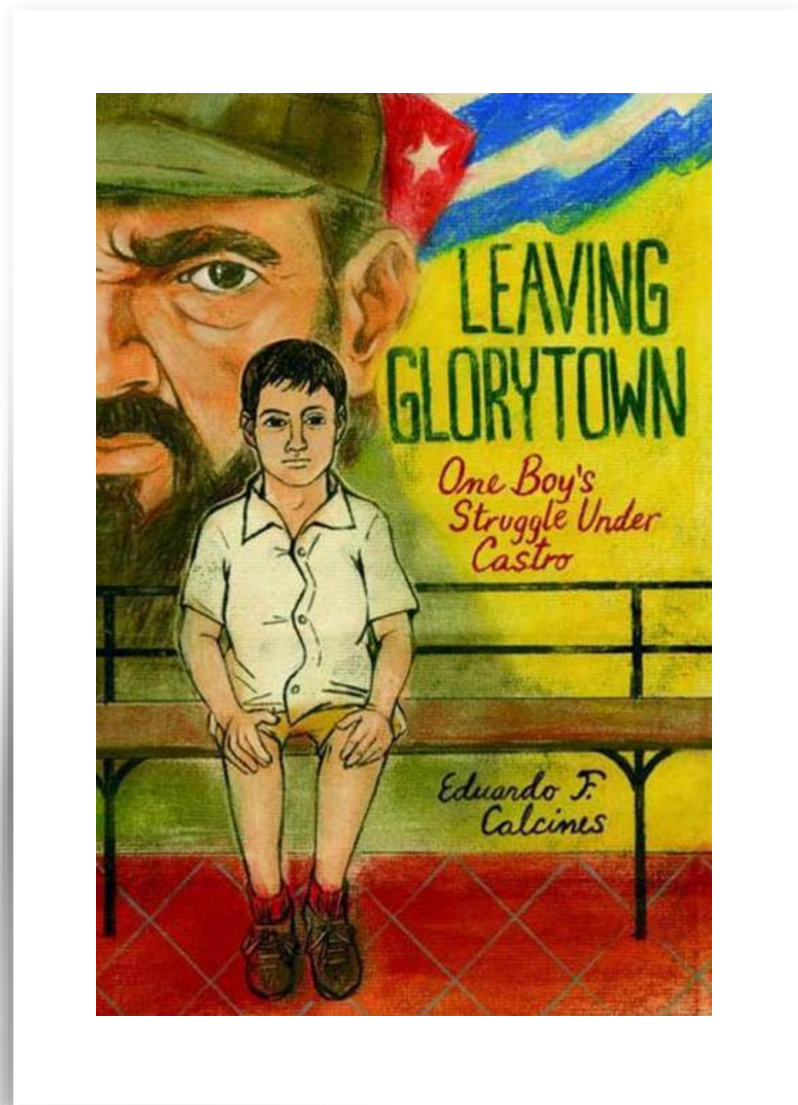


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Educator's Guide

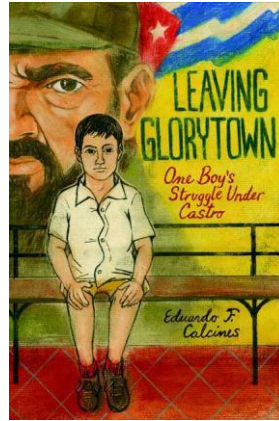
Leaving Glorytown:

One Boy's Struggle Under Castro

Written by Eduardo F. Calcines

Published by Farrar Straus Giroux, 2009

ISBN: 9780374343941



BOOK SUMMARY

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, and over the next few years, it was hard for Eduardo to understand why soldiers now stood on every street corner, food was strictly rationed, and adults weren't allowed to gather together—even at Christmastime or for family parties. But as he grew older, the realities of Communist Cuba became clear to him, often painfully so. After his family applied for an exit visa to immigrate to America when Eduardo was ten, he was ridiculed by his schoolmates and even his teachers for being a traitor to his country and, worse, his father was sent to an agricultural reform camp to do hard labor for fifteen hours a day as punishment for daring to want to leave. During the years to come, Eduardo hoped with all his might for one thing: that their exit visas would be granted before he turned fifteen, the age at which he would be drafted into the army.

In this gripping memoir, Eduardo F. Calcines recounts his boyhood in Glorytown, a neighborhood in the city of Cienfuegos, 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.

AUTHOR'S CORNER

About *Leaving Glorytown* in the words of the author. . .

Until I was introduced to Oskar Schindler, in Steven Spielberg's "Schindler's List", I had never been exposed to the personal side of the extraordinary human dilemma that was the Holocaust. This film inspired me to detail my childhood in Communist Cuba, an era filled with its own share of human dilemma. Although an admirer of Ernest Hemingway, to consider myself a literary man would be a gross overstatement and writing a book was beyond my wildest dreams. Yet I was blessed with a loving wife who gifted me with two sons, who have proven to be the greatest joy of my life. Naturally, I took a special interest in the childhoods of my boys and niece, Rebeca. I felt that life had granted me the opportunity to be a child again by making their early lives as special as could be. Along with the playful days spent under the sun, there was endless time spent storytelling. Without realizing it, their childhoods had prepared me to ultimately write my memoir.



It is my humble hope that you will find my writing enjoyable and revealing of a place and time that stood still in my heart and memories. I am eternally grateful for God's grace in my life and for those of you who have shown interest in my story. (Taken from <http://glorytown.net/authors-letter.htm>).

Students with questions can also write the author at <http://glorytown.net/contact.htm>.

Click [here](#) to watch an interview with Calcines.

USING LEAVING GLORYTOWN IN THE CLASSROOM

I realize that almost everything about Cuba is politically charged and polarized. This has made it difficult for me to write a review of *Leaving Glorytown*. Not only is it a book about life in Cuba after the 1959 Revolution, but it is also a memoir. To question the ideas or themes of a memoir is to question the author's own personal story. My position as a U.S. citizen weighs a little heavier on my mind when I write about Cuba, particularly when I struggle with books written about the Cuban experience. I have my own thoughts and opinions about Cuba, and I realize that these are influenced by my own positionality. I can imagine how much of an author's being must go into the creation of a book, even more so perhaps for a memoir. I feel that all of this necessitates a responsible and respectful discussion of any title. I don't take book reviews lightly. I think carefully over how to share my thoughts and reactions. With that said, the following is a discussion of my thoughts on *Leaving Glorytown*.

Calcines' strength in *Leaving Glorytown* is his portrayal of the close

relationships he had with friends and family. By far, my favorite part of the book was Calcines' description of his relationship with his grandparents, especially his abuelo. The affection he shared with him was palpable. His descriptions of his relationships with his friends and cousins were also quite touching. Despite everything, they were always loyal—something that I hope any students reading would take note of. I also believe that Calcines does a good job of sharing important cultural elements of Cuban life throughout his memoir. Readers will gain some understanding of Cuban traditions. Yet, I was saddened when so many of the things that he and his friends longed for were symbols of 1960s American culture, like ketchup, apple pie, blonde haired, blue-eyed girls, and Juicy Fruit gum.

Leaving Glorytown was a difficult read for me in many ways. Typically, I enjoy memoirs, and I'd been looking forward to this one. However, it painted a difficult picture for me to accept. Calcines is quite critical of Fidel Castro, and not without reason. I don't think it is any secret, even to those who have supported Castro's Revolution, that there were serious issues in Cuba, including human rights violations. Like so many other revolutions throughout history, the reality didn't always live up to the ideals. Calcines begins his book with a telling statement: "I was raised in two worlds—one a world of ideals, the other the real world. The world of ideals was full of Fidel Castro's lying propaganda and empty promises of a better tomorrow. The real world was even worse: a world of oppression, hunger, fear, poverty, and violence" (p. 1). For me, Calcines suggests a far too simplistic understanding of the Cuban situation: everything about Castro and communism is bad, while U.S. capitalism is the ultimate ideal to be attained. His portrayal is too black and white. I believe any legitimate discussion of the Cuban Revolution, must deal not only with what happened after 1959, but also the events preceding the revolution. There are important reasons for how and why the revolution took place, and why such a significant portion of the population was willing to support Castro. If we are going to teach our students about Castro's Cuba, then we must also be prepared to discuss conditions in Cuba under his predecessor, Fulgencio Batista. We must look at the realities that created the need and opportunity for Castro's political movement.

Calcines' word choice is telling. He refers to supporters of Castro as zealots, thugs, minions, or evil people. Take the following description of a teacher: "Señora Santana, like many Cubans, was of African descent. She wore a ponytail that pulled her hair tight against her skull, and her eyes gleamed with a fervor of the truly brainwashed. Her appearance was made even more terrifying by the electrical tape that held one arm of her glasses to the rest of the frame. Her beloved Communists couldn't even provide her with a decent pair of glasses. . .she'd abandoned reason and common sense" (p. 148). Now, I have no doubt that political propaganda was disseminated through the educational system. I'd argue this even happens in the United States. However, I have to question the depiction of Cuba's educational system as merely a vehicle for indoctrination. With some of the highest literacy rates and levels of educational attainment in the world,

Cuba's system is well-known for its success.

Calcines writes with a specific agenda, as I imagine most of us do. It's important to keep the author's purpose in mind when we share this book with our students, and perhaps, offer other alternative views. Then, with discussions that encourage critical thinking, our students can come to their own conclusions. Calcines begins his book with the following statement: "I decided that it is time to let the world know not only what happened to my family, but also what happened—and continues to happen today—to all the people of Cuba, from whom Fidel Castro has taken everything, including hope itself" (p. 1). This is his story, yet, I must disagree with his last statement. A number of years ago, I lived in Cuba for a month. Based on that experience, I don't believe that Castro has taken hope itself from the Cuban people. In fact, I found the Cuban people to be full of hope, intelligence, creativity and a strong desire for survival.

Others have written about *Leaving Glorytown* as well, so I hope you'll check out their reviews that I've linked to below.

- [WOW Review: Reading Across Cultures](#)
- [The Happy Nappy Bookseller](#)
- [Cynsations Review and Interview with Calcines](#)

If you're an Albuquerque local, join us this Monday, March 4, for our next Vamos a Leer book group meeting. We'd love to hear your thoughts on *Leaving Glorytown*. For more information about our meeting, [click here](#). Our complete Educator's Guide for the book is coming next week, [click here](#) to access it.

LESSON PLANS & ACTIVITIES

While it is not absolutely necessary in order to use the book in a classroom, background information on Cuba, the revolution, and certain political movements, theories or concepts will be quite helpful in providing your students context and knowledge with which to understand the ideas and the events presented in the novel. Below you will find a list of links to various resources for teaching about Cuba in the classroom. These resources could be used before, during and/or after reading the book.

- "The Arts in Cuba: An Eye Behind the Curtain": This resource includes a very large collection of links to various websites and lesson plans for teaching about Cuba. It also includes a powerpoint presentation on the title of the resource and past resources created by Kellogg <http://kellogg.nd.edu/outreach/cuba2011.shtml>
- A Scholastic Guide to teaching about the 1959 Cuban Revolution: http://teacher.scholastic.com/scholasticnews/indepth/upfront/feature/s/index.asp?article=f090108_Cuba
- PBS Lesson Plans on Race and Government Policy in Revolutionary Cuba <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/black-in-latin-america/resources/lesson-plan-race-and-government-policy-in->

- [revolutionary-cuba/198/](#)
- “Dreaming of Cuba: The stories that bind with storyteller Antonio Sacre”
<http://www.racebridgesforschools.com/antonio/sacrelessonplan.pdf>
- “Revolt! Comparing Historical Revolutions” from teaching and learning with the New York Times
<http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/02/08/revolt-comparing-historical-revolutions/>
- “Operation Pedro Pan: A leap of faith for the sake of freedom”
http://briefings.dadeschools.net/files/67343_Operation_Pedro_Pan_Instructional_Resource_Packet-_Final_Version.pdf
- Flight to Never-Never land: The story of Operation Pedro Pan
<http://depthome.brooklyn.cuny.edu/latinashistory/PedroPanlesson69.pdf>

The following lesson plans are divided into a number of categories: History and Social Studies; Guided Reading Questions; and Reflective Writing Questions.

- The History and Social Studies sections are project-based activities or suggestions that can be used to extend the content of the book.
- The detailed Guided Reading Questions accompany each chapter.
- The Reflective Writing Questions can be used in multiple ways, including as extended response questions, formal essays or individual closing assessments.

Common Core Standards Addressed:

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.

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.

History and Social Studies

Geography:

Find Cuba on a map of North and South America. How close is Cuba to the United States? Do you think that the U.S. and Cuba are close enough that events in the two countries could potentially affect each other? Can U.S. citizens travel to Cuba? Can Cubans travel to the U.S.? How do you think these travel restrictions affect relations between the United States and Cuba?

Sugar and Cuba:

Using appropriate print and online resources, research the role of sugar in Cuba. Has sugar been an important product for Cuba? Is it still important? What group of people was the first to work the sugar

plantations? What is that work like? Why do you think that group was used on the plantations? Is sugar still important in Cuba? What is the process for producing the sugar available in grocery stores?

Fidel Castro and Communism:

How can you tell that Eduardo is very critical of Fidel Castro and his government? Think about the words he uses to describe Castro, the government, communists and Communism, and even his teachers. Summarize how Eduardo feels about Castro's communist government? Do you think that Eduardo's understanding of communism and Castro is too simple?

What is Communism:

Using a history textbook or appropriate print and online resources, research Communism. What is communism? Communism is often held in contrast to capitalism. Using similar resources find a definition or explanation for capitalism. How would you compare and contrast the two?

The Cuban Revolution:

The Cuban Revolution took place in 1959. Research what Cuba was like prior to the revolution. Who was Fulgencio Batista? What was life like when he was in power? Why were so many willing to support Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution?

Cuban Immigration:

There have been various waves of Cuban immigration during different periods of U.S. history. One of the first groups to come over in large numbers was children through the Pedro Pan Operation. In more recent years, smaller numbers of immigrants have continued to come to the U.S. Research these different periods of immigration. What was the Pedro Pan Operation? Watch the film *Balseros* to get an idea of what immigration has been like for Cubans in the past 15 years. How has the experience changed over the years?

Literacy Campaigns and the Brigadistas:

Watch the film *Maestra* (more information available at <http://www.maestrathefilm.org/>). This brief and engaging documentary tells the story of 100,000 Cuban teenagers, most of them girls, who participated in Cuba's 1961 literacy campaign. Historical footage and current-day interviews bring the campaign to life. Most compelling to U.S. students will be the stories of the girls themselves, many of them middle school age, who left their families to take on major responsibilities far away. Fifty years later, the brigadistas reminisce about the independence and self-confidence they gained from the great adventure and the trust the country placed in them—in one year, they taught more than 700,000 people to read and write! (In English with voiceovers.)

Reading Comprehension Questions:

**Literary
Interpretation:
Guided Reading
Questions and
Writing Prompts**

Coming to Glorytown:

1. What was it like to work in the sugarcane fields? Who originally did this work? (p. 4).
2. What is Glorytown? (p. 5)
3. Who was Eduardo's favorite person? Why? (p. 10-11)

The Revolution:

1. What changes does Eduardo notice after the revolution? (pgs. 12-15)
2. What happens to Carmensita? Who or what does the family blame for the loss? (p. 17-18)

The Bay of Pigs:

1. Why do the soldiers arrest Eduardo's father? (p. 21-23)
2. What does Eduardo think the Bay of Pigs is? What is the Bay of Pigs? (pgs. 22-23)
3. What is the C.D.R? What do the letters stand for? (p. 23)
4. What is the significance of placing a picture face down with a glass of water over it? (p. 24)

Our Last Noche Buena:

1. What is Noche Buena and how is it celebrated? (p. 26-29)
2. What happens to make it their last Noche Buena? (p. 29-32)
3. Papa tries to explain to Eduardo why the group of men wanted to interrupt the celebration. What explanation does he give? (p. 33)

More Changes:

1. What is a libreta? (p. 34)
2. Why would Cuba have food from Russia? (p. 35-36)
3. What is apagón? What does Papa say is the real reason for this? (p. 37)

Stories to Ease the Pain:

1. What was Papa's childhood like? How was it different from most children in the U.S.? (p. 43-45)
2. Papa says "The Communists don't believe in anything, except power and control" (p. 45). From what you've learned about Communism, do you think that's true? Why would Papa believe that?

Tío William's Arrest:

1. Why does the family believe that Tío William was targeted and arrested by the government? Why is Tío William's arrest so serious

- for the extended family and the community (p. 49-50)
- 2. What does nationalize mean according to Papa? (p. 51)
- 3. Re-read the cousins' discussion on page 53. What things do they miss the most? Are any of these things originally from Cuba? Where are they from? (p. 53-54)

149901:

- 1. How does Eduardo help Quco? (p. 57-58)
- 2. At what age are boys drafted into the army in Cuba? (p. 59)
- 3. What two choices does the family have in terms of trying to leave Cuba? (p. 60)
- 4. What happens to the children whose families have decided to apply for exit visas? (p. 61)
- 5. What is the significance of 149901? (p. 62)

Gusanos:

- 1. What do Eduardo's friends think life in the United States will be like? Do you agree with them? (p. 67-68)
- 2. How does Eduardo describe the schools in Cuba? (p. 69)
- 3. What does gusano mean? (p. 70)
- 4. Who stands up first for Eduardo on the playground? Why do you think he does that? (p. 72)
- 5. What does Eduardo daydream about when he thinks of life in the U.S.? (p. 74-75)
- 6. What happens to Papa as a result of applying for the exit visa? (p. 77-79)

Remember the Lord:

- 1. Where has the government taken Eduardo's father? What will he be doing? (p. 82-83)

More Goodbyes:

- 1. What happens to Tío William's company? (p. 88)
- 2. What is life like for Papa at the work camp? (p. 92)
- 3. What is the Peter Pan Program? (p. 96)
- 4. What does Eduardo do to try and deal with how hard everything feels? Does it work? (p. 99)

Panetelas de Vainilla:

- 1. What is a panatela de vainilla? (p. 100)
- 2. Why is Mama going to make these? Why do they have to be careful in talking about Mama's plan? (p. 100)
- 3. Why is Tía Luisa able to help Eduardo's family? (p. 103-105)
- 4. What happens to Eduardo on his way home from the Tía Luisa's? (p. 106-108)

5. What does Papa get for Eduardo at the end of the chapter? (p. 109)

The Ashes of Spring:

1. Why is there ash covering everything at the beginning of the chapter? (p. 110)
2. Why does abuelo continue to go and work at the sugar mill? What does he say about sugar and its importance to Cuba? (p. 112)
3. Given how Eduardo has described the state of Cuba, are you surprised that Tío William was able to buy a truck? What does he do with the truck? Who does he do work for? Do any of these groups surprise you? (p. 115)

La Natividad:

1. Why is Eduardo's age significant? (p. 120)
2. Who is La Natividad? What have the boys heard about her? (p. 120-122)
3. What do the boys dare Eduardo to do? (p. 122)
4. What do you think—do you believe the rumors about La Natividad are true?

Nguyen Van Troy:

1. Who is Nguyen Van Troy? Why is Eduardo's school named after him? (p. 130)
2. What does the telegram say about Papa? (p. 132) How does Papa look when they meet him at the bus stop? (p. 133)

Papa's Homecoming:

1. Why is Eduardo afraid of his father going to the hospital? What does he think may happen? (p. 137)
2. Who is Eduardo's first date with? Where does he go? Where does he get the money to pay for the tickets? (p. 141)
3. Who shows up at the end of the movie? (p. 142)

Señora Santana:

1. How does Eduardo describe Señora Santana? (p. 148) What do you think of his description?
2. Abuelo gives Eduardo the following advice when he's upset over Olga: "I want you to remember one thing, Eduardo Calcines. . .Killing solves nothing. Killing Fidel would solve nothing. There will only be another Fidel to take his place. Fidel is not the problem. Fidel is a symptom. . .Fidel is a symptom of the problem. . .The real problem is here. He tapped his chest" (p. 154-155). What do think Abuelo is trying to explain to Eduardo? Do you think this is good advice? Could you apply it to any area in your life?
3. What is the Schools-to-Countryside Program? What will the students be doing as part of this program? (p. 157)

4. What is it like at the onion farm? (p. 158-162)

A Taste of Freedom:

1. What does the mailman deliver to the Calcines' house? Who is it from? What is inside? (p. 164-165)
2. What does Esther get to do for the first time in her life? (p. 166)
3. What do you think of Eduardo's thoughts on America? (p. 166) Do you think he's correct? How would you describe America?
4. Where do the boys decide to go? Is Eduardo allowed to go? (p. 167-170)
5. What does Rolando see in the future for his friends? (p. 172)

Planning to Escape:

1. Why is this birthday like a bad dream for Eduardo? What is he worried about? (p. 180)
2. What does his father give him for his birthday? (p. 181)
3. What is Eduardo's plan in case the telegram doesn't come by the time he is fourteen and a half? (p. 184-185)
4. What does Eduardo's family finally receive? (p. 188) How do you think you would feel at that moment if you were Eduardo? Do you think it is going to be easy for Eduardo to leave Cuba behind?
5. What almost keeps the family from getting to leave Cuba? What does the officer decide to do? (p. 190-191)
6. Where do the boys go to hang out one last time? (p. 193-194)
7. Which was the hardest goodbye for Eduardo? Why is it so hard—what does Eduardo realize? What advice does Eduardo's abuelo give him? (p. 196-197)

Flight to Freedom:

1. What do Mama and Papa have to do before the family can leave the country? (p. 204-205)
2. What do the children decide to spend Abuela's money on? (p. 208)
3. What do you think of Eduardo's statement—"Soon we would be in the land of the blond people"? Is that how you would describe the United States? (p. 215)
4. What do Eduardo and Esther think of English? (p. 217)

Reflective Writing Questions

Writing Questions:

1. *Leaving Glorytown* is a memoir. What is the definition of a memoir? What is its purpose? Think of a significant event or period of time in your own life. Write your own memoir of that event or period of time.
2. Think about the ways that Eduardo and his friends describe America. What American things do they long for? What do they think America is like? Are their thoughts accurate? How are they wrong in what they believe about America? How would you describe America to someone who had never been here?

**ABOUT US &
THIS GUIDE**

The Latin American & Iberian Institute (LAI) receives resources from the U.S. Department of Education to support K-12 teaching about Latin America. Our goal is to provide a supportive environment for teaching across grade levels and subject areas so educators can bring regional and linguistic knowledge of Latin America into their classrooms. For more information and materials that support teaching about Latin America in the classroom, visit our website at <http://laii.unm.edu/outreach>.

Written by staff at the LAI, **Vamos a Leer Educator's Guides** provide an excellent way to teach about Latin America through literacy. Each guide is based upon a book featured in the Vamos a Leer book group. For more on Vamos a Leer, visit our blog at bit.ly/vamosaleer. This guide was prepared 2/ 2012 by Adam Flores, LAI Graduate Assistant and Katrina Dillon, LAI Project Assistant.

To complement this guide, the LAI oversees the **Vamos a Leer blog**, which provides a space for exploring how to use literature to teach about Latin America, the Caribbean, and Latinos in the United States. In addition to promoting discussion, the blog shares relevant resources and curriculum materials. Visit the blog at the following address: <http://bit.ly/vamosaleer>.