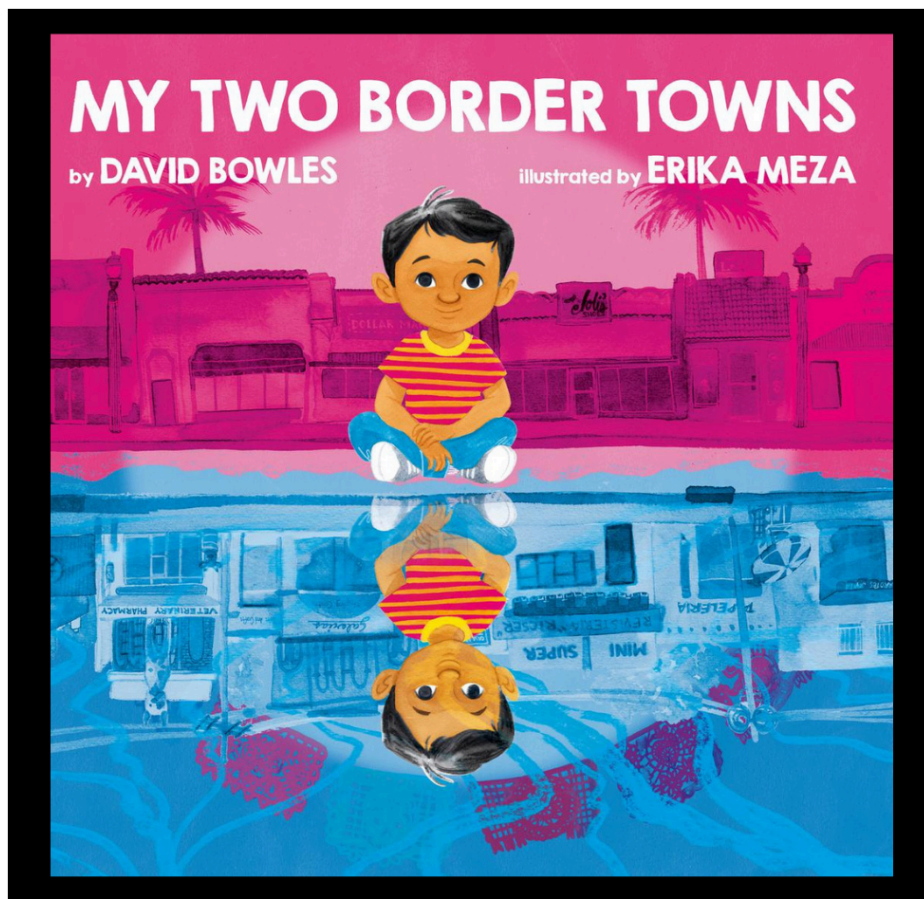


Americas Book Award

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



PRODUCED BY THE CONSORTIUM FOR LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES
PROGRAMS
WRITTEN BY KATRIMA DILLON



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This educator's guide was written to support using *My Two Border Towns* in the K12 classroom. Produced by the Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs (CLASP) on behalf of the Américas Award, it was written in 2024 by Dr. Katrina Dillon, Assistant Director of Outreach at the Center for Latin American Studies at the University of Arizona. Research and writing support was also provided by UA Graduate Assistants Juanita Sandoval and Omar Méndez.

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 the Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs (CLASP) and coordinated by both Tulane University's Stone Center for Latin American Studies and the University of Arizona's Center for Latin American Studies. Generous support is also provided by Florida International University, Michigan State University, Stanford University, University of California, Berkeley, University of California, Los Angeles, UNC-Duke Consortium in Latin American and Caribbean Studies, University of Florida, University of Michigan, University of New Mexico, University of Texas at Austin, University of Utah, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and Vanderbilt University.

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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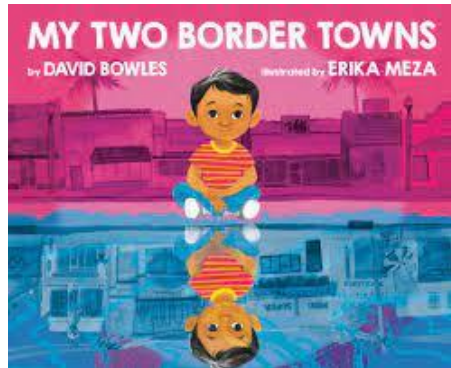
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OVERVIEW



My Two Border Towns

Written by David Bowles

Illustrated by Erika Meza

Published 2021 by Kokila

ISBN: 9780593111048

THEMES

Asylum, Bicultural, Bilingual, Borders, Border Towns, Community, Culture, Family, Friendship, Mexico, Refugees, Spanglish, United States

SYNOPSIS

A picture book debut by an award-winning author about a boy's life on the U.S.-Mexico border, visiting his favorite places on The Other Side with his father, spending time with family and friends, and sharing in the responsibility of community care.

Early one Saturday morning, a boy prepares for a trip to The Other Side/El Otro Lado. It's close--just down the street from his school--and it's a twin of where he lives. To get there, his father drives their truck along the Rio Grande and over a bridge, where they're greeted by a giant statue of an eagle. Their outings always include a meal at their favorite restaurant, a visit with Tío Mateo at his jewelry store, a cold treat from the paletero, and a pharmacy pickup. On their final and most important stop, they check in with friends seeking asylum and drop off much-needed supplies.

My Two Border Towns by David Bowles, with illustrations by Erika Meza, is the loving story of a father and son's weekend ritual, a demonstration of community care, and a tribute to the fluidity, complexity, and vibrancy of life on the U.S.-Mexico border.

READING LEVEL

Grades 1+ / Ages 6+



REVIEWS

★ “A wistful and generous book, this doesn’t place blame but carries a message of what borders do to families and livelihoods. It will rightly invite conversation, and is a necessary inclusion in most collections.” – starred, *School Library Journal*

★ “A father and son run errands across the U.S.–Mexico border. Early on Saturday, the boy (who’s never named) prepares his “special bag” to bring to Mexico for his friends. Crossing from Texas to Tamaulipas, the duo drives across town and over the bridge into a twin town where Spanish is just as frequently heard, but English is spoken less. Before tackling their errands, father and son stop to fuel up with café de olla and chocolate caliente, respectively. They visit the jewelry shop, gather groceries and supplies at the abarrotes, play soccer with cousins, and pick up medicine at the pharmacy. On their way back home to the United States, the protagonist encounters his friends at the bridge: displaced people from the Caribbean and Central America living in limbo on the border between two towns and two countries. Taking advantage of the slow pace of the traffic on the bridge, the boy exits his father’s truck, bringing the gathered supplies and toys to those in wait. In what initially comes across as a story of a sweet visit to a Mexican town to run some errands, Bowles seamlessly weaves in some of the complexities of living on the border. He fearlessly introduces the complex issues surrounding the presence of refugees waiting to be admitted into the United States and candidly portrays the everyday lives of families who span the border, creating a unique cosmos in this space. Meza’s background illustrations around town imbue the pages with Mexico’s vibrance. Bowles translates his own text into Spanish in a simultaneously publishing edition” – starred, *Kirkus*

AWARDS

- 2023-24 Land of Enchantment Book Award Nominee
- 2022 Association for Library Service to Children Notable Children’s Books
- 2022 Notable Social studies Trade Books for Young People
- 2022 Américas Award Winner
- 2022 Canadian Children's Book Centre Choice Selection
- 2022 Tomás Rivera Book Award Winner
- 2022 Premio, Mejor Libro Infantil/Best Spanish Language Picture Book Award Gold Medalist
- 2021 New York Public Library Best Books
- 2021 School Library Journal Best Books
- 2021 Kirkus Reviews Best Books
- 2021 Center for the Study of Multicultural Literature Best Books



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: DAVID BOWLES



David Bowles is a Mexican American author and translator from south Texas, where he teaches at the University of Texas Río Grande Valley. He has written over two dozen award-winning titles, most notably *They Call Me Güero* and *My Two Border Towns*.

His work has also been published in multiple anthologies, plus venues such as *The New York Times*, *Strange Horizons*, *Apex Magazine*, *School Library Journal*, *Rattle*, *Translation Review*, and the *Journal of Children's Literature*.

Additionally, David has worked on several TV/film projects, including *Victor and Valentino* (Cartoon Network), the *Moctezuma & Cortés* miniseries (Amazon/Amblin) and *Monsters and Mysteries in America* (Discovery).

In 2017, David was inducted into the Texas Institute of Letters. He now serves as its vice president. In 2019, he co-founded the hashtag and activist movement #DignidadLiteraria, which has negotiated greater Latinx representation in publishing. In 2021, he helped launch *Chispa*, the Latinx imprint of Scout Comics, for which he serves as co-publisher.

IN HIS WORDS: THE AUTHOR'S NOTE

Taken from an interview in “To Mexico and Back with Author David Bowles” in [Kirkus Profiles](#)

When did you begin working on *My Two Border Towns*?

It was [around] 2017 to 2018, when we were going back and forth between the towns of Progreso, Texas, and Nuevo Progreso, Mexico, where we have friends and relatives. We began to notice a proliferation of tents on the pedestrian walkway from the Mexican side to the U.S. side. The checkpoint's in the middle of the bridge. If you don't have documents, you aren't permitted to step onto U.S. soil, [so this] gets in the way of the ability of people to request asylum. People were being written down on a list, and eventually they'd be called. They were afraid of losing their place in line, so they started camping out on this bridge. We would stop and talk to these people—many of them were from Cuba, Nicaragua, El Salvador—and they had their children with them. We just felt a real sense of duty of care for people who before would have been folded into our community. We would buy medicine, food, water, and we would give the kids comics and games.



I had grown up going back and forth across the border with my dad, and we had done the same with my children, as part of this transnational community with relatives on all sides. I imagined how my kids would react, coming across these kids, and how they would likely be playing with them. I thought, that's the story I need to tell, I need to tell the story of the joy of living in this transnational community. What a great way to counter the negative rhetoric about the place where I've lived for 51 years and also to bring to light the plight of people down here in a way that's accessible to kids. Parents can use it to help border kids see themselves reflected in a positive way and see their culture and community celebrated. And let other kids say, "Oh, that place sounds fun. These kids are having a good time. And it's beautiful."

CLASSROOM RELEVANCE AND APPLICATIONS

David Bowles' *My Two Border Towns* (2021) offers educators a refreshing and authentic glimpse into the rhythms of life along the U.S.-Mexico border. Through the eyes of a young boy and his father, readers embark on a journey that reveals the deep connections that make border communities uniquely whole rather than divided.

The story follows a father and son as they drive across the border from their Texas hometown to its sister city in Mexico. What begins as a familiar Sunday excursion—visiting family, shopping at favorite stores, and enjoying local treats—evolves into a gentle yet powerful exploration of community, compassion, and the complex realities of transborder life. Erika Meza's vibrant illustrations complement Bowles' narrative, bringing to life the warmth and vitality of border culture while subtly addressing more serious themes.

For educators, this picture book proves invaluable as both a mirror and a window. Students from border communities will see their daily experiences validated and celebrated, while those from other regions gain insight into a way of life that may be unfamiliar yet deeply relatable. The seamless integration of Spanish words into the predominantly English text provides natural opportunities for language learning and discussions about bilingual identity, making it particularly effective in dual-language or ESL classrooms.

What sets *My Two Border Towns* apart is its ability to address complex social issues without overwhelming young readers. When the protagonist and his father visit refugee families waiting at the border, the interaction is presented through the lens of routine kindness rather than political commentary. This approach allows teachers to facilitate age-appropriate discussions about empathy, social responsibility, and community support.

The book's educational applications extend far beyond Language Arts. In Social Studies, it serves as a springboard for exploring geography, contemporary immigration, and cultural studies. The father-son



An Educator's Guide to *My Two Border Towns* by David Bowles

relationship at the heart of the narrative offers opportunities for character education discussions about family bonds and civic responsibility. The detailed depictions of border life support lessons about community structures and international relations at an accessible level.

Bowles, drawing from his own experiences growing up in the Rio Grande Valley, brings an authenticity to the narrative. It presents the bicultural, transborder experience as a natural part of many Americans' lives, rich with both everyday moments and profound connections.

For classroom implementation, the book works especially well with students in grades 2-5, though it can be adapted for both younger and older audiences. Early elementary teachers might focus on the family relationships and community helpers aspects, while upper elementary and middle school educators can delve deeper into themes of cultural identity and social justice.

Perhaps the book's greatest strength lies in its ability to generate meaningful discussions about community and belonging. When the young protagonist shares his understanding of how his two towns are really one community, he opens the door for students to explore their own connections to place and people. This naturally leads to conversations about how communities support one another and how young people can participate in making their world a better place.

The narrative also challenges simplified notions of borders as mere dividing lines. Through the boy's perspective, we see how borders can be places of connection, commerce, and community. This nuanced view provides teachers with an excellent foundation for helping students develop more sophisticated understandings of geography, culture, and human relationships.

As educators, we often search for resources that combine literary merit with genuine educational value. *My Two Border Towns* achieves this balance masterfully, offering beautiful storytelling while creating space for important conversations about identity, compassion, and community. In today's increasingly interconnected world, this book stands as an essential addition to any classroom library, providing both windows and mirrors for our students to better understand themselves and their neighbors. This is more than just another picture book about cultural diversity—it's an invitation to explore the complex, beautiful reality of life in border communities through the eyes of a child. For teachers seeking to build cultural understanding and empathy in their classrooms, it offers an authentic, accessible, and deeply engaging pathway to these crucial conversations.



LESSON PLANS AND ACTIVITIES

In addition to this guide, there are a number of other high-quality resources available to support educators in using *My Two Border Towns*. These have been linked below.

- [My Two Border Towns](#) | Penguin Classroom
- [My Two Border Towns](#) | NEA National Education Association

Resources about *My Two Border Towns*

- [Fronteras: 'My Two Border Towns' highlights the uniqueness of transnational communities for young readers | TPR](#) Podcast Texas Public Radio
- [My Two Border Towns Is About the Duality of Life on the Border](#) We Need Diverse Books

Resources for teaching about the border

- [National Endowment for the Humanities and The University of Texas at El Paso 2017 Summer Institute for Secondary School Teachers \(Grades 6th–12th\) - Lesson Plan: Border Policy, Race, Culture, and Binationalism](#)
- [Deconstructing the Wall: Teaching About the Symbolism, Politics and Reality of the U.S.-Mexico Border - The New York Times](#)

Resources for teaching about the Coahuiltecan Peoples as mentioned in *My Two Border Towns*

- [TSHA | Coahuiltecan Indians](#)
- [South Texas Plains](#)

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:

VOCABULARY

Border, immigrant, refugee, asylum seeker, Coahuiltecan

ACTIVITY 1: DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

My Two Border Towns engages with a number of serious themes surrounding the topics of refugees, immigration, and asylum. 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.
- 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](#)
- 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, the border, border towns 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. Oftentimes, 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.

1. Print one copy of each image.
2. Glue each image to the top of a large piece of butcher paper or poster board to create the observation charts.
3. 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:

1. 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 note-taker at each table.



2. 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?”
3. Then, students will discuss their thoughts in the small group. The note-taker 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.
4. 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.
5. Begin the activity. Continue rotating groups through the images until each group has seen each image.
6. Hang up all of the observation charts with comments.
7. 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 *My Two Border Towns*. Allow students to revisit them, and discuss them as they think more about what the images represent.

ACTIVITY 3: THINK, PAIR, SHARE: BORDERS, NEIGHBORS, COMMUNITY AND FAMILY

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 “borders” “neighbors” “community” and “family ” on four separate large pieces of butcher paper. Hang the papers where they can be seen by the whole class.
2. Read each word out loud to the class. Ask students to think about the word.
3. What do they think of when they hear the four 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 *My Two Border Towns*, 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: PICTURE WALK

Picture Walk Process:

1. Pique students' interest, activate prior knowledge, and introduce the book through a picture walk.
2. Show students the front and back cover of the book. Ask them to predict what they think the story will be about. Then, slowly flip through the pages of the book without reading any of the words. Ask students questions about each picture they see, guiding them to make inferences based upon what they see. Focus on who, what, when, where, why and how questions such as: "What is happening here?" "What will happen next?" "Who do you think this is?" "How does this character feel?" "How does this picture make you feel?" "Where does the story take place?" "How do you think the story will end?"

Once students have read the book, return to their thoughts and predictions, comparing them to the actual events of the story.

ACTIVITY 5: VISUAL THINKING STRATEGIES

Visual thinking strategies are a great way to have students use visuals to think critically about content and formulate questions. Before reading the text, project a picture from the book so that it is larger in size. Cover the words of the text so students only see the visuals. Additionally, teachers can choose to project an art piece that is representational of the plot/theme of the book.

Visual Thinking Strategies Process: Have students spend 30 seconds to one minute looking at the picture. Use the following prompts to engage students in a discussion about the piece.

1. What's going on in this picture?
2. What do you see that makes you say that?
3. What more can we find?

For more information about how to use Visual Thinking Strategies refer to the resource below

[How to Teach Visual Thinking Strategies to Your Students | Education World](#)

ACTIVITY 6: GEOGRAPHIC CONNECTIONS

The boy and his dad travel through the United States/Mexico border during their journey.

Look at a map of the border between the United States and Mexico. Mark the following areas.

1. Mark the border between the United States and Mexico.
2. Mark the Rio Grande River
3. Mark Coahila, Mexico
4. Mark Texas, USA
5. Mark Eagle Pass Texas
6. Mark the cities that are close to both sides of the border.



GUIDED READING QUESTIONS

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Based on the cover and illustrations, what do you think this book will be about? What clues does the cover art give us about what the book is about?
2. What kind of characters will be in the book?
3. Based on the title of the book, what do you think this book will be about?
4. Look at and read the back cover. What do you notice? The back cover says "This town's a twin of the one where I live." What do you think this tells us about the story?
5. What do you think this author will try to teach us with this book?

READING QUESTIONS

1. What does dad mean when he says, "*Vamos al Otro Lado.*" Where are they going? p. 1
2. Why does mama give the boy a list? What do you think is on the list? p. 1-2
3. Make a prediction: What is inside the bag for the main character's friends? p. 2
4. What are some of the boy's favorite spots in his hometown? p. 3
5. What does the day buy from the man on the street? p.4
6. Look at the pictures of the town, does this town and its buildings remind you of where you live? Why or why not? What is similar or different about this town and your own? p. 3-4
7. Do you go on errands with members of your family or community? What do you do on these errands? p. 3-4.
8. Look at the picture on p. 5-6 Describe the landscape and environment. What does it look like? What features do you see? Where does the bridge lead to? What is under the bridge that separates the two cities? p. 5-6
9. Who were the Coahuiltecas? Where did they used to live? p. 5
10. How does the boy describe the river at the border? p. 5
11. What two countries is the boy talking about? p. 6
12. Where is the great eagle that greets the boy and his dad? What does it look like? Have you seen an eagle like this before? Where? p. 7-8.
13. Who are the soldiers and what are they doing? p. 7
14. Look at the picture of the town on p. 9-10. What do you notice? What do the buildings look like? What are the people in the town doing?
15. Have you ever been to a town that looks like this? What did you do there? p. 9-10
16. Who is Don Chava and what is his job? p. 9
17. If you could go to this town, where would you want to visit and why? p. 9-10



18. What two languages does the boy hear in this town? What does he mean when he says English pops us like grains of sugar on a chile pepper? p. 10
19. Have you ever visited a town where people speak two or more different languages? Where was it? How did it make you feel when you were there? p. 10
20. What do the boy and his dad eat in the restaurant? Describe the restaurant and what the workers are doing. p. 11-12
21. What is the first errand on their list? p. 11
22. Look at the pictures: The boy describes what it is like to walk down the street of the town. Can you imagine what it sounds like? What do you hear? What do you smell? p. 13-14
23. What would you like to buy from the stores on the street and why? p. 13-14
24. Do you think the boy enjoys running errands with his father? Why or why not?
25. What does the boy's dad and Tio Mateo start complaining about? How does the boy feel about this? p. 16
26. Where does the little boy go with his primos? What do they do? p. 17-18
27. Do you like to play games with family and friends? What games do you like to play? p. 17-18
28. What do the little boy and his primos eat to cool off? What is your favorite flavor of paleta? p. 18
29. What items do the little boy and his dad buy from the aborrotos (the store)? What would you get from the store? p. 19-20
30. Where do the little boy and his dad go after the aborrotos? What do they get for his mom? p. 19-20
31. Make a prediction: The boy and his dad have one last stop. Where do you think they will go and what will they do?
32. Look at the pictures: why are the cars waiting in line? What do they need to do and where are they going? p. 22
33. What does the boy put in the basket for the kids? p. 21
34. Who does the little boy look for at the bridge? p. 23-24
35. Who is in line at the bridge and where are they from? What does the dad refer to them as? Why does he say they are 'stuck between two countries'? p. 25-26
36. Who is Elder? What does he look like? p. 26
37. Look at the pictures: What are the people doing while they are waiting in line? How do you think they feel? p. 25-26
38. How can you tell the little boy and Elder are friends? Why do they call each other 'asere' y 'cuate'? What do these two words mean? p. 27-28
39. What do they give the mother of the little boy? Where did they get this from earlier in the book? p. 27-28
40. How do you think the two little boys feel when they have to part ways? p. 29
41. What documents do the boy and his dad need to show in order to cross? What does the little boy say his passport means? p. 29-30



42. What does the little boy wish for as he crosses? p.30
43. Why do you think his friend Elder cannot cross with him? p.30
44. What does his dad say they will do when Elder and his family are finally able to cross? p.30
45. What does the little boy imagine when he is on his way back home? p.31

POST-READING QUESTIONS

1. What do you think the author hoped you would think after reading the text?
2. How is the town that the boy visits similar or different to the town you live in?
3. What was your favorite part of the text and why?
4. What did this text remind you of?
5. Have you ever traveled to a different place with your family? What was that experience like? How was it similar or different from the little boy in the book?
6. If the author wrote a sequel to the book, what would it be about?
7. What questions would you like to ask the author about the book?
8. What questions do you have about what happened in the book?

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 post-reading activities that can be used in conjunction with *My Two Border Towns*.

ACTIVITY 1: COMPREHENSION CHECK

Assess students' comprehension of the story by asking them to retell the major events in *My Two Border Towns*

Process:

As a class, have students identify and discuss the things that the little boy and his father did throughout the day. As students retell the story, chart or timeline of the plot as a visual reference for students to refer back to.



ACTIVITY 2: LITERACY CONNECTIONS

To expand the literacy connections made when using *My Two Border Towns*, consider including the readings discussed below. David Bowles is also the author of *They Call Me Guero: A Border Kid's Poems*. The following two poems (*Border Kid* and *Pulga Pantoum*) are from this book and can be paired with *My Two Border Towns* as companion texts. This can be used as an opportunity to discuss themes such as community, migration, borders, family, etc..

Process:

- Write the poem on a piece of chart paper or project it digitally so that students can see it.
- Read the poem aloud for the students.
- Choral read the poem with students.
- Ask students what words in the poem are important or what words they do not understand. Highlight important/unknown words on the chart paper.
- If helpful, add pictures/drawings to the text to help with comprehension.
- After you have read the poem on the chart paper, ask students to look for sensory language within the poem. What words/phrases show sight, smell, sound, touch and taste? Circle or highlight these terms. Finally, print a copy of the poem for the students. Students can highlight or circle meaningful phrases or words. Have them write/sketch out the meaning of the poem in the margins.

Border Kid

It's fun to be a border kid, to wake up on Saturdays
and cross the bridge to Mexico with my dad

The town's like a mirror twin of our own,
with Spanish spoken everywhere just the same
but English mostly missing till it pops up
like grains of sugar on a chili pepper.

We have breakfast in our favorite restoran.
Dad sips cafe de olla while I drink chocolate
then we walk down uneven sidewalks, chatting
with strangers and friends in both languages.

Later we load are car with Mexican cokes and Joya,
avocados and cheese, tasty reminders of our roots.

Waiting in line at the bridge, though my smile fades.



The border fence stands tall and ugly, invading
the carrizo at the river's edge. Dad sees me staring,
puts his hands on my shoulder. "Don't worry, m'ijo:

"You're a border kid, a foot on either bank.
Your ancestors crossed this river a thousand times.
No wall, no matter how tall, can stop your heritage
from flowing forever, like the Rio Grande itself."

Pulga Pantoum

Mom and I love to go to the pulga,
to get lost in the crowd that flows
between all the busy stalls,
drawn to colors, sounds and smells

To get lost in the crowd. That flows
from our instincts, I bet. Humans are
drawn to colors, sounds and smells
like a swarm of bees to blooming flowers

From our instincts, I bet humans are
happiest together. Bulging bags in hand,
like a swarm of bees to blooming flowers,
people meet for friendly haggling.

Happiest together, bulging bags in hand-
Mom and I love to go to the pulga!
People meet for friendly haggling
between all the busy stalls

ACTIVITY 3: WRITING-DIARY ENTRY

Based on the author's style of writing, students will create their own diary entry/narrative on how they may spend a day running errands.

Process:



Pretend you are running errands with your parents/guardians just like the boy and his father from *My Two Border Towns*. Write a diary entry about how you spent your day. Remember to write about what you did throughout the entire day. Use language that describes how you use your five senses. What did you see, hear, smell, taste or feel throughout the day?

ACTIVITY 4: SOCIAL STUDIES- MAPPING MY COMMUNITY

Students will create a map of the community they live in or the community that surrounds their school.

Process:

Ask students to remember the places the little boy in *My Two Border Towns* mentioned throughout the day. Create a list of these places on chart paper. Then ask the students what buildings/places they visit in their communities. Write their responses on chart paper. Ask students to compare and contrast the places the little boy visited to the places they visit or may visit. On a large piece of paper, students will create a map by drawing and label places in their community. Afterwards, students can select places on their map and write out what they do at those places and why they are important to them.

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Titles marked with * are Américas Award selections.

**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)

A Sky Without Lines written by Krystia Basil and Illustrated by Laura Borrás. Minedition Publishing, 2020.

A moving and timely story of a young boy separated from his beloved brother and father by a border. Arturo loves to look at maps and the lines where different countries meet--as if greeting each other with a big hug. But his mother tells him these lines have a different purpose--to keep people from moving freely across the land. Arturo and his mother are separated from his father and his brother Antonio by one of these lines. Will he ever see his brother again? But the sky has no lines, so Arturo



dreams of flying with Antonio through the open sky to the moon, free of barriers. Artful, moving watercolor illustrations express a young boy's sorrow at separation and his joyful dreams of a world without lines. (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

Between Us and Abuela: A Family Story from the Border written by Mitali Perkins and illustrated by Sara Palacios. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2019.

It's almost time for Christmas, and Maria is traveling with her mother and younger brother, Juan, to visit their grandmother on the border of California and Mexico. For the few minutes they can share together along the fence, Maria and her brother plan to exchange stories and Christmas gifts with the grandmother they haven't seen in years. But when Juan's gift is too big to fit through the slats in the fence, Maria has a brilliant idea. Here is a heartwarming tale of families and the miracle of love. (Grades 1 and up)

Bright Star written by Yuyi Morales. Neal Porter Books, 2021.

With the combination of powerful, spare language and sumptuous, complex imagery characteristic of her work, Yuyi Morales weaves the tale of a fawn making her way through a landscape that is dangerous, beautiful—and full of potential. A gentle voice urges her onward, to face her fears and challenge the obstacles that seek to hold her back. (Grades Kindergarten and up)

Calling the Doves / El canto de las palomas written 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)

Carmela Full of Wishes written by Matt de la Pena and illustrated by Christain Robinson. G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers, 2018.

When Carmela wakes up on her birthday, her wish has already come true--she's finally old enough to join her big brother as he does the family errands. Together, they travel through their neighborhood, past the crowded bus stop, the fenced-off repair shop, and the panadería, until they arrive at the Laundromat, where Carmela finds a lone dandelion growing in the pavement. But before she can blow its white fluff away, her brother tells her she has to make a wish. If only she can think of just the right wish to make . . . (Grades PreK and up)

Dreamers written and illustrated by Yuyi Morales. Neal Porter Books, 2018.

Dreamers is a celebration of making your home with the things you always carry: your resilience, your dreams, your hopes and history. It's the story of finding your way in a new place, of navigating an unfamiliar world and finding the best parts of it. In dark times, it's a promise that you can make better tomorrows.

This lovingly-illustrated picture book memoir looks at the myriad gifts migrantes bring with them when they leave their homes. It's a story about family. And it's a story to remind us that we are all dreamers, bringing our own strengths wherever we roam. Beautiful and powerful at any time but given particular urgency as the status of our own *Dreamers* becomes uncertain, this is a story that is both topical and timeless.

The lyrical text is complemented by sumptuously detailed illustrations, rich in symbolism. Also included are a brief autobiographical essay about Yuyi's own experience, a list of books that inspired her (and still do), and a description of the beautiful images, textures, and mementos she used to create this book. (PreK and up)

Facing Fear written by Karen Lynn Williams and illustrated by Sara Palacios. Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2021.

Enrique can't believe his father won't let him travel to his team's big soccer tournament. Papi says going across the checkpoint is too risky. Even though Enrique is a U.S. citizen, the rest of the family isn't—and if the border police stop them, the family might be split up. The next morning Enrique decides he's going to his big game, no matter what. But the day ahead will change how he sees his dad and how he defines courage...

This book is a powerful depiction of the everyday struggles faced by undocumented immigrants and their families. Sensitively told with expressive illustrations, *Facing Fear* explores the meaning of bravery and the strength of a community. (Grades 1 and up)



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).

Hear My Voice: The Testimonies of Children Detained at the Southern Border of the United States/Escucha Mi Voz: Los testimonios de los jóvenes detenidos en la frontera sureña de los estados unidos [Bilingual Edition] written by Warren Binford and Michael Garcia Bochenek. Workman Publishing Co., 2021.

Every day, children in migration are detained at the US-Mexico border. They are scared, alone, and their lives are in limbo. Hear My Voice/Escucha mi voz shares the stories of 61 these children, from



An Educator's Guide to *My Two Border Towns* by David Bowles

Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Ecuador, and Mexico, ranging in age from five to seventeen—in their own words from actual sworn testimonies. Befitting the spirit of the project, the book is in English on one side; then flip it over, and there's a complete Spanish version.

Illustrated by 17 Latinx artists, including Caldecott Medalist and multiple Pura Belpré Illustrator Award-winning Yuyi Morales and Pura Belpré Illustrator Award-winning Raúl the Third. Includes information, questions, and action points. Buying this book benefits Project Amplify, an organization that supports children in migration. (Grades 3 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

Home is in Between written by Mitali Perkins and illustrated by Lavanya Naidu. Macmillan Publishers, 2021.

In the timely yet timeless picture book *Home Is in Between*, critically acclaimed author Mitali Perkins and illustrator Lavanya Naidu describe the experience of navigating multiple cultures and embracing the complex but beautiful home in between. Shanti misses the warm monsoon rains in India. Now in America, she watches fall leaves fly past her feet. Still, her family's apartment feels like a village: Mama cooking luchi, funny stories in Bangla, and Baba's big laugh. But outside, everything is different – trick-or-treating, ballet class, and English books. Back and forth, Shanti trudges between her two worlds. She remembers her village and learns her new town. She watches Bollywood movies at home and Hollywood movies with her friends. She is Indian. She is also American. How should she define home? (Grades Kindergarten and up)

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)

Idriss and His Marble written by Rene Gouichoux, Illustrated by Zau Starberry. Starberry Books, 2019.

Idriss, who comes from an unidentified African country, loves his marble. One day, there is an explosion and people start fighting. The unrest continues, and his mother decides it is too dangerous for them to stay. Idriss and his mother leave their village. Dramatic illustrations with strong, brushy black outlines and daubs of color portray their struggle. Mother and son endure a tenuous journey, walking through the desert, riding on crowded buses, crawling beneath barbed wire, and finally getting on a flimsy boat to cross the sea. Along the way, Idriss hangs on tight to his marble, protecting the only thing he took with him from home. The precious marble almost gets lost, as does the dream of reaching safety, but the family is very lucky. As an object of affection to a young child, the marble plays an important role in fostering connections among people—both on the road and at Idriss' new home, which is likely in Europe. The story portrays some reasons why people could become refugees and the struggles they may experience while seeking refuge. However, the combination of artistic choices—the outsized preciousness of the single marble, the stark, impoverished landscape of Idriss' village, the easy authority of a new white friend, and Idriss' lack of linguistic skills, among others—does not disrupt stereotypes about Africa. (Grades Kindergarten and up)

La Frontera: El viaje con papá/My Journey with Papa written by Alfredo Alva & Deborah Mills and illustrated by Claudia Navarro. Barefoot Books, 2018.

Join a young boy and his father on a daring journey from Mexico to Texas to find a new life. They'll need all the resilience and courage they can muster to safely cross the border - la frontera - and to make a home for themselves in a new land. (Grades Kindergarten and up)

Mama's Nightingale: A Story of Immigration and Separation written by Edwidge Danticat and illustrated by Leslie Staub. Dial Books, 2015.

After Saya's mother is sent to an immigration detention center, Saya finds comfort in listening to her mother's warm greeting on their answering machine. To ease the distance between them while she's in jail, Mama begins sending Saya bedtime stories inspired by Haitian folklore on cassette tape. Moved by her mother's tales and her father's attempts to reunite their family, Saya writes a story of her own—one that just might bring her mother home for good.

With stirring illustrations, this tender tale shows the human side of immigration and imprisonment—and shows how every child has the power to make a difference. (Grades Kindergarten and up)

Mango Moon written by Diane de Anda and illustrated by Sue Cornelison. Albert Whitman & Company, 2019.



When a father is taken away from his family and faces deportation, the family is left to grieve and wonder what comes next. Maricela, Manuel, and their mother face the many challenges of having their lives completely changed by the absence of their father and husband. Having to move, missed soccer games and birthday parties, and emptiness are just part of the now day-to-day norm. *Mango Moon* shows what life is like from a child's perspective when a parent is deported, and the heartbreaking realities the family has to face. (Grades PreK and up)

Migrants written by Issa Watanabe. Gecko Press, 2020.

Bear witness to a long, arduous journey across forests and seas for those searching for renewed hope. The travelers—a group of anthropomorphic animals carrying just the clothes on their backs and what little else is possible—stand out against the black background. There's the unyielding deep green of the ground and the stark trees that line the path ahead. But wait, here comes Death with lively flowers pressed upon its black robe and a giant blue ibis at its side. Together the travelers set off, sharing food and company and camping when fatigue sets in. Once at the coast, everyone climbs aboard the boat, a modest wooden scrap against the turbulent sea. The sea proves itself cruel, obliterating the travelers' vessel, and those that can swim to shore do so. Not everyone makes it. More fall behind the further the journey goes on, and all along, Death lingers nearby, accompanied by its ibis. It's a lengthy march disrupted with loss and grief until the migrants finally arrive at a landscape of blossoming shrubbery. Originally released in Mexico and imported via New Zealand, Peruvian creator Watanabe's depiction of migration and its often harrowing trials shares no words but plenty of images that ask readers to consider. It's a rare feat: a wordless picture book in which the absence of text intensifies the stories it tells. With its stark dearth of color, seen only where necessary, and evocative imagery, the artist's pictures make the migrant's journey—distinct yet everyday—feel palpable. (Grades Kindergarten and up)

My Diary from Here to There / Mi diario de aquí 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)

My Papi Has a Motorcycle written by Isabel Quintero and illustrated by Zeke Peña. Kokila, 2019.

When Daisy Ramona zooms around her neighborhood with her papi on his motorcycle, she sees the people and places she's always known. She also sees a community that is rapidly changing around her.



But as the sun sets purple-blue-gold behind Daisy Ramona and her papi, she knows that the love she feels will always be there.

With vivid illustrations and text bursting with heart, *My Papi Has a Motorcycle* is a young girl's love letter to her hardworking dad and to memories of home that we hold close in the midst of change. (Grades PreK 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)

My Town / Mi Pueblo written by Nicholas Solis and illustrated by Luisa Uribe. Nancy Paulsen Books, 2022.

Two cousins live in two towns, separated by a river. But there is also a bigger divide—the US-Mexico border—which means they live in different countries. On the girl's side, English is the main language, and on the boy's it's Spanish. The cousins love their towns, and they love visiting each other's, where they notice some things are the same and some are wonderfully different, adding up to a vibrant world full of even more possibilities.

Author Nicholas Solis shows how border towns are special places, beautiful and dynamic, because two cultures can be better than one—and both cultures should be equally treasured and respected. (Grades PreK 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)



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 Notebook Keeper written by Stephen Birseno and Illustrated by Magdalena Mora. Random House Press, 2022.

Noemi and her mother are denied entry at the border and must sign with the refugee in charge of the notebook, an unofficial ledger of those waiting to cross from Mexico into the U.S. (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 Suitcase written by Chris Naylor-Ballesteros. Nosy Crow Publishing, 2020.

When a new stranger arrives in town with a single suitcase, he doesn't receive a warm welcome. Bird, Rabbit, and Fox wonder what's inside the stranger's suitcase, and they're not sure they believe his



answers. Soon they'll learn a lesson about just how much we carry with us -- and how much a warm welcome can mean. (Grades Kindergarten and up)

Super Cilantro Girl / La Superniña del Cilantro written by Juan Felipe Herrera and illustrated by Honorio Tapia. Lee & Low Books, 2022.

An empowering story by former US poet laureate Juan Felipe Herrera about a young girl who uses her newfound superpowers to rescue her mamá from the United States-Mexico border. Young Esmeralda Sinfronteras eagerly waits for her mamá to come home from Mexico so the two of them can be together again. But when Esmeralda learns that her mother is being kept at the United States-Mexico border, she begins to worry about when they will be reunited. That night, Esmeralda makes a wish that Mamá comes home bright and full of life, like the heart-shaped cilantro leaves that grow in their garden. The next day, there's still no word from Mamá, but something strange has happened to Esmeralda's hands; they are green, as green as cilantro leaves! At school, Esmeralda tries to hide her hands and the other parts of her body that are turning green too, but it's no use. Her hair has become tangled like green vines and she's grown fifty feet tall. Esmeralda rushes home hoping to find Mamá and ask her for help, but Mamá still hasn't returned. Missing her mother more than ever, Esmeralda decides to use her newfound powers to save Mamá herself. In a daring rescue, Esmeralda--now known as Super Cilantro Girl--finds her mother, evades border patrol, and successfully reunites her family. Herrera taps poetically into the wellsprings of imagination to address and transform the very serious concerns many first-generation children have about national borders and immigrant status. Artist Honorio Robledo Tapia, a prize-winning illustrator of children's books, has created landscapes that will delight all children in this heartwarming story about a brave girl who becomes her own hero. (Grades 1 and up)

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 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)

The Wall in the Middle of the Book written and illustrated by Jon Agee. Rocky Pond Books, 2018.



There's a wall in the middle of the book, and our hero--a young knight--is sure that the wall protects his side of the book from the dangers of the other side--like an angry tiger and giant rhino, and worst of all, an ogre who would gobble him up in a second! But our knight doesn't seem to notice the crocodile and growing sea of water that are emerging on his side. When he's almost over his head and calling for help, who will come to his rescue? An individual who isn't as dangerous as the knight thought--from a side of the book that might just have some positive things to offer after all! (Grades PreK and up)

To the Other Side written by Erika Meza. Katherine Tegen Books, 2023.

My sister tells me the rules of the game are simple.

Avoid the monsters. Don't get caught. And keep moving.

If the monsters catch you, you're out.

A young boy and his older sister have left home to play a game. To win, they must travel across endless lands together and make it to the finish line. Each child imagines what might be waiting for them across the border: A spotted dog? Ice cream! Or maybe a new school.

But the journey is difficult, and the monsters are realer than they imagined. And when it no longer feels like a game, the two children must still find a way to forge ahead. (Grades PreK and up)

Two White Rabbits written by Jairo Buitrago and illustrated by Rafael Yockteng. Groundwork Books, 2015.

In this moving and timely story, a young child describes what it is like to be a migrant as she and her father travel north toward the U.S. border. They travel mostly on the roof of a train known as The Beast, but the little girl doesn't know where they are going. She counts the animals by the road, the clouds in the sky, the stars. Sometimes she sees soldiers. She sleeps, dreaming that she is always on the move, although sometimes they are forced to stop and her father has to earn more money before they can continue their journey. As many thousands of people, especially children, in Mexico and Central America continue to make the arduous journey to the U.S. border in search of a better life, this is an important book that shows a young migrant's perspective. (Grades Kindergarten and up)

¡Vamos! Let's Cross the Bridge written and illustrated by Raúl the Third. Versify, 2021.

People are always crossing the bridge for work, to visit family, or for play. Some going this way; others going that way. Back and forth they go. With friends on foot and in bicycles, in cars and trucks, the bridge is an incredibly busy place with many different types of vehicles.

Little Lobo and his dog Bernabé have a new truck and they are using it to carry party supplies over the bridge with their pals El Toro and La Oink Oink. The line is long and everyone on the bridge is stuck. How will they pass the time? (Grades PreK 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)

Wall written by Tom Cole. Templar Publishing, 2014.

The story of one boy's struggle to reunite his family, on the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. A young boy and his mother and sister were separated from their father when the Berlin Wall was built between East and West Germany. This story shows the family's struggle as they try to cross the wall so they can be together again. This spectacular book is based on true stories about the Berlin Wall. Powerful illustrations teamed with an emotive storyline make this an impressive tale of triumph over adversity. (Grades Kindergarten and up)

What Is a Refugee? written by Elisa Gravel. Puffin, 2021.

In this simple, graphic and bold picture book for young children, author/illustrator Elise Gravel explores what it means to be a refugee. This book is the perfect tool to introduce an important and timely topic to children. (Grades PreK and up)

When Spring Comes to the DMZ written by Uk-Bae Lee. Plough Publishing, 2019.

This bittersweet picture book walks through the four seasons at Korea's heavily weaponized demilitarized zone, celebrating the nature that thrives there while mourning the human cost of this border wall. Although the story does not even define or discuss the DMZ or the Korean War, colorful illustrations reveal to young readers the long fences of razor wire hugging a beautiful mountainside. But because no humans are allowed in this 2.5-mile-wide, 150-mile-long buffer zone, the area has unintentionally become a nature sanctuary. The water deer, striped salmon, and mountain goats know no limitations to their habitat, crossing borders, swimming under barbed wire, and nesting near land mines. Their freedom, together with many references to home and family, stand in stark contrast to the military exercises that have continued through the cease-fire since 1953. Lee views this irony through the character of elderly Grandfather, who makes his way to the wall every season, gazing longingly upon his inaccessible former homeland. A fold out reveal at book's end is symbolic of the hope of a reunified Korea, with a simple reunion embrace representing the dreams of families separated since the 1950s. The endnote provides needed background along with a plea for peace and freedom. 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)

With Lots of Love written by Jenny Torres Sanchez and illustrated by André Ceolin. Viking Books for Young Readers, 2022.

Rocio has grown up in Central America, but now she and her family are moving to the United States. Rocio does her best to adjust to a new way of living, but there are many things she misses from her old life—Abuela's cooking, Abuela's pinata creations, Abuela's warm hugs, and of course, Abuela herself most of all. But Abuela finds a way to send Rocio something special just in time for her birthday—a gift wrapped with lots of love—and that fills Rocio to the brim. (Grades PreK and up)

**Xochitl and the Flowers / Xóchitl, la niña de las flores* written 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 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