



Enrique's Journey

The Story of a Boy's Dangerous Odyssey to Reunite with His Mother

By *Sonia Nazario*

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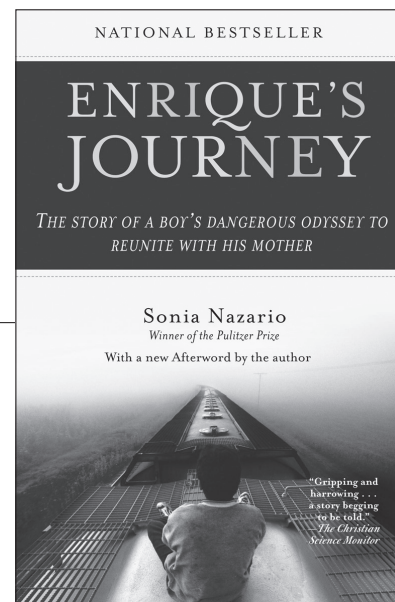
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Visit the author's website for additional educator resources
www.enriquesjourney.com/educators.html



“A heart-wrenching account. . . . Provides a human face, both beautiful and scarred, for the undocumented—a must read.” —*Kirkus Reviews (starred)*

“*Enrique's Journey* is the odyssey of our time and place. The story of a boy's brave and harrowing search for the mother who loved him but left is the most telling, moving, and unsparing account I have ever read about those who struggle and sacrifice to give their families better lives, and the loneliness and regret that no success can ever fully put to rest. It is a great American—I emphasize that—story, beautifully reported.” —Scott Simon, NPR

“This is a twenty-first-century *Odyssey*. Nazario's powerful writing illuminates one of the darkest stories in our country. This is outstanding journalism. If you are going to read only one non-fiction book this year, it has to be this one, because you know these young heroes. They live next door. . . .” —Isabel Allende

• note to the teacher •

Originally written as a newspaper series for the *Los Angeles Times*, *Enrique's Journey* tells the true story of a Honduran boy's quest to find his mother in the United States. As a literary text, the work lends itself to the study of primary elements: plot, setting, character, theme, etc. Readers are challenged to think about universal themes such as parent-child conflict, family responsibility, separation, and assimilation into new cultures.

The Common Core Standards place emphasis on the importance of reading and examining nonfiction for meaning and application to society. For this reason, *Enrique's Journey* is particularly appropriate for use in language arts and the social sciences. The discussion and activities in this guide are aligned with Common Core Standards and offer an opportunity for discussion and analysis of the diverging opinions that people have about immigration.

For a complete listing of the Standards, go to: www.corestandards.org/the-standards.

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• about the author

Sonia Nazario was a projects reporter for the *Los Angeles Times*. She has spent more than two decades reporting and writing about social issues and won the Pulitzer Prize for her work on the *Los Angeles Times* series that served as the basis for *Enrique's Journey*. Nazario, who grew up in Kansas and in Argentina, has written extensively from Latin America and about Latinos in the U.S. She has been named among the most influential Latinos by *Hispanic Business* magazine and among 40 women who changed the media business in the past 40 years by *Columbia Journalism Review*. She lives in Los Angeles with her husband.

• about the book

Enrique is only 5 years old when his mother, Lourdes, leaves him and his sister, Belky, behind in Honduras so that she can go work in America. Lourdes promises only to stay until she can send for her children or return with enough money to support them, but each year setbacks prevent her from being with her children again. Enrique desperately misses his mother and believes that only she can understand and support him. After difficult stays with other relatives, Enrique sets out to find his mother. He is 16 years old when he makes the first of seven failed attempts to get through Mexico in the hopes of crossing the border into the United States. Along the way, he encounters gangs and bandits, but learns new survival skills that help him when he successfully crosses the border on his eighth try. Enrique is reunited with his mother in North Carolina, but the years apart have been tough. How Enrique envisions his mother and the reality he finds are very different.

More than 60 universities, 50 high schools, and 10 cities have selected *Enrique's Journey* as a common or one-city read. For a complete listing, go to: <http://tinyurl.com/289o78x>.

• pre-reading activity

Read aloud both poems “Unguarded Gates” (1895) by Thomas Bailey Aldrich and “The New Colossus” (1883) by Emma Lazarus (www.poets.net/2008/08/classic-poetry-two-immigration-poems.html). Have students write about why people might have different views on immigration and how that can affect how people are treated.

Correlates to Common Core Standards Reading: Informational Text: Key Ideas & Details RI. 9-10.2, 11-12.2; Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 9-10.1, 11-12.1.

• classroom discussion

1. *Enrique's Journey* is a work of nonfiction. What sparked the idea for the book? One of the goals of any type of research is to deepen an understanding of the issue. How does Nazario set out to accomplish this goal? How is her method of research appropriate for the story she wanted to tell?
2. What about the author's background gives her empathy for her characters?
3. What does the United States offer Latin American immigrants that they cannot get in their own countries? Contrast the images of the United States that Lourdes and Enrique see on television versus what each finds in the United States.

4. Describe the relationship between Mexicans and Central Americans. Why do Mexicans feel superior to their southern neighbors?
5. Discuss the value of family in the Latino culture. Why are mothers more revered than fathers? What is the role of grandmothers? Discuss the effect of immigration on families.
6. Compare and contrast Enrique and Belky's lives after their mother leaves. What negative habits does Enrique develop in his mother's absence? How is his father partly responsible?
7. Describe the guilt that Lourdes feels when she leaves her children. Why does she kiss Belky good-bye, but find it too hard to face Enrique? How does she attempt to rectify her guilt when she gets to the states?
8. Cite evidence that Aunt Rosa Amalia is correct that the separation from their mother has caused Enrique and Belky deep emotional wounds. How do these problems continue to haunt Enrique after he is reunited with his mother?
9. What does Enrique expect from his mother once he has found her? Explain what Nazario means when she says that for these children, finding their mothers "becomes the quest for the Holy Grail"? (p. 7) How is this especially true for Enrique?
10. Discuss what the migrants mean when they say of Chiapas, "Now we face the beast." (p. 61) What is the "beast"? How does Enrique endure his encounter with the "beast"? Debate whether Enrique is surprised by the brutal attacks on migrants.
11. Trace the different names given to the train. What does each name reveal about the journey?
12. Describe the gangs aboard the trains. What is Enrique's attitude toward the gangs? How is his view of El Brujo different from other gang members? Why does their friendship end?
13. Compare and contrast Enrique's reception in Veracruz and Oaxaca to what he experiences in Chiapas. How does he survive?
14. Latino immigrants come to the United States with hope for a better life. Why is their hope fragile? How do Padre Leo and Olga work to restore dignity to migrants, and give them hope? Explain how the "coyotes" take advantage of the migrants' hopes and dreams.
15. What is the significance of the statue of Jesus Enrique encounters? How does his journey change after this encounter?
16. Describe Enrique's relationship with María Isabel. Why does she find it difficult to forget Enrique despite his flaws? How does she call upon her religion to get through her darkest moments with Enrique? Discuss Enrique's reaction when he finds that he has a daughter. What conflicts arise between María Isabel and Enrique's family?
17. What is Enrique's relationship with Diana, his half-sister? How is her life more stable than his? Discuss the environment in which Diana lives. How does it contribute to her failure as a student?
18. How does Enrique become the "most famous undocumented immigrant in America"? 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?

• classroom discussion (continued)

19. What motivates Enrique to stay in the United States? What things make him wish to return to Honduras?
20. Discuss 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. 258)
21. How does it look like the beginning of the book may repeat itself?

Correlates to Common Core Standards Reading Informational Text: Key Ideas & Details RI 9-10.1, 11-12.1, 9-1-2, 11-12.2, 9-10.3-11-12.3, Craft & Structure RI. 9-10.4, 11-12.4, 9-10.5, 11-12.5, 9-10.6, 11-12.6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RI. 9-10.8, 11-12.8; Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 9-10.1, 11-12.1, Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 9-10.4, 11-12.4, 9-10.6, 11-12.6; History/Social Studies: Key Ideas & Details RH.9-10.1, 11-12.1, 9-10.2, 11-12.2, 9-10.3, 11-12.3.

• activities

1. Ask students to write a brief paper that contrasts Enrique’s life in the United States with the life he left behind. Instruct them to use direct quotes from the book to support their thoughts.

Correlates to Common Core Standards Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 9-10.1, 11-12.1.

2. Nazario uses figurative language to convey and enlarge the meaning of the text. Ask students to find examples of simile in the book. Then have them write a simile that conveys Enrique’s feeling when he is finally reunited with his mother.

Correlates to Common Core Standards Reading Informational Text: Craft & Structure RI. 9-10.4, 11-12.4; History/Social Studies: Craft & Structure 9-10.4, 11-12.4.

3. Engage students in a discussion about other works of literature that trace a character’s odyssey. Possible texts may include Homer’s *Odyssey*, Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn* and J.R.R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*. Then have students work in small groups and find quotes from *Enrique’s Journey* and one other work of literature that illustrates the character’s courage and strength. Ask the groups to share their quotes in class.

Correlates to Common Core Standards Reading Literature: Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RL. 9-10.7, 11-12.7; Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas 9-10.4, 11-12.4.

4. Have students work with a partner and create a dialogue between Enrique and a main character from another book about their immigrant experience. Titles for consideration may include: *The Immigrants* by Howard Fast, *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair, *Kaffir Boy* by Mark Mathabane, *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet* by Jamie Ford, *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan, *The Devil's Highway* by Luis Alberto Urrea and *The Red Umbrella* by Christina Diaz. Instruct students to film or recite the dialogue in class.

Correlates to Common Core Standards Reading Literature: Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RL. 9-10.7, 11-12.7; Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 9-10.6, 11-12.6; History/Social Studies: Craft & Structure RH. 9-10.6, 11-12.6

5. Display the following map: <http://tinyurl.com/o7egr8o>. What is the ethnicity of the majority of immigrants in your state? If possible, interview one of these immigrants. How did they decide to come to your state and community? What obstacles did they encounter? What do they miss about their former homeland? What do they like about living in the United States and your community? What advice would they give to new immigrants who are faced with adjusting to a new culture? Finally, what do immigrants think we can learn from them? Then have students write answers to the same questions from Enrique's point of view.

Correlates to Common Core Standards Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 9-10.3, 11-12.3, History/Social Studies: Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RH. 9-10.7, 11-12.7

6. Have students make and illustrate a brochure to aid newcomers in their community. Include information such as: (1) where to go for health care; (2) how to register children for school; (3) where to find free activities for children; (4) where to find economical places to shop for food, children's clothing, toys, etc.; (5) how to find legal aid; and (6) where to find religious organizations that conduct services in other languages. Students should consider that many immigrants don't speak English. Consider using symbols and very few words to describe the information in the brochure.

Correlates to Common Core Standards Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 9-10.2, 11-12.2, Production & Distribution of Writing W. 9-10.4, 11-12.4.

7. Padre Leo often uses popular song lyrics to communicate his message to parishioners. 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 to the migrants. Allow time for each group to share the lyrics in class and lead a discussion that draws a relationship between hope expressed in the lyrics and the journey of migrants like Enrique.

Correlates to Common Core Standards Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 9-10.2, 11-12.2.

activities (continued)

8. Examine *Enrique's Journey* as a part of the tradition of American investigative journalism. Upton Sinclair said that he “aimed for America’s heart and hit its stomach” with *The Jungle*. Debate whether the texts are similar in their view and treatment of the subject of immigration. Write a paper that discusses the actions that Nazario wishes to inspire in her readers. Cite specific quotes from the book to support arguments. Encourage peer editing for clarity of ideas, spelling, and grammar.

Correlates to Common Core Standards Reading Informational Text: Key Ideas & Details RI. 9-10.1, 11-12.1, 9-10.2, 11-12.2, 9-10.3, 11-12.3, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RI. 9-10.8, 11-12.8; Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 9-10.1, 11-12.1, 9-10.2, 11-12.2, Production & Distribution of Writing W. 9-10.4, 11-12.4, 9-10.5, 11-12.5.

9. Have students interview a school administrator about the issues related to immigrant children in the school environment. Draw on information learned in *Enrique's Journey* to prepare questions for the interview. Then have students write an editorial for a local newspaper called “How Schools May Better Serve Immigrant Children and Teens.”

Correlates to Common Core Standards Writing: Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 0-10.7, 11-12.7, Text Types & Purposes W. 9-10.2, 11-12.2.

10. Instruct students to read about the Dream Act on the following website: www.immigrationpolicy.org/issues/DREAM-Act. Have them construct a survey that gets to the heart of the issues related to this act. Then ask them to survey at least 25 people. Make a chart that illustrates the results of the survey. Attach a written statistical summary. Spend class time comparing the various results. What is the overall attitude about this act?

Correlates to Common Core Standards Writing: Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 9-10.7, 11-12.7-10.8, 11-12.8; Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 9-10.4, 11-12.4, 9-10.5, 11-12.5; History/Social Studies: Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RH. 0-10.9, 11-12.9.

11. Encourage students to view a film about the immigrant experience. Such films may include *A Better Life*, *The Long Long Journey*, *Spanglish*, and *Under the Same Moon*. Have them write a paper about the assimilation issues of the immigrants in the film.

Correlates to Common Core Standards Reading Informational Text: Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RI. 9-10.7, 11-12.7; Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 9-10.1, 11-12.1.

- **other works of interest**

How the García Girls Lost Their Accents by Julia Alvarez

In the Time of Butterflies by Julia Alvarez

Denied, Detained, Deported by Ann Bausum

Nobodies by John Bowe

Mexican WhiteBoy by Matt de la Peña

Breaking Through by Francisco Jimenez

Reaching Out by Francisco Jimenez

- **about this guide's writer**

Note: To accommodate the Common Core State Standards, this guide was revised and updated from the original teacher's guide by **DAVID CORLEY**. To download the original guide, go to: <http://tinyurl.com/p5qxvt4>

PAT SCALES is a retired middle and high school librarian from Greenville, SC. She is a freelance writer and free speech advocate.



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