

EDUCATOR GUIDE

# Enrique's JOURNEY

The True Story of a Boy Determined to Reunite with His Mother

*Adapted for Young People*

**SONIA NAZARIO**

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize

Includes  
Common Core  
State Standards  
Correlations



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Grades 7 up

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## About the Book

Enrique is only five years old when his mother leaves her starving family in Honduras and illegally enters the United States in search of a better life. Her plan is to make enough money for Enrique and his sister, Belky, to join her. Opportunities for immigrants like Enrique's mother are few, however, and she cannot deliver on her promise. Years later, at age sixteen, Enrique is still in Honduras, and his resentment toward his mother is increasing. Yet his urge to see her is so great that he sets out on a dangerous journey through Mexico, across the US border, and eventually to North Carolina. There, the two are finally reunited, but the fairy-tale life Enrique imagined is nowhere to be found. His encounters with bandits, corrupt cops, and dishonest coyotes have hardened him, and he finds himself battling drug addiction and arguing with his mother, refusing to live by her rules. *Enrique's Journey* is the story of a family torn apart, yearning to be together again, and trying to heal deep wounds—a story all too common among America's newcomers.

## Pre-Reading ACTIVITY

Read aloud both poems “Unguarded Gates” (1895) by Thomas Aldrich and “The New Colossus” (1883) by Emma Lazarus (people.hofstra.edu/alan\_j\_singer/294%20Course%20Pack/6.%20Immigration/114.pdf). Have students write about why people might have different views on immigration and how those views can affect the way people are treated.

## Questions for GROUP DISCUSSION

- *Enrique’s Journey* is a work of nonfiction. What sparked the idea for the book? Discuss how Nazario approaches her research.
- What does the United States offer Latin American immigrants that they cannot get in their own countries?
- Explain the relationship between Mexicans and Central Americans as described in the book. Why do some Mexicans feel superior to their southern neighbors?
- Discuss the value of family in Latino culture. Why are mothers often more revered than fathers? What is the role of grandmothers? Discuss the effect of immigration on families. Compare and contrast Enrique’s and Belky’s lives in Honduras after their mother leaves.
- Describe Enrique’s living conditions in Honduras. He grows to resent both his mother and his father, though for different reasons. How are those reasons different? Why does Enrique think finding his mother will solve his problems? How does his resentment toward his mother continue after they are reunited?
- What is Enrique’s relationship with Diana, his half sister? How is her life more hopeful than his? Discuss the environment in which Diana lives. How does it contribute to her difficulties as a student and failure to graduate from high school?
- Describe the guilt that Lourdes feels when she leaves her children. Why does she kiss Belky good-bye but finds it too hard to face Enrique? How does she attempt to assuage her guilt when she gets to the United States?
- Aunt Rosa Amalia believes that being separated from their mother has caused Enrique and Belky deep emotional problems. Cite specific evidence from the book that supports this belief.
- Lourdes often misses her country and her family. When is her homesickness most evident? How does pride keep her from going home?
- Explain Enrique’s relationship with María Isabel. Why does she find it difficult to forget Enrique despite his deep flaws? How does religion help María Isabel get through her darkest moments with Enrique? Describe Enrique’s reaction when he learns that he has a daughter.
- What is Enrique’s attitude toward gangs? How is his view of El Brujo different from his view of other gang members? Why does their friendship end?
- Latino immigrants come to the United States with hope for a better life. Why is their hope fragile? Explain how “coyotes” often take advantage of their optimism. How do Padre Leo and Olga work to restore dignity and hope to immigrants in despair? Why does Enrique lose hope?
- In the prologue, a woman in Los Angeles who helps immigrants from Latin America says that journeys like Enrique’s represent “the adventure story of the twenty-first century” (p. 16). What elements of this book make it an adventure story? How is Enrique’s story also one of survival? What is the climax of *Enrique’s Journey*?
- Why does Enrique become the “most famous undocumented immigrant in America” (p. 213)? How might his story be a lesson about the perils of drug use and addiction? What chance do his children have for a better life?
- Discuss some of the anti-immigrant measures local, state, and national governments have taken. What are the gray areas of the issue? What do immigration observers mean when they say that the United States has a “schizophrenic immigration policy” (p. 238)?

● **Correlates to Common Core Standards Reading: Informational Text Key Ideas & Details RI. 7.1, 8.1, 7.2, 8.2; Craft & Structure RI. 7.5, 8.5, 7.6, 8.6; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RI. 7.8, 8.8.**

# ACTIVITIES

- Instruct students to jot down unfamiliar words and try to define them using clues from the context. Such words may include: *corroborate* (p. 12), *vortex* (p. 12), *deter* (p. 13), *vulnerability* (p. 37), *introverted* (p. 41), *salvation* (p. 48), *atrocities* (p. 67), *desolate* (p. 112), *stymied* (p. 117), *futile* (p. 161), *inconsolable* (p. 164), *berates* (p. 170), *extortion* (p. 213), *perpetrator* (p. 214), and *rancor* (p. 229). Then have them use a dictionary to define the words. How well did they do?
  - Correlates to Common Core Standards Language: Vocabulary & Acquisition & Use L. 7.5, 8.5.
- Have students write a brief essay titled “Sonia Nazario’s Position on Immigration.” Instruct them to cite specific quotes from the book to support their claims.
  - Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading: Informational Text: Craft & Structure 7.6, 8.6; Writing: Text Types & Purposes ELA-Literacy W. 7.1, 8.1.
- Ask students to explain the following simile: “To migrants, begging in Chiapas is like walking up to a loaded gun.” Have them find other similes in the book that describe extreme danger. Then instruct them to write a simile that captures Enrique’s fear of crossing the Rio Grande, or his fear for his family when he is in jail at the end of the book.
  - Correlates to Common Core Standards Reading: Informational Text: Craft & Structure ELA-Literacy R. 7.4, 8.4.
- Padre Leo communicates his message to parishioners by “spinning a lesson out of a popular movie or song” (p. 123). Divide the class into small groups and ask them to find a contemporary song lyric that Padre Leo might use to deliver a message of hope. Allow time for each group to share the lyrics in class. Instruct them to lead a discussion that draws a relationship between the hope expressed in the lyrics and the journeys of the migrants.
  - Correlates to Common Core Standards Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 7.2, 8.2.
- Read the brief first-person stories of immigrants on the following website: [library.thinkquest.org/20619/Present.html](http://library.thinkquest.org/20619/Present.html). Then have students write a similar entry from the point of view of Enrique, Lourdes, or María Isabel.
  - Correlates to Common Core Standards Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 7.3, 8.3.

- Instruct students to read about the Dream Act on the following websites: [immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/dream-act-resource-page](http://immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/dream-act-resource-page) and [utsa.edu/twp/spring12/0103spring2012.pdf](http://utsa.edu/twp/spring12/0103spring2012.pdf). Have them write a letter to their congressman or congresswoman explaining their position on this controversial act. Encourage peer editing for clarity and grammar.
  - Correlates to Common Core Standards Reading: Informational Text: Key Ideas & Details RI. 7.3, 8.3, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RI. 7.8, 8.8; Writing: Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 7.7, 8.7, Production & Distribution of Writing W. 7.4, 8.4, 7.5, 8.5.
- Have students take the Civics Test for Naturalized Citizenship ([uscis.gov/USCIS/Office%20of%20Citizenship/Citizenship%20Resource%20Center%20Site/Publications/100q.pdf](http://uscis.gov/USCIS/Office%20of%20Citizenship/Citizenship%20Resource%20Center%20Site/Publications/100q.pdf)). Return the graded tests to students. Ask them to find the correct answers for the questions they missed and cite their sources.
  - Correlates to Common Core Standards Reading: Informational Text: Key Ideas & Details RI. 7.1, 8.; Writing: Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 7.8, 8.8.
- Have students read about how U.S. border enforcement evolved “from horseback to high-tech” at [migrationinformation.org/usfocus/display.cfm?ID=370](http://migrationinformation.org/usfocus/display.cfm?ID=370). Divide the class into four groups and have each group further research border-control strategy in one of these time periods: 1904–1985; 1986–1992; 1993–2001; 2001–present. Have each group present their findings to the class..
  - Correlates to Common Core Standards Reading: Informational Text: Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RI. 7.7, 8.7; Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 7.1, 8.1, 7.2, 8.2.

## About the Author

**Sonia Nazario** was a projects reporter for the *Los Angeles Times* and staff writer for the *Wall Street Journal*. She has spent more than two decades reporting and writing about social issues. In addition to numerous national journalism and book awards she won the Pulitzer Prize for her work on the newspaper series that served as the basis for the adult edition of *Enrique’s Journey*. Sonia Nazario grew up in Kansas and in Argentina and lives in Los Angeles with her husband.

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