

***Enrique's Journey* Reader's Guide Week 1**

Map, Prologue, Chapter 1

**Community Reading Group
prepared by Jennifer Cooley
University of Northern Iowa**

Readers, please direct questions and comments to jennifer.cooley@uni.edu. I'd really like your feedback about the book and your experiences in the reading group. Just a short note is fine!

Week 1

Introductions. Participants. What is your name and, if you'd like to tell us,

- Where are you from?
- Why did you decide to be a part of this study group?
- Have you ever been part of a study group in the past?

Book cover. Examine all aspects of the cover of the book and remark upon the following
(**Note: There are copies available at CF and ALO Public Libraries, as well as through UNI.**)

What do you see in terms of **text** and also **visual information** on the cover of this book?

- Bestseller
- Highly-acclaimed
- Random House Reader's Circle
- Author.
- Title.
- Photo

All of these elements of the photo give us clues about the book's content. What do you think we'll see in the book?

Thinking about the information on the cover:

- What makes this a timely book?
- Why do you think it has been so popular? (For example, it is the #1 common read on university campuses again this year!)
- On page XIV of the Prologue, the author quotes a Los Angeles woman as saying "This is the adventure story of the twenty-first century." Have you read, or are you familiar with any other books or films about the topic of "a boy's dangerous odyssey" or a boy's adventure story? What are they? Why do you think this is a common topic of interest for films and books?

NOTE: This is a work of investigative journalism (nonfiction), although some would call it creative nonfiction or "a novel based on real stories". Do you think it is a unique example of this type of writing? Why or why not?

Introduction to Themes and Ground Rules.

This is a book that incorporates many themes. Important among them are:

- Family
- Immigration
- Adolescence
- Journeys
- Psychological challenges
- Addiction
- ¿? (Add your own here!)

These topics are complex and they can be divisive. (We need look no further than our current presidential campaign to see how easily these issues can ignite strong feelings.) That is part of why we selected this book as a way to unite the campus and the community in an exploration of rich topics that benefit from informed discussion.

There will be ground rules to participate in our reading group.

- Please be respectful of all the voices and people present.
- Feel free to share your ideas and responses to the text, and be supportive of others as they share theirs.
- Since the book is factual and journalistic in nature, we'll try to ground our own responses to it on factual information too.
- Any questions or comments about the book and the discussions can be directed to jennifer.cooley@uni.edu

We will offer some guidance to the discussions in the form of questions and activities. We also welcome you to bring your own responses and questions. Keep in mind that you can also communicate with the author, **Sonia Nazario**, when she comes to the **UNI campus on April 11, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. to speak in the Lang Hall Auditorium. The talk is free and open to the public.**

Map, Prologue and Chapter 1 Discussion Questions

Map and Origins:

1. Where are you from? Did you choose when and where you'd be born? Does anyone? What implications does the place you are born have for how the rest of your life will unfold?
2. Where is Enrique from? What do you know about this country? Has anyone in the group been there?
3. Where is Carmen from? What do you know about her country? Has anyone in the group been there?
4. What do you know about daily life in the Northern Triangle (Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala)? What are some of the biggest challenges facing these countries?

5. What parts of Mexico does Enrique enter in this part of the book? What do you know about these areas?

The Author:

1. What drew Sonia Nazario to want to investigate the issues in this book?
2. In what way (according to the author) is she uniquely prepared to become involved in journalistic research on this topic?
3. What do we learn about the investigative methods Nazario employs to get the story (and get it right)?
4. What are the risks associated with doing this kind of journalism, in general, and what are the risks Nazario identifies specific to this story?
5. Do you think the benefits outweigh the risks? What are some of the benefits of doing investigative journalism of this sort?
6. When Nazario learns of the impossible decisions Central American mothers who live in poverty have to make, she asks herself, "What would I do?" So, what would you do?

The Subjects of Inquiry:

1. What motivates women like Carmen and Lourdes to come to the U.S.? Are the ideas Lourdes about the U.S. (based on tv, according to her) similar to her daily reality once in the U.S.?
2. Why are women now a growing percentage of the migrants leaving Central America for the U.S.?
3. Nazario states "In much of the United States, legitimate concerns about immigration and anti-immigrant measures have had a corrosive side effect: immigrants have been dehumanized and demonized." Can you cite examples of this phenomenon?
4. How will Nazario's work contest those "corrosive side effects," according to her? Do you feel that personal narratives and firsthand reports can incite empathy? Can you think of any current examples of this phenomenon? (You may think of Humans of New York, Serial (the podcast) or other examples.)

Chapter 1

1. Look at the picture of Enrique at the beginning of Chapter 1. Based on this photo, and the adjectives Nazario uses to describe him, what kind of the child was Enrique?
2. What are some of the challenges that Enrique, Lourdes and Belky face in Tegucigalpa, Honduras?
3. Is Enrique an isolated case, as a child left behind when his mother migrates North? Is the idea of an unaccompanied minor traveling North to be reunited with a family member an unusual phenomenon? (Cite examples from the book, or you may review information from the Migration Policy Institute here:
<http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/trends-unaccompanied-child-and-family-migration-central-america>)
4. Many children like Enrique, "begin to idealize their mothers" after being separated from them. What are the risks of this sort of idealization? Do you think the same thing

happens when a single father leaves a child behind in Central America and goes to seek work in the U.S.? Why, or why not?

5. Describe Lourdes trip North. What stands out to you most about her experiences?
6. What are some of the biggest challenges Lourdes reports facing when she first arrives in the U.S. (in terms of jobs, living conditions, her personal life, etc.)
7. Describe the series of living situations Enrique goes through during his childhood. How do you think these situations impact him as a person?
8. We reach a point in Chapter 1 called “Rebellion” and then another section called “Addiction.” As Enrique becomes a teenager, how does he start to change? What are some of the aspects of his life that you find most troubling? Can you identify a process that leads to these extremes? How could that process be reversed or shifted?
9. Who is María Isabel? Describe her relationship with Enrique. What do you foresee for the future of this relationship? Do you think it could be beneficial to Enrique to maintain this relationship? And to María Isabel? Why or why not?

Conclusions.

1. In the Prologue and Chapter 1 we can begin to see a gender divide that suggests that the fallout from immigration may affect men and women differently. For example, we can perceive some differences in the relationship between Lourdes and Belky, (her daughter) and Lourdes and Enrique, Why do you think these differences exist? What implications do you think they might have as the children grow up? Are there other elements of the report that suggest that men and women are playing vastly different roles, or experiencing immigration differently?
2. In the Prologue and Chapter 1 we can begin to see many ways that immigration affects families. Identify some of these impacts. Can you think of both positive and negative results of immigration? (The positive impacts are sometimes referred to as “pull factors”.)
3. In the Prologue and Chapter 1 we can begin to see factors that lead to out migration from Central America. (These are sometimes referred to as “push factors.”) Can you list some of them? What remedies can you think of to address these issues?

Homework:

During the coming week you may engage in any or all of the following activities.

- “Google” Sonia Nazario and/or Enrique’s Journey, or to visit the webpage enriquesjourney.com
- Watch a film about immigration journeys. I suggest the following:

Which Way Home

Who is Dayani Cristal?

The Invisibles

Wetback: The Undocumented Documentary

Assaulted Dream

Sin Nombre

Border War (film)

Border Wars (National Geographic TV show)

- Identify the one object you wouldn't leave home without if you went on a "journey" (not just a trip, but a JOURNEY). Bring it to our next meeting, or just be ready to talk about it.
- Keep a journal of their reactions to the most exciting, most gut-wrenching, most interesting, most memorable parts of the book.

The reading assignment for next week is Chapters 2-3. See you next week!

Optional Discussion (10-15 minutes). We may also save this 'till the last meeting.

To give us a chance to recognize how strong the feelings are related to one of the central themes of the book, we can consider two poems. Both were published just over 100 years ago. We can read these aloud. Let's see how they intertwine with one another with *Enrique's Journey*.

See the two poems juxtaposed at the following link:

<http://www.poets.net/2008/08/classic-poetry-two-immigration-poems.html>

or below:

"A frequent impression is that nineteenth-century America, the so-called mixing bowl, welcomed immigrants. Emma Lazarus' famous 1886 poem, "The New Colossus," echoes this notion in its description of the Statue of Liberty:

The New Colossus

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
 With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
 Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
 A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
 Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
 Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
 Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
 The air-bridged harbor that twice cities frame.
 "Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp" cries she
 With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
 Your huddled masses yearning to breath free,
 The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
 Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me:
 I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

However, a very different view was expressed only a few years later by one of the era's most noted popular authors, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, who in 1894, just one year after the celebration of America that was the Chicago World's Fair, but also the year after a major financial crisis, penned "Unguarded Gates."

Unguarded Gates

Wide open and unguarded stand our gates
And through them presses a wild, motley throng—
Men from the Volga and the Tartar steppes,
Fearless figures of the Hoang-Ho,
Malayan, Scythian, Teuton, Kelt, and Slav,
Flying the Old World's poverty and scorn;
These bringing with them unknown gods and rites,
Those, tiger passions, here to stretch their claws.
In the street and alley what strange tongues are loud,
Accents of menace alien to our air,
Voices that once the Tower of Babel knew!

O Liberty, white Goddess! Is it well
To leave the gates unguarded? On thy breast
Fold Sorrow's children, soothe the hurts of hate,
Lift the down-trodden, but with hands of steel
Stay those who to thy sacred portals come
To waste the gifts of freedom. Have a care
Lest from thy brow the clustered stars be torn
And trampled in the dust. For so of old
The thronging Goth and Vandal trampled Rome,
And where the temples of the Caesars stood
The lean wolf unmolested made her lair."

Have you heard echoes in our times of the ideas expressed in these poems in the late 1800's? Why do you think these opinions about immigration persist in the U.S.? Are there ideas here that you find especially compelling? Or appalling? What is the human impact of these types of ideas? In other words, how do these opinions about immigration play out in our system of laws? How do they impact our economy? How do they play into the daily lives of immigrants living in the U.S.?