten and up)

**From North to South/ Del norte al sur* written by René Colato Laínez and illustrated by Joe Cepeda. Lee and Low Books, 2014.

Near the border, the cars began to move very slowly. "Papá, go fast. I want to see Mamá," I said. José loves helping Mamá in the garden outside their home in California. But when Mamá is sent back to Mexico for not having proper papers, José and his Papá face an uncertain future. What will it be like to visit Mamá in Tijuana? When will Mamá be able to come home? Award-winning children's book author René Colato Laínez tackles the difficult and timely subject of family separation with exquisite tenderness. René is donating a portion of his royalties to El Centro Madre Assunta, a refuge for women and children who are waiting to be reunited with their families up north. Joe Cepeda's bright and engaging illustrations bring this story of hope to vivid life. (Grades 1 and up).

Home at Last written by Susan Middleton Elya and illustrated by Felipe Davalos. Lee and Low Books, 2006.

Ana Patino is adjusting well to her new life in the United States, but her mother is having a difficult time because she doesn't speak English. When Ana's baby brother falls ill, Mama tries to get help, but no one can understand her. Now convinced of the need to learn the native language, Mama agrees to take English lessons. As her knowledge of the English language grows, so does her sense of confidence and belonging. Susan Middleton Elya's sympathetic tale of a mother-daughter bond and overcoming adversity is brought to life by the vivid illustrations of Felipe Davalos. (Grades Kindergarten and up)

Classroom Resources: [Teacher's Guide for Home at Last](#) produced by Lee & Low Books



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I am Rene, the Boy/Soy René, el niño written by René Colato Laínez and illustrated by Fabiola Graullera Ramírez. Piñata Books, 2005.

When Rene learns that in the United States his name is also a girl's name, he does some research and relates the name's meaning and letters to his homeland of El Salvador and the things that make him special. Complimented by playful illustrations, this bilingual picture book follows Colato Laínez's own experiences, when he was faced with a challenge to his own name as a child. This witty story about a young boy's odyssey to find out the meaning of his name will challenge readers aged 3 to 7 to chart cross-cultural differences by gaining an understanding about themselves and the people around them. (Grades Kindergarten and up)

My Diary from Here to There / Mi diario de aqui hasta allá written by Amada Irma Pérez and illustrated by Maya Christina Gonzalez. Lee and Low Books, 2009. 32 pages. ISBN 9780892392308

One night, young Amada overhears her parents whisper of moving from Mexico to the other side of the border—to Los Angeles, where greater opportunity awaits. As she and her family make their journey north, Amada records her fears, hopes, and dreams for their lives in the United States in her diary. How can she leave her best friend behind? What if she can't learn English? What if her family never returns to Mexico? From Juárez to Mexicali to Tijuana to Los Angeles, Amada learns that with her family's love and her belief in herself, she can make any journey and weather any change—here, there, anywhere. (Grades Kindergarten and up)

**Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote: A Migrant's Tale* written and illustrated by Duncan Tonatiuh. Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2013. ISBN 9781419705830

Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote opens with festive scenes of the Rabbit family preparing for Papá Rabbit's homecoming. Musicians, family and friends gather to welcome home Papá who had traveled north to work in the carrot and lettuce fields, years before. Plates of mole, rice and beans are prepared in anticipation of his arrival and the house is strung with papel picado. When Papá Rabbit doesn't arrive, his son Pancho decides to sneak away in the dark of the night to find him. The reader follows the young rabbit as he travels north with the aid of a sneaky coyote by train, by river, by tunnel, and by desert. Tonatiuh bravely presents the controversial issue of illegal immigration through the lens of a children's fable. Inspired by 14th century Mixtec codices and traditional folklore, the author / illustrator presents the sometimes startling realities of many modern day immigrants in a form which can be appreciated by both young and old alike. (Grades Kindergarten and up)



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Classroom Resources: [Educator's Guide for Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote: A Migrant's Tale](#)
written by Katrina Dillon on behalf of CLASP

The Dream on Blanca's Wall: Poems in English and Spanish/El sueño pegado en la pared de Blanca: poemas en Inglés y Español written by Jane Medina and illustrated by Robert Casilla. Wordsong, 2004.

Sixth-grader Blanca dreams of being a teacher, but even at such a young age she knows obstacles block her way: Her family is poor, her Mexican-born parents speak little English, and her underachieving brother and friends chide her academic endeavors. Yet the encouragement of her classroom teacher--and a portrait that she drew in second grade of herself standing in front of a blackboard--inspires her to reach higher. Jane Medina's carefully crafted poems, in both English and Spanish, tell the story of Blanca: the barrio she knows, the people she cares for, and the young Latina's struggle for empowerment and self-esteem. (Grades Kindergarten and up)

**The Storyteller's Candle/ La velita de los cuentos* written by Lucía González and illustrated by Lulu Delacre. Lee and Low Books, 2008.

The winter of 1929 feels especially cold to cousins Hildamar and Santiago—they arrived in New York City from sunny Puerto Rico only months before. Their island home feels very far away indeed, especially with Three Kings' Day rapidly approaching. But then a magical thing happened. A visitor appears in their class, a gifted storyteller and librarian by the name of Pura Belpré. She opens the children's eyes to the public library and its potential to be the living, breathing heart of the community. The library, after all, belongs to everyone—whether you speak Spanish, English, or both. The award-winning team of Lucía González and Lulu Delacre have crafted an homage to Pura Belpré, New York City's first Latina librarian. Through her vision and dedication, the warmth of Puerto Rico came to the island of Manhattan in a most unexpected way. (Grades Kindergarten and up)

Classroom Resources: [Classroom Guide for The Storyteller's Candle](#) produced by Lee & Low Books

The Upside Down Boy/El niño de cabeza written by Juan Felipe Herrera and illustrated by Elizabeth Gomez. Lee and Low Books, 2006.

The Upside Down Boy is award-winning poet Juan Felipe Herrera's engaging memoir of the year his migrant family settled down so that he could go to school for the first time. Juanito is bewildered by the new school, and he misses the warmth of country life. Everything he does feels upside down. He eats lunch when it's recess; he goes out to play when it's time for lunch; and his tongue feels like a rock when he tries to speak English. But a sensitive teacher and loving family



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help him to find his voice and make a place for himself in this new world through poetry, art, and music. Juan Felipe Herrera's playful language and the colorful, magical art of Elizabeth Gómez capture the universal experience of children entering a new school feeling like strangers in a world that seems upside down-at first. (Grades Kindergarten and up)

Waiting for Papa/Esperando a Papa written by René Colato Laínez and illustrated by Anthony Accardo. Piñata Books, 2004.

In this heartwarming bilingual picture book about a boy's reunion with his father, readers discover a young character whose vision and tenacity allow him to accomplish a feat that once seemed nearly impossible. Through the character's memories of El Salvador and his classroom experiences, the reader also gains insight into the tense political ramifications of war in a country and how that war impacts its survivors. (Grades Kindergarten and up)

When This World Was New written by D. H. Figueredo and illustrated by Enrique O. Sanchez. Lee and Low Books, 1999.

It was Danilito's first day in America. He and his parents have just made a long, exhausting move from the Caribbean to New York City. The ocean and the palm trees he is familiar with are now replaced by tall buildings and crowded streets. Danilito is scared. He has heard that some Americans are not friendly to foreigners. In addition, he does not speak any English. His parents have worries, too. They will have to find new jobs, a new home, and adjust to the new surroundings. This was going to be their first cold winter. Danilito's worries disappear the next morning when he wakes up and Papá leads him on a magical trip of discovery. D.H. Figueredo, in his picture book debut, brings us a gentle and uplifting story of coming to America, and Enrique O. Sanchez captures the loving images of a boy embracing his new home and finding a special bond with his family. (Grades Kindergarten and up)

**Xochitl and the Flowers / Xóchitl, la niña de las flores* by Jorge Argueta and illustrated by Carl Angel. Children's Book Press, 2008.

Miles away from their home in El Salvador, Xochitl (SOH-cheel) and her family make a new home in the United States, but nothing is the same. Xochitl mourns a lovely garden and her family's small flower business, all left behind. Selling flowers on the street soon provides more than income for the Flores family: they begin to make friends with local storeowners and neighbors. But it is not until the family decides to start a nursery in its backyard that Xochitl begins to learn the true value of community in their adopted country. Basing his narrative on real-life events, prize-winning poet Jorge Argueta has crafted a tender, poetic, and moving story about a family's



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determination to set down roots and about their child's blooming among friends and neighbors. Artist Carl Angel's authentic and brilliant artwork splendidly documents this quintessentially American immigration story. (Grades Kindergarten and up)

Classroom Resources: [Teacher's Guide to Xochitl and the Flowers](#) produced by Children's Book Press and Lee & Low Books

Calling the Doves / El canto de las palomas by Juan Felipe Herrera and illustrated by Elly Simmons. Lee and Low Books 2001.

Calling the Doves is poet Juan Felipe Herrera's story of his migrant farmworker childhood. In delightful and lyrical language, he recreates the joy of eating breakfast under the open sky, listening to Mexican songs in the little trailer house his father built, and celebrating with other families at a fiesta in the mountains. He remembers his mother's songs and poetry, and his father's stories and his calling the doves. For Juan Felipe, the farmworker road was also the beginning of his personal road to becoming a writer. (Grades 1 and up)

My Shoes and I written by René Colato Laínez and illustrated by Fabricio Vanden Broeck. Boyds Mills Press, 2010.

A timely and inspiring story. Mario is leaving his home in El Salvador. With his father by his side, he is going north to join his mother, who lives in the United States. She has sent Mario a new pair of shoes. He will need good shoes because the journey north will be long and hard. He and his father will cross the borders of three countries. They will walk for miles, ride buses, climb mountains, and cross a river. Mario has faith in his shoes. He believes they will take him anywhere. On this day, they will take him to the United States, where his family will be reunited. (Grades Kindergarten-4)

Young Adult Literature

90 Miles to Havana by Enrique Flores-Galbis. Squarefish, 2012. 304 pgs.

When Julian's parents make the heartbreaking decision to send him and his two brothers away from Cuba to Miami via the Pedro Pan operation, the boys are thrust into a new world where bullies run rampant and it's not always clear how best to protect themselves. *90 Miles to Havana* is a 2011 Pura Belpré Honor Book for Narrative and a 2011 Bank Street Best Children's Book of the Year. (Grades 4-7)

Classroom Resources: [Web-based Thematic Unit for 90 Miles to Havana](#) written by Melissa Babins, April Etzold, and Erica Frischkorn.

**Before we were Free / Antes de ser libre* by Julia Alvarez. Knopf, 2002. 192 pgs.



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Anita de la Torre never questioned her freedom living in the Dominican Republic. But by her 12th birthday in 1960, most of her relatives have emigrated to the United States, her Tío Toni has disappeared without a trace, and the government's secret police terrorize her remaining family because of their suspected opposition of el Trujillo's dictatorship. Using the strength and courage of her family, Anita must overcome her fears and fly to freedom, leaving all that she once knew behind. From renowned author Julia Alvarez comes an unforgettable story about adolescence, perseverance, and one girl's struggle to be free. (Grades 7 and up)

Classroom Resources: [Vamos a Leer Educator's Guide to Before we were Free](#) written by Katrina Dillon on behalf of the UNM Latin American & Iberian Institute // [Book Notes and Educator's Guide to Before we were Free](#) produced by Random House

Border Crossing: A Novel written by Maria Colleen Cruz. Piñata Books, 2003.

In this debut novel, Maria Colleen Cruz creates the vibrant voice of a girl just on the brink of understanding. With her journal at her side, this thoughtful and creative character tackles complicated issues of identity and self-empowerment. The things Ceci Alvarez does not know about her father's family send her riding rails from Los Angeles to Tijuana, Mexico in order to piece together the mysteries behind a set of her Nana's photographs. Tony, a lively young teen Ceci meets on the train, leads her from one country to the next, and challenges her to see Mexico as "green and brown. It's little villages with big farms, and lots of grass, and towns where electricity is something not everyone has. It's spicy chiles, juicy tomatoes, and light tortillas. It's music, and laughter, and pride. (Grades 5 and up)

**Breaking Through / Senderos fronterizos* by Francisco Jiménez. HMH Books for Young Readers, 2002. 208 pgs.

At the age of fourteen, Francisco Jiménez, together with his older brother Roberto and his mother, are caught by la migra. Forced to leave their home in California, the entire family travels all night for twenty hours by bus, arriving at the U.S. and Mexican border in Nogales, Arizona. In the months and years that follow during the late 1950s-early 1960s, Francisco, his mother and father, and his seven brothers and sister not only struggle to keep their family together, but also face crushing poverty, long hours of labor, and blatant prejudice. How they sustain their hope, their good-heartedness, and tenacity is revealed in this moving, Pura Belpré Honor-winning sequel to *The Circuit*. Without bitterness or sentimentality, Francisco Jiménez finishes telling the story of his youth. (Grades 7 and up)

Classroom Resources: [Study Guide for Breaking Through](#) produced by Santa Clara University



Call Me Maria: a novel [in letters, poems, and prose] written by Judith Ortiz Cofer. Orchard Books, 2004. 144 pgs.

Maria is a girl caught between two worlds: Puerto Rico, where she was born, and New York, where she now lives in a basement apartment in the barrio. While her mother remains on the island, Maria lives with her father, the super of their building. As she struggles to lose her island accent, Maria does her best to find her place within the unfamiliar culture of the barrio. Finally, with the Spanglish of the barrio people ringing in her ears, she finds the poet within herself. (Grades 3 and up)

**Enrique's Journey* by Sonia Nazario. Delacorte, 2013. 288 pgs.

Based on the Los Angeles Times newspaper series that won two Pulitzer Prizes, one for feature writing and another for feature photography, this page-turner about the power of family is a popular text in classrooms and a touchstone for communities across the country to engage in meaningful discussions about this essential American subject. *Enrique's Journey* recounts the unforgettable quest of a Honduran boy looking for his mother, eleven years after she is forced to leave her starving family to find work in the United States. Braving unimaginable peril, often clinging to the sides and tops of freight trains, Enrique travels through hostile worlds full of thugs, bandits, and corrupt cops. But he pushes forward, relying on his wit, courage, hope, and the kindness of strangers.

Classroom Resources: [Spanish, Middle, and High School Lesson Plans](#) developed by educators around the country and compiled by Sonia Nazario

How Tia Lola Came to Visit Stay written by Julia Alvarez. Yearling, 2002. 147 pgs.

Moving to Vermont after his parents split, Miguel has plenty to worry about! Tía Lola, his quirky, carismática, and maybe magical aunt makes his life even more unpredictable when she arrives from the Dominican Republic to help out his Mami. Like her stories for adults, Julia Alvarez's first middle-grade book sparkles with magic as it illuminates a child's experiences living in two cultures. (Grades 3 and up)

**Journey of Dreams* by Marge Pellegrino. Frances Lincoln, 2009. 260 pgs.

This is the story of how one family survives the Guatemalan army's "scorched earth" campaign in the 1980s and how, in the midst of tragedy, suspicion and fear, their resilient love and loyalty — and Papa's storytelling — keeps them going. On their harrowing journey as refugees to the United States, the dramatic ebb and flow of events are mirrored in the tapestries of one daughter's dreams.



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Classroom Resources: [Vamos a Leer Educator's Guide to Journey of Dreams](#) written by Katrina Dillon on behalf of the UNM Latin American & Iberian Institute

**La línea* by Ann Jaramillo. Roaring Brook Press, 2006. 129 pgs.

Miguel has dreamed of joining his parents in California since the day they left him behind in Mexico six years, eleven months, and twelve days ago. On the morning of his fifteenth birthday, Miguel's wait is over. Or so he thinks. The trip north to the border—la línea—is fraught with dangers. Thieves. Border guards. And a grueling, two-day trek across the desert. It would be hard enough to survive alone. But it's almost impossible with his tagalong sister in tow. Their money gone and their hopes nearly dashed, Miguel and his sister have no choice but to hop the infamous mata gente as it races toward the border. As they cling to the roof of the speeding train, they hold onto each other, and to their dreams. But they quickly learn that you can't always count on dreams—even the ones that come true. (Grades 7 and up)

Leaving Glorytown: One Boy's Struggle Under Castro by Eduardo F. Calcines. Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 2009. 240 pgs.

Eduardo F. Calcines was a child of Fidel Castro's Cuba; he was just three years old when Castro came to power in January 1959. After that, everything changed for his family and his country. When he was ten, his family applied for an exit visa to emigrate to America and he was ridiculed by his schoolmates and even his teachers for being a traitor to his country. But even worse, his father was sent to an agricultural reform camp to do hard labor as punishment for daring to want to leave Cuba. In this absorbing memoir, by turns humorous and heartbreaking, Eduardo Calcines recounts his boyhood and chronicles the conditions that led him to wish above all else to leave behind his beloved extended family and his home for a chance at a better future. (Grades 5-10)

Classroom Resources: [Vamos a Leer Educator's Guide to Leaving Glorytown](#) written by Katrina Dillon on behalf of the UNM Latin American & Iberian Institute

Migrant/Migrante written by José Manuel Mateo and illustrated by Javier Martínez Pedro. Abrams, 2014.

A Mexican boy tells of his journey to the U.S. with his family. They must face many dangers to cross the border, only to experience the uncertainty felt by all illegal immigrants. The narrative is accompanied by one long, beautifully vivid illustration reminiscent of pre-Hispanic codices, packaged as an accordion-style foldout frieze.

Reaching Out / Más allá de mí by Francisco Jiménez. HMH Books for Young Readers, 2009. 208 pgs.



An Educator's Guide to *The Only Road* by Alexandra Diaz

From the perspective of the young adult he was then, Francisco Jiménez describes the challenges he faced in his efforts to continue his education. During his college years, the very family solidarity that allowed Francisco to survive as a child is tested. Not only must he leave his family behind when he goes to Santa Clara University, but while Francisco is there, his father abandons the family and returns to Mexico. This is the story of how Francisco coped with poverty, with his guilt over leaving his family financially strapped, with his self-doubt about succeeding academically, and with separation. Once again his telling is honest, true, and inspiring. (Grades 7 and up)

Red Midnight written by Ben Mikaelson. HarperCollins Publishers, 2002. 224 pgs.

When guerrilla soldiers strike Santiago's village, they destroy everything in their path -- including his home and family. Santiago and his four-year-old sister escape, running for their lives. But the only way they can be truly safe is to leave Guatemala behind forever. So Santiago and Angelina set sail in a sea kayak their Uncle Ramos built while dreaming of his own escape. Sailing through narrow channels guarded by soldiers, shark-infested waters, and days of painful heat and raging storms, Santiago and Angelina face an almost impossible voyage hundreds of miles across the open ocean, heading for the hope of a new life in the United States. (Grades 5 and up)

Return to Sender / Devolver al remitente by Julia Alvarez. Knopf, 2009. 318 pgs.

After Tyler's father is injured in a tractor accident, his family is forced to hire migrant Mexican workers to help save their Vermont farm from foreclosure. Tyler isn't sure what to make of these workers. Are they undocumented? And what about the three daughters, particularly Mari, the oldest, who is proud of her Mexican heritage but also increasingly connected her American life. Her family lives in constant fear of being discovered by the authorities and sent back to the poverty they left behind in Mexico. In a novel full of hope, but no easy answers, Julia Alvarez weaves a beautiful and timely story that will stay with readers long after they finish it.

Classroom Resources: [Vamos a Leer Educator's Guide to Return to Sender](#) written by Katrina Dillon on behalf of the UNM Latin American & Iberian Institute //

Sarita, Be Brave written by Ruby Tolliver. Eakin Press, 1999. 132 pgs

When political unrest in Honduras forces twelve-year-old Sara to flee with her family and make the dangerous journey north to Texas, she faces the challenges of starting a new school and a new life. (Grades 3 and up)

**The Circuit / Cajas de cartón* by Francisco Jiménez. Houghton-Mifflin, 1997. 134 pgs.



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After dark in a Mexican border town, a father holds open a hole in a wire fence as his wife and two small boys crawl through. So begins life in the United States for many people every day. And so begins this collection of twelve autobiographical stories by Santa Clara University professor Francisco Jiménez, who at the age of four illegally crossed the border with his family in 1947. “The Circuit,” the story of young Panchito and his trumpet, is one of the most widely anthologized stories in Chicano literature. At long last, Jiménez offers more about the wise, sensitive little boy who has grown into a role model for subsequent generations of immigrants. These independent but intertwined stories follow the family through their circuit, from picking cotton and strawberries to topping carrots—and back again—over a number of years. As it moves from one labor camp to the next, the little family of four grows into ten. Impermanence and poverty define their lives. But with faith, hope, and back-breaking work, the family endures. (Grades 6 and up)

Classroom Resources: [Vamos a Leer Educator's Guide to The Circuit](#) written by Katrina Dillon on behalf of the UNM Latin American & Iberian Institute | [Lesson Plans Novel for The Circuit](#) produced by Santa Clara University |

The Girl Who Could Silence the Wind by Meg Medina. Candlewick, 2012. 256 pgs.

Sixteen-year-old Sonia Ocampo was born on the night of the worst storm Tres Montes had ever seen. And when the winds mercifully stopped, an unshakable belief in the girl's protective powers began. All her life, Sonia has been asked to pray for sick mothers or missing sons, as worried parents and friends press silver milagros in her hands. Sonia knows she has no special powers, but how can she disappoint those who look to her for solace? Still, her conscience is heavy, so when she gets a chance to travel to the city and work in the home of a wealthy woman, she seizes it. At first, Sonia feels freedom in being treated like all the other girls. But when news arrives that her beloved brother has disappeared while looking for work, she learns to her sorrow that she can never truly leave the past or her family behind. With deeply realized characters, a keen sense of place, a hint of magical realism, and a flush of young romance, Meg Medina tells the tale of a strong-willed, warm-hearted girl who dares to face life's harsh truths as she finds her real power. (Grades 6 and up)

Classroom Resources: [Vamos a Leer Educator's Guide to The Girl Who Could Silence the Wind](#) written by Katrina Dillon on behalf of the UNM Latin American & Iberian Institute

The Red Umbrella by Christina Diaz Gonzalez. Yearling | Random House, 2012. 288 pgs.

The Red Umbrella is the moving tale of a 14-year-old girl's journey from Cuba to America as part of Operation Pedro Pan—an organized exodus of more than 14,000 unaccompanied children, whose parents sent them away to escape Fidel Castro's revolution. In 1961, two years after the



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Communist revolution, Lucía Álvarez still leads a carefree life, dreaming of parties and her first crush. But when the soldiers come to her sleepy Cuban town, everything begins to change. Freedoms are stripped away. Neighbors disappear. Her friends feel like strangers. And her family is being watched. As the revolution's impact becomes more oppressive, Lucía's parents make the heart-wrenching decision to send her and her little brother to the United States—on their own. Suddenly plunked down in Nebraska with well-meaning strangers, Lucía struggles to adapt to a new country, a new language, a new way of life. But what of her old life? Will she ever see her home or her parents again? And if she does, will she still be the same girl? *The Red Umbrella* is a moving story of country, culture, family, and the true meaning of home.

Classroom Resources: [Vamos a Leer Educator's Guide to The Red Umbrella](#) written by Katrina Dillon on behalf of the UNM Latin American & Iberian Institute

The Secret Side of Empty by Maria E. Andreu. Running Press Kids, 2014. 336 pgs.

What's it like to be undocumented? High school senior M.T. knows all too well. With graduation and an uncertain future looming, she must figure out how to grow up in the only country she's ever called home... a country in which she's "illegal." M.T. was born in Argentina and brought to America as a baby without any official papers. And as questions of college, work, and the future arise, M.T. will have to decide what exactly she wants for herself, knowing someone she loves will unavoidably pay the price for it. On the way, M.T. must navigate first love, letting go of her childhood friends as they begin a life she can't share, a difficult relationship with a father who grew up a world away and a mother struggling to find her way in America. What is it like when the only country you've ever known says you don't belong? *The Secret Side of Empty* offers an intimate, often surprising glimpse into a story you often hear on the news but have never heard told this way before. Author Maria E. Andreu draws from her personal experience as a former undocumented immigrant to explore issues of belonging, keeping secrets and what it's like to be undocumented. More than that, *The Secret Side of Empty* is a story that will touch anyone who has ever felt excluded or unsure about the

Films

A Better Life, 2011, directed by Chris Weitz. Drama. 98 min. Rating: PG-13

Mexican actor Demián Bichir plays Carlos Galindo, an undocumented immigrant who purchases the gardening business—truck, tools, and clients—from his old boss, who wants to return to Mexico. Carlos' goal is to provide a better future for his only son Luis (José Julián). But Luis is embarrassed of his working-class dad, hangs around with gangas after high school, and dates the



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niece of a local gang leader. One day, another immigrant steals the gardening truck, and Carlos' life begins to unravel. For this role, Mr. Bichir was nominated for a Best Actor Academy Award.

Babel, 2006 directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Drama 143 min. Rating: Rated-R

In this Oscar-nominated film, Adriana Barraza plays an illegal immigrant and nanny who takes her two young charges with her back to Mexico for her son's wedding (their parents are stuck in Morocco and no one else can care for them, so she's stuck). On the way back, her nephew dumps them in the middle of the Sonoran desert; they're lost. In a heartbreaking sequence, she and the kids bake under a crushing sun and she slogs through the sand and the heat to find help. This brutal setting is the same that thousands of real-life immigrants—right or wrong—have crossed on their way to find a better life for themselves and their families.

*Balseros/Cuban Rafter*s, 2002, directed by Carles Bosch and Josep Maria Doménech. Documentary. 120 min. Rating: Not Rated

The story of Cuban refugees who risked their lives in homemade rafts to reach the United States, and what life is like for those who succeed.

Bread and Roses, 2000, directed by Ken Loach. Drama. 110 min. Rating: Rated R

A young Mexican woman immigrates illegally to LA to join her sister to work as a non-union janitor. The two become involved in the effort to organize a janitor's union which creates considerable tension.

Documented, 2013, directed by Jose Antonio Vargas and Ann Raffaella Lupo. Documentary. 89 min. Rating: Not Rated

In 2011, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Jose Antonio Vargas outed himself as an undocumented immigrant in the New York Times Magazine. 'Documented' chronicles his journey to America from the Philippines as a child; his journey through America as an immigration reform activist/provocateur; and his journey inward as he re-connects with his mother, whom he hasn't seen in 20 years. engagements, an appearance before Congress and, most dramatically, his reunion over Skype with his mother.

El Norte, 1983, directed by Gregory Nava. Drama. 141 min. Rating: Rated-R

The film features two indigenous youths who flee Guatemala's genocidal civil war in the 1980s. Traveling through Mexico, they arrive in Los Angeles after an arduous journey and start their



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new life. Nava based the film on his own experiences growing up in San Diego, California, with relatives on both sides of the border. In 1995, the film was selected for preservation in the United States National Film Registry by the Library of Congress.

Entre Nos, 2009 directed by Gloria La Morte and Paola Mendoza. Drama. 80 min. Rating: Not Rated

A story based on facts which offers a fresh take on the issue of new immigrants in the United States. Mariana totes her two children from Colombia to reunite with her husband in Queens, New York. Her life is devastatingly turned around when her husband abandons the family. The woman and her kids have to fend for themselves in a foreign country. Mariana desperately searches for work. In the end, she resourcefully navigates a surprising avenue for making some money, the city's recycling.

Harvest of Empire: The Untold Story of Latinos in America, 2012, directed by Peter Getzels and Eduardo Lopez. Documentary. 90 min. Rating: Not Rated

A powerful documentary that exposes the direct connection between the long history of U.S. intervention in Latin America and the immigration crisis we face today. From the territorial expansionist policies that decimated the young economies of Mexico, Puerto Rico and Cuba, to the covert operations that imposed oppressive military regimes in the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador, *Harvest of Empire* provides an unflinching look at the origins of the growing Latino presence in the United States. Adapted from the landmark book written by journalist Juan Gonzalez, the film tells the story of an epic human saga that is largely unknown to the great majority of citizens in the U.S., but must become part of our national conversation about immigration.

Leaving no Trace/Sin Dejar Huella, 2000, directed by Maria Navaro. Drama. 109 min. Rating: Not Rated

The story follows Ana and Aurelia, two women on the road to Cancun who wish to flee their former lives. Ana is a former Mayan art smuggler who is being chased by a federal investigator and needs to get out. Aurelia wants to provide a better life for her children and leave her drug-dealer boyfriend behind. Together, they road trip across Mexico to cross the border into a new life.

Those Who Remain/Los que se quedan, 2009, directed by Carlos Hagerman and Juan Carlos Rulfo.

Documentary. 96 min. Rating: Not Rated

An exquisitely-photographed film about immigrants who crossed the U.S.–Mexico border and return to visit their relatives, told from the point of view of those who stayed home. The movie



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offers a poignant view of the emotional costs of immigration. It is also an insightful portrayal of Mexico and its culture.

Maria Full of Grace, 2004, directed by Joshua Marston. Drama. 101 min. Rating: Rated R

A bright, spirited 17-year old, Maria Alvarez, lives with three generations of her family in a cramped house in rural Colombia and works stripping thorns from flowers in a rose plantation. The offer of a lucrative job involving travel--in fact, becoming a drug "mule"--changes the course of her life. Far from the uneventful trip she is promised, Maria is transported into the risky and ruthless world of international drug trafficking. Her mission becomes one of determination and survival and she finally emerges with the grace that will carry her forward into a new life.

Mi Familia, 1995, directed by Gregory Nava. Drama. 128 min. Rating: Rated-R

This heartwarming story has not one, but three border crossing scenes and they make great political and social commentary. In the first, a young country boy from Mexico walks for a year from his village to Los Angeles at the turn of the 20th century. He just walks in. The border? "In those days, the border was just a line in the sand," says the narrator, underlining the often-unacknowledged close historical ties between Mexico and the United States. Later, his pregnant wife (Jennifer Lopez) is wrongly deported in a Great Depression-era round-up where Mexicans, whether legal or not, were driven to central Mexico and dumped. This really happened, after Mexicans were (surprise!) blamed for taking jobs away from Americans. Months after giving birth, she crosses the Rio Grande with her baby boy, losing him in the waves at one point, in a heart-stopping scene. You'd have to be made of stone not to be touched.

Mojados: Through the Night, 2004, directed by Tommy Davis. Documentary. 65 min. Rating: Not Rated

Director Tommy Davis tags along with four migrants from a small village in Mexico as they leave their families and embark on a 120 mile trek across the deserts of Texas, attempting to evade the U.S. Border Patrol. They must overcome dehydration, hypothermia and come face to face with death.

Sin Nombre, 2009 directed by Cary Jôji Fukunaga . Drama. 96 min. Rating: Rated-R

Honduran teenager Sayra reunites with her father, an opportunity for her to potentially realize her dream of a life in the U.S. Moving to Mexico is the first step in a fateful journey of unexpected events.

Sleep Dealer, 2008, directed by Alex Rivera. Sci-Fi. 90 min. Rating: PG-13



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Mexico. The near future. Memo Cruz has always dreamed of leaving his tiny village and heading north. But, when he is ultimately forced to leave, Memo finds a future so bizarre--border walls, shantytowns, hi-tech factories, remote control drones and aqua-terrorists--that it looks a lot like today.

The Dream is Now, 2013, directed by Davis Guggenheim. Documentary. 31 min. Rating: Not Rated

Both moving and thought-provoking, *The Dream is Now* brings this pressing issue to America's attention, where we can all debate, discuss, and decide for ourselves what is right, what is fair, and what is best for our nation.

The Harvest/La Cosecha, 2011, directed by U. Roberto Romano. Documentary. 80 min. Rating: Not Rated

This gripping documentary follows three of the more than 400,000 migrant child farm workers in the United States who miss out on childhood and school as they work up to 14 hours a day, seven days a week, without the protection of child labor laws.

The Other Side of Immigration, 2009 directed by Roy Germano. Documentary. 55 min. Rating: Not Rated

Based on over 700 interviews in Mexican towns where about half the population has left to work in the United States, *The Other Side of Immigration* asks why so many Mexicans come to the U.S. and what happens to the families and communities they leave behind. Through an approach that is both subtle and thought-provoking, filmmaker Roy Germano provides a perspective on undocumented immigration rarely witnessed by American eyes, challenging audiences to imagine more creative and effective solutions to the problem.

Under the Same Moon, 2007, directed by Patricia Riggen. Drama. 106 min. Rating: PG-13

The debut feature from director Patricia Riggen, this drama centers on a young boy's journey across the U.S./Mexico border to be reunited with his mother. Adrian Alonso stars as Carlitos, a Mexican adolescent living with his grandmother while his mother works as a maid in the U.S., hoping someday to send for her child. But when the grandmother dies unexpectedly, Carlitos must sneak across the border and seek out his mother.

Which Way Home, 2009, directed by Rebecca Cammisa. Documentary. 90 min. Rating: Not Rated.

Which Way Home is a feature documentary film that follows unaccompanied child migrants, on their journey through Mexico, as they try to reach the United States. We follow children like Olga and Freddy, nine-year old Hondurans, who are desperately trying to reach their parents in the U.S.; children like Jose, a ten-year old El Salvadoran, who has been abandoned by smugglers and



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ends up alone in a Mexican detention center; and Kevin, a canny, streetwise fourteen-year old Honduran, whose mother hopes that he will reach the U.S. and send money back to her. These are stories of hope and courage, disappointment and sorrow. They are the children you never hear about; the invisible ones.

Classroom Resources: [An Educator's Film Guide to Which Way Home](#) written by Katrina Dillon on behalf of the UNM Latin American & Iberian Institute

Who is Dayani Cristal?, 2013, directed by Marc Silver. Documentary. 85 min. Rating: Not Rated.

Who is Dayani Cristal is a feature documentary film that explores what happens when the body of an unidentified immigrant is found in the Arizona Desert. In an attempt to retrace his path and discover his story, director Marc Silver and Gael García Bernal embed themselves among migrant travelers on their own mission to cross the border, providing rare insight into the human stories which are so often ignored in the immigration debate.

Classroom Resources: [An Educator's Film Guide to Who is Dayni Cristal?](#) written by Katrina Dillon on behalf of the UNM Latin American & Iberian Institute