

# LATIN AMERICA THROUGH FILM

Educator's Guide

## WHICH WAY HOME

Directed by Rebecca Cammisa

United States, 2009

Length: 83 minutes

In Spanish and English with subtitles



## FILM SUMMARY

“Of the thousands of Latin American migrants traveling through Mexico with the hope of reaching the United States, approximately five percent are unaccompanied children. Director Rebecca Cammisa follows several such children on their grueling but ever-hopeful journey north. Kevin and Fito have fled their small town in search of greater opportunities in America. José set out for the States but was quickly apprehended and now languishes in the bureaucratic process of deportation back to Honduras. These are just a few of the true stories of young children undertaking the brutal odyssey from Latin America to the United States, never letting their dire circumstances overtake their youthful exuberance. In this bold, revelatory documentary, Cammisa presents a harrowing tale of children in danger, riding on tops of freight trains and subject to conditions beyond the capacity of their tender years to navigate. But this is also a story of indefatigable youth, of children of very young age pursuing the only outlet for

opportunity they perceive, and of the many allies and adversaries they encounter along the way.” – Tribeca Film Festival.

“The film follows several unaccompanied child migrants as they journey through Mexico en route to the U.S. on a freight train they call "The Beast." Director Rebecca Cammisa ("Sister Helen") tracks the stories of children like Olga and Freddy, nine-year old Hondurans who are desperately trying to reach their families in Minnesota, and Jose, a ten-year-old El Salvadoran who has been abandoned by smugglers and ends up alone in a Mexican detention center, and focuses on Kevin, a canny, streetwise 14-year-old Honduran, fleeing an abusive stepfather, and whose mother hopes that he will reach New York City and send money back to his family. These are stories of hope and courage, disappointment and sorrow. They are the ones you never hear about - the invisible ones.” –Bullfrogfilms.com

### **AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS**

- The 2010 EMMY Award for Outstanding Informational Programming
- The Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award Grand Prize
- The 2010 Imagen Award for Best Documentary on Television
- The American Heritage Award for Distinguished Public Service, the American Immigration Council
- The La Mancha Humanitarian Award, The Casa Cornelia Law Center
- The Humanitarian Activist Award, Alliance of Women Film Journalists
- Jury Honorable Mention for Documentary Feature, Cine Las Americas FF
- Audience Award for Best Documentary Feature, Cine Las Americas FF
- Eye Audience Award, Seoul International Youth Film Festival, South Korea
- Special Jury Prize for Human Rights, Traverse City Film Festival, Michigan
- The UNICEF Award, The 2009 Havana International Film Festival
- The 2010 Youth Vision Award, United Nations Association Film Festival

- The 2011 Dirk Vanderypen Journalism Award
- Le Grand Prix du Festival Festival des Libertés, Belgium

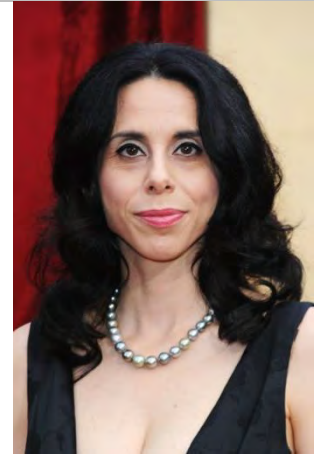
### **NOMINATIONS**

- ACADEMY AWARD® Nominee 2010 Best Documentary Feature
- The Independent Spirit Award for Best Documentary Film
- EMMY Award Nominee 2010 for Outstanding Individual Achievement — Cinematography
- EMMY Award Nominee 2010 for Outstanding Individual Achievement — Editing
- EMMY Award Nominee 2010 for Outstanding Individual Achievement — Research

## DIRECTOR'S CORNER

In 2003, Rebecca Cammisa founded Documentress Films, teamed up with Mr. Mudd Productions, and began developing the 2010 OSCAR-nominated documentary, "Which Way Home," for which she received a 2006 Fulbright Fellowship for Filmmaking.

"Which Way Home" aired on HBO and was nominated for a 2010 Independent Spirit Award for Best Documentary, and received four Emmy nominations. The film won the 2010 News & Documentary Emmy Award for Outstanding Informational Programming and also received a 2010 Imagen Award for Best Documentary on Television. (Taken from <http://whichwayhome.net/about-the-filmmakers.html> )



Check out the links below for interviews with Rebecca Cammisa discussing her film *Which Way Home*

- [The documentarian discusses how 2005-2006 Fulbright to Mexico helped her in producing and directing the critically-acclaimed "Which Way Home" and how other filmmakers can benefit from the Fulbright experience](#)
- [Director Rebecca Cammisa discusses her feature-length documentary "Which Way Home," which follows three unaccompanied children as they leave their homes in Latin America and travel through Mexico to the U.S. border in order to reunite with their parents who've made the trip before them.](#)
- [Question and Answer with Rebecca Cammisa on the making of \*Which Way Home\*.](#)

## **GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR USING FILM IN THE CLASSROOM**

Film can be used in a way similar to diverse literature, transporting students to a different place or time. To show a good film is to give students the opportunity to experience a piece of life through someone else's eyes. If we use films written, directed, produced or acted by those from other countries, we're also providing exposure to another's point of view, one that often is vastly different from our own.

Our students are from a visually and technologically savvy generation. Amid Promethean boards, other smart board technologies, Ipads, and Imovie apps, watching a movie in class isn't necessarily the 'treat' it used to be--some of our students are used to creating their own movies. Too often movies in class have become synonymous with nap time or busy work--a.k.a the teacher has work she/he has to get done, and doesn't have time to teach. So, the idea of a movie itself might not catch a class's attention, but that story that transports them to a country they've never seen, an ecosystem they've only read about, languages or music they've never heard, or art they've never seen--that can grab their attention.

Discussions of films like these are always a great exercise in critical thinking skills. In Spring 2012 the UNM LAII hosted a workshop on "Teaching About the Border Through the Lens of Film." Dr. Liz Hutchison, UNM Professor of History, brought up a number of important points to consider when using film in the classroom--many that could lead to fruitful classroom discussions.

The following is a section from a hand-out she provided. It's full of great questions, both for teachers to consider when choosing films, and to be used in class discussions about films. She specifies Latin America, as that is our focus, but these are applicable to any film.

### **Film as a Source for Teaching About Latin America**

- **Origins:** Why, when, and how was this film produced? Who paid for production and dissemination? Who was supposed to see it?
- **Motives:** What was the film-maker trying to accomplish by writing/directing/producing this film? What were the film-maker's immediate goals (to persuade its audience, to document events, to effect political or other change, etc.)?
- **Perspective:** What can you tell about the film-makers' values and assumptions by watching the film itself? What can you learn about his/her biography, historical

context, or career from other sources? How does this affect the credibility or reliability of the film with respect to the events it portrays?

- **Film:** What major themes and topics emerge in the film itself? If the film claims to be “true,” what evidence or techniques does the film-maker use to convey the story or message of the film, and are these assertions believable?
- **Information:** What does the film say about the events, people, or time period under discussion?

### **Resources for using films in the classroom**

We realize films like these can be hard to come by, but below we've provided information about programs that provide many Latin American films for free to teachers nationwide.

- The [Roger Thayer Stone Center for Latin American Studies](#) at Tulane University has an incredible [Lending Library](#). It is “the most comprehensive lending collection of educational materials about Latin American topics available for classroom use. Their library holds over 3,000 videos, slide packets, culture kits, curriculum units, games, and miscellaneous print items.” Films comprise a large part of their resources and they will ship the films to teachers nationwide free of charge.
- The [Institute for the Study of the Americas](#) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has extensive [Film Resources](#) that they, too, freely lend to educators nationally. They also have a section devoted to films for K-12 classrooms with accompanying curricular materials for the majority of the films.

### **Guidelines for Implementing Film in the Classroom**

Below are some guidelines for implementing film in your classroom. These were adapted from Regina Higgins' article “[Teaching Latin America Through Film](#),” available at: [www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/6457](http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/6457)

#### **Introduce the theme before you introduce the film**

To make the most of viewing a film, introduce students to the themes in instruction, so you can explain and provide context before you view the film together. Connect with the themes not just in your planning, but in your teaching. Let students know explicitly and in detail just what you want them to watch and listen for. Tell them how their viewing will link to their learning. If there are terms and concepts that may be new to students, give them a thorough grounding in their meaning.

Film, especially documentary film, is powerful and immediate. We see people affected (and sometimes afflicted) by forces we may have known only in the abstract. Suddenly the consequences of these forces are brought to life for us, made present through individuals we can see and hear. Preparation and context help students to process these images as part of their learning. In fact, many conventional reading strategies work well, with some adaptations, for pre-viewing a film.

### **K-W-L works for viewing as well as reading**

For most films, the standard K-W-L (“what I know, what I want to know, what I learned”) graphic organizer for reading makes a good framing device. This gives students a chance to put into words what they bring to the film, what they expect from the experience of viewing, and then, afterwards, what new information or insights they achieved. If students are already completing K-W-L organizers for reading, they’ll be familiar with the process. It will also give the message from you that viewing the film will be just as important a part of their learning as assigned reading.

The “what I learned” section provides a solid post-viewing assessment. And, to keep the learning going forward, students can re-visit and update their “what I know” notes, and add to their “what I want to know” questions. The final discussion can focus on just how students can learn more about the themes presented in the film.

### **Making predictions**

Even very young students can prepare for a film by predicting what they will see and learn about. When they make their predictions in informal writing or in drawings, students form some basic anticipatory ideas, which give them a context for viewing. Make notes without comment. Now you’ve set up an opportunity to test their assumptions. Will their predictions come true, or will they see and learn things they hadn’t even thought of?

After viewing, students can discuss what they saw that surprised them, and why they were surprised. The post-viewing is an opportunity for assessment, as well as a springboard for more exploration.

### **Asking essential questions**

Every film, documentary or feature, brings up and addresses essential questions about life and the world. A good post-viewing activity is to challenge students to answer specifically and in writing the essential question from the various points of view offered in the film. And, after thoughtful study and

viewing, students can add their own answers to the essential question.

### **Building on learning**

When the film is over and you turn the lights back on, be sure to continue the learning through discussion and writing, as well as other projects. At first, especially if the film is emotionally engaging, students will need to respond informally, sharing their surprise or outrage. Let them express their reactions, but be ready to turn their energy and engagement to further learning.

While interest is high and memory is fresh, students should note not only what they've learned from the film, but what questions remain for them. A class list of further questions to explore can give form and immediacy to a return to the "regular" instruction through reading. Those questions can light students' way back into the textbook chapter, and give them a reason for digging through data. Some films inspire students to action, as well as further study.

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### **MEET THE CAST**

(taken from the official website for the movie at <http://whichwayhome.net/meet-the-children.html>)

**Kevin**, a canny, 14-year-old Honduran, is traveling through Mexico to get to the United States. His reason: to find a job and send money back to his mother, Lupe. Kevin hopes to buy her a house so that she can leave an abusive relationship. Lupe hopes he will find work, or some U.S. citizen will adopt him. Kevin wants to go to Manhattan. But the trip is a revelation to Kevin – he was prepared for the harshness of the journey, but the violence that he experiences and witnesses takes its toll. Unexpectedly, he reexamines the high cost migrants pay for their common dream of a better life in the United States.

**Fito**, 13-year-old Honduran whose mother abandoned him when he was very young, lives with his impoverished grandmother, who has a job making cigars. He is traveling to the U.S. to look for work and hopes to be adopted.

**Yurico**, a 17-year-old Mexican who ran away from his mother, has lived on the streets of Tapachula, Chiapas since age seven. Yurico proclaims that his life has been spent begging and sleeping on streets, thieving and abusing drugs; sometimes he makes money by washing buses at the city depot. Yurico wants a life free of drugs and violence, and is traveling to the U.S. to find a loving family.

**Jairo**, a 14-year-old Mexican whose father never accepted him.



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He has lived on the streets of Chiapas since his mother was killed a year ago. Schooling is very important to him, but he cannot currently afford to continue his education. Jairo has decided to go to Laredo, Texas to find employment, and then return to Mexico with money to hire a tutor.

**Jose**, a nine-year-old Salvadoran, lives with his aunt, and has not seen his mother Rosa since she left to work in the U.S. three years ago. Hoping to live with her, he traveled through Mexico on a bus with a smuggler. When Mexican immigration officials boarded the bus, the smuggler abandoned Jose, who was then taken to a detention center.

**Olga and Freddy**, nine-year-old Hondurans being taken to the U.S. by smugglers, travel on Mexican freight trains. Olga is trying to get to her mother and sisters in Minnesota, while Freddy wants to reunite with his father. Both have witnessed many accidents while riding the trains, and hope that God will bless their journey.

**Juan Carlos**, a 13-year-old Guatemalan, left a letter for his mother Esmeralda, stating that he was going to the U.S. to help her and his siblings. Juan Carlos' father abandoned the family years ago, so he feels it is his responsibility to provide for them. He also wants to find his father in New York, and confront him about why he's forgotten them.

WHICH WAY HOME also features the families of two young migrants who did not survive their journey. The bodies of 13-year-old **Eloy** and his 16-year-old cousin **Rosario** were found separately in the desert. Their deaths, along with the other stories of those featured in the film, underscore the extremely dangerous journey undertaken by these often-invisible children, who are making adult decisions to change their lives.

## LESSON PLANS & ACTIVITIES

Common Core Standards Addressed:

K-12

### Reading

#### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

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

#### Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

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

### Writing

#### Text Types and Purposes:

- 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.

#### 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.
- Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

#### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
- Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.
- Integrate and evaluate the content presented in diverse media formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

#### Dialogue Journal

This activity was adapted from an activity found in *Reading, Writing and Rising Up* by Linda Christensen (Rethinking Schools Publications, 2000, p. 48-49). See the end of this guide for the accompanying activity sheets to use in your classroom.

Give each student a copy of Activity Sheet #1. As a class, read over the various themes listed on the sheet, discussing what they mean, and possible examples. Have each student create a table out of paper with two columns labeled “Observations/Quotes” and “Reactions and Reflections” (See Activity Sheet #2 for an

## Writing

example). View the film over a few days. Have students use the table they created to keep a dialogue journal throughout the viewing of the film. Students can keep track of their thoughts as they watch the film, then give them time at the end of each class period to expand on their “Reactions and Reflections” section.

If time allows, expand the activity by having students write a more in-depth review of the movie or reflection on the themes based upon the things they noted in their dialogue journal. Students should include why or why not they would recommend the movie, its usefulness in the classroom, and what their reaction to the film was.

### **Character Study**

Pick your favorite character. Imagine that you are living his or her life. How would you feel? What would you do if you were in his or her position? Would you still try to come to the United States? How would your life be different from what it is today? Does this character change over the course of the film? If so, how? Write an essay that answers all of these questions.

### **The View from Abroad**

Many of the children in the film discuss what they think the United States is going to be like. Do you think their impressions are correct? Do you think it is worth risking everything to come to the United States? If you could have a conversation with any of the children from the movie what would you tell them? What do you think they should know?

## **Extension Projects: Immigration**

Below you’ll find four sections of possible extension projects: Film Study, Literary Connections, Rethinking the Border, and Interrogating the Myths and Realities of Immigration

### **Learning About Immigration Through Film:**

#### **Comparative Analysis of Films on Immigration:**

This activity is more suited for an entire unit on immigration that would allow for the viewing of more than just one movie. Begin by showing one film on the topic of immigration (possible films are listed in the resource section below). Once students have viewed the first film, discuss the themes, developments, or ideas presented in the film. Based on this discussion create some sort of visual diagram or table that can be used to take notes on

the remaining films to be viewed—perhaps a table grouped by characters, countries, themes, plot, etc.

As each film is viewed, fill out the table either as a class or individually.

Once students have viewed the chosen films, ask them to sort through what they've seen—Are there common themes in these films? If so, what are they? What do the films have in common? Are any of the characters similar? Is the viewer's response different for each film? Do the films leave the viewer feeling the same way? What information are we given on immigration through these films? What do we learn? Did your thinking on immigration change at all? What did you learn? Which film was the most memorable for you - and why? What were the intentions or purposes of the individual directors in creating these films?

With the information gathered from the above questions and conversations, have students create some sort of culminating paper or project. There are a number of possibilities:

- Students create a Venn Diagram comparing two or more of the movies, then write a compare and contrast essay using the Venn Diagram as the basis for their essay.
- Students create a graphic organizer on “Learning about Immigration through Film.” With this information, students then write an essay that discusses the themes that each film explores and how these themes contribute to learning about Immigration through Film.
- Students write a reflective essay that describes their personal learning journey as they were exposed to these various films about immigration. They should include their initial thoughts on immigration before the unit and how their opinions or thinking changed by the end of the unit. They should discuss any “Aha” moments they had and why these were significant. They could include a discussion of the movie they found the most meaningful and why.

See the section on film in the resources below for a listing of complementary films.

[Note: Some of the following activities were originally published as part of the Educator's Guide to *Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote: A Migrant's Tale*, which was produced on behalf of the Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs and the University of New Mexico Latin American & Iberian Institute.]

**Literary Connections:**

### **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:**

1. Read “First Crossing” either individually, in pairs, or as a whole-class read aloud.
2. Compare Marcos’ experience with that of the children in the documentary. Have students discuss any similarities and differences in the two stories.
3. 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.
4. 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. 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 to think about what it may be like for a child or young adult to immigrate to the U.S.

If time permits for you to explore this resource more fully with your students, know that there are many other freely available

guides that are related to this collection of stories. Below is an example:

- [Educator's Guide for \*The Circuit\*](#)

**“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://knau.org/post/nau-english-professor-monica-brown-weighs-power-dehumanizing-language#stream/0>

Process:

1. Read or listen to the article as a class.
2. 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.
3. 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 the film *Who Is Dayani Cristal*. 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 in a unit immigration.

### **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](#) ?”

1. 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.
2. 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 the film *Who Is Dayani Cristal* or other films and books on immigration and/or the border that they are familiar with. Last, have students imagine that they are a member of border patrol. Make a list of the characteristics that a patroller would notice.
3. 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.
4. 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 :**

#### **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 any of the films or books listed in the resource section, 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.

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## **RELATED RESOURCES FOR TEACHING ABOUT IMMIGRATION**

[Note: The following resource list was originally published as part of the Educator's Guide to *Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote: A Migrant's Tale*, which was produced on behalf of the Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs and the University of New Mexico Latin American & Iberian Institute.]

### **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, Joaquin receives help and friendship from Prietita, a brave young Mexican American girl. Though her friends' first reaction on seeing Joaquin 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 Joaquin 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](#)

***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 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)

*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 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 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.

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.

>>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)

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

*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.

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.

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 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](#)

*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 future or has kept a secret she felt was too big to share. (Grades 7 and up)

## **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 gangs after high school, and dates the 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 Rafters*, 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 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 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

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 US.; children like Jose, a ten-year old El Salvadoran, who has been abandoned by smugglers and 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](#)

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**ABOUT  
THIS GUIDE**



Written by staff at the UNM Latin American & Iberian Institute (LAI), *Latin America Through Film Educator's Guides* provide an excellent way to teach about Latin America through film. For more materials that support teaching about Latin America in the classroom, visit the LAI online at <http://laii.unm.edu/outreach>. This guide was prepared 03/ 2012 by Katrina Dillon, LAI Project Assistant.

## Instructions for Dialogue Journal

The following is adapted from Linda Christensen's book *Reading, Writing and Rising Up* (2000, p. 48-49)

### Dialogue Journal for Film: Guiding Ideas

As you watch the film, keep track of scenes or dialogues that you want the class to come to for discussion, or that you want to think about more. Use your Observations and Reflections table to list the specific scene or dialogue, and to write your reaction. The following are ideas to help you think about what you are viewing.

1. **SOCIAL QUESTIONS:** Look for race, class, and gender inequalities. Write what you notice and how it makes you feel, or why you think it's important.
2. **GREAT WRITING:** Listen for a line, a phrase, or an entire dialogue that you think is great writing (or speaking if this film is a documentary). Think about how you might "steal" some ideas or words to use in your own writing or speaking. Listening for good examples will help you to become a better speaker and writer.
3. **QUESTIONS:** It could be that you don't understand something that is going on in a movie. These questions usually lead to reach classroom discussion.
4. **TALK BACK:** Get mad at a character or narrator. Talk back. Disagree. These are also great discussion starters.
5. **MEMORIES:** Every dialogue or scene changes somewhat depending upon the viewer and his or her experiences. You might hear yourself saying, "That reminds me of . . ." What memories click when you watch the film?
6. **AHA'S:** As you watch a movie, you might start to notice a thread that you want to follow. Keep track of these. When it comes time to write an essay or answer an extended response question, you will have the evidence that you need.
7. **OTHER READINGS OR FILMS:** Sometimes when we watch a film, other films or books come to mind. It's good to write those down.
8. **VISUAL TECHNIQUES:** Above, I asked you to keep track of great writing or speaking, but I'd also like you to watch for great visual techniques: use of imagery, flashback, scenery, filming style, etc. Notice the things that work and how they help to further the purpose of the film.

ACTIVITY SHEET FOR DIALOGUE JOURNAL

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

OBSERVATIONS/QUOTES	REACTIONS & REFLECTIONS