Annotated Bibliography of Children’s Literature
Related to Borderlands and Migration/Immigration
Compiled by Graciela B. Robinson in conjunction with the exhibition
*A World Separated By Borders*
Arizona State Museum, March – October 2013
www.statemuseum.arizona.edu

This compilation of fiction and non-fiction children’s and youth literature was written by diverse Latino authors who have a common trait to share: they migrated with their parents to the U.S. Through memories of childhood they depict their cultures, families, and countries of origin. They also address how they found themselves involved in a cultural learning process totally different than what their parents experienced. Through the eyes of a child, narrations may raise a level of awareness that may help readers understand migrant communities, and may remind youth of their family’s origins and make them think about their dreams and values.


In simple words and sundrenched paintings, the author takes readers into the fields and orchards, and into the lives of the people who work them. Using the letters of the Spanish alphabet as a template, Alma Flor Ada has written 28 poems that celebrate honor and pride, family and friends, history and heritage, and, of course, the bounty of the harvest. The translations reveal in English the emotional heart and underlying truth of each poem.

Grade Level: K – 2  Age Level: 4-8 yrs
Source: http://www.amazon.com/Gathering-Sun-Alphabet-Spanish-English/dp/0688170676/ref=la_B001H6EQUG_1_10?ie=UTF8&qid=1365203437&sr=1-10


Saturdays and Sundays are very special days for the child in this story. On Saturdays, she visits Grandma and Grandpa, who come from a European-American background, and on Sundays -- *los domingos* -- she visits Abuelito y Abuelita, who are Mexican-American. While the two sets of grandparents are different in many ways, they also have a great deal in common -- in particular, their love for their granddaughter. While we follow our narrator to the circus and the pier, share stories from her grandparents' pasts, and celebrate her birthday, the depth and joy of both cultures are conveyed in Spanish and English. This affirmation of both heritages will speak to all children who want to know more about their own families and ethnic backgrounds.

Grade Level: K – 2  Age Level: 5+
Source: http://almaflorada.com/i-love-saturdays-y-domingos/
Alarcon, Francisco X. 2005. From the Bellybutton of the Moon and Other Summer Poems / Del ombligo de la luna y otros poemas de verano en México.

A collection of 22 bilingual poems inspired by his touching recollections of childhood summers in Mexico. With a poet's magical vision, Alarcón takes us back to his childhood when he traveled with his family to Mexico to visit his grandma and other relatives. We travel with him in the family station wagon, across the misty mountain range to the little town of Atoyac. There, in the beloved town of his ancestors, we hear his grandma's stories, sample Auntie Reginalda's tasty breakfasts, learn about the keys to the universe, and take playful dips in the warm sea.

Interest level: 2 – 6    Reading level: 3 – 4
Source: http://www.bookish.com/books/cc6fd3f7-1b60-460a-ae70-318bd4ef51c2


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.

Age Level: 6+    Grade level: 1+


This is a book of narratives about how nomadic people from Asia followed herds of caribou across the Bering land bridge and became the first settlers in the Americas. Aveni tells how these people and those who followed them fanned out across the continents. It is an absorbing story of the first people to set foot in North America and the many cultures of their descendants. The book opens some 20,000 years ago in Beringia (the now-submerged land between Siberia and Alaska) and attempts to assemble evidence to point to one basic conclusion: The native tribes of North and South America descended from those who crossed the land bridge from Asia to discover America. This is by no means a universally accepted thesis, and is made in the face of the author's own passing acknowledgement of the possibility of a sea route.

Age Level: 9+    Grade Level: 4 and up
Source: http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/the-first-americans-anthony-aveni/1110861171?ean=9780439551441


After their father dies in an accident, the Torres children (Lupita and Salvador) must make the perilous journey to the United States, in order to get jobs and send money home.
Unfortunately all is not well once they reach the United States. The children encounter many barriers (language, hard labor, unscrupulous people, and the constant threat of deportation). Although Patricia Beatty is not of Mexican descent, her books are well researched and she does a great job capturing the immigrant experience. The characters are exceptionally realistic, and middle school students will enjoy the plots fast pace.

Age: 8+
Source: Kitty Reeve and L. Nicole Russell


As our neighborhoods grow more diverse, a variety of cultures, values and traditions become an important part of our classrooms and schools. In Kids Like Me: Voices of the Immigrant Experience, twenty-six personal narratives celebrate the experiences of young people making new homes in unfamiliar communities-finding common ground as they make new friends, learn different languages, and share their unique cultural identities. Kids Like Me personalizes the important themes of cultures and customs, immigration and citizenship, and learning to appreciate differences. While written to help youth understand their classmates and friends, Kids Like Me also includes discussion questions, self-directed activities and research ideas for teachers and families that can be used in classrooms, clubs and community settings. Richly illustrated with photos and maps of each home country, the text presents countless opportunities to explore and understand new cultures and new friends.


The story describes the situation that many immigrant families go through in the U.S.. This Mexican family comes to work as farm laborers, so that their children have opportunities; the parents still consider Mexico their home. They are lucky to have their children with them. The illustrations are very authentic because they reflect the magic and colorful traditions of Mexico. Carlos and his family are going home for Christmas, across the border from California to Mexico. Mama and Papa are excited, but Carlos and his sisters are not so sure. To Carlos Mexico does not seem like home now, even though he was born there. But as his family drives through festive villages and sun-kissed landscapes, Carlos and his sisters discover there is magic in their roots and that, whether in California or in Mexico, home is where the heart is: with one's family.

Reading Level: Ages 4+ (Middle school, ESL) Grade Level: P+


Nailed into a crate in the back of a truck, fifteen-year-old Maria, her older sister, Julia, their little brother, Oscar, and a boy named Tomas endure a terrifying and torturous journey across the U.S. border and then north to Chicago. There they struggle to find work-cleaning, sewing, washing dishes-always fearful of arrest and deportation back to the cruelties of El Salvador. By turns heartbreaking and hopeful, this moving story of the secret lives of immigrants is not to be missed.

A Cambodian girl who fled her country struggles to fit in to an American lifestyle. Sundara fled Cambodia with her aunt's family to escape the Khmer Rouge army when she was thirteen, leaving behind her parents, her brother and sister, and the boy she had loved since she was a child. Now, four years later, she struggles to fit in at her Oregon high school and to be "a good Cambodian girl" at home. A good Cambodian girl never dates; she waits for her family to arrange her marriage to a Cambodian boy. Yet Sundara and Jonathan, an extraordinary American boy, are powerfully drawn to each other. Haunted by grief for her lost family and for the life left behind, Sundara longs to be with him. At the same time she wonders, are her hopes for happiness and new life in America disloyal to her past and her people?

Age Level: 12+ Grade Level: 7 +

Colato Lainez, René. 2010. *From North to South* / *Del Norte al Sur*. Children's Book Press (Bilingual)

José loves helping Mamá in the garden outside their home in California. But when Mamá is sent back to Mexico for not having citizenship papers, José and his Papá face an uncertain future. What will it be like to visit Mamá in Tijuana? When will she be able to come home? Award-winning children's book author René Colato Lainez tackles the difficult and timely subject of family separation with exquisite tenderness. He is donating a portion of his royalties to the Centro Madre Assunta, a refuge for women and children who are waiting to be reunited with their families in the United States. Joe Cepeda’s bright and engaging illustrations bring this story of hope to vivid life.

Age level: 6+ Grade level: K+
Source: [http://fromnorthtosouth.weebly.com/](http://fromnorthtosouth.weebly.com/)

Colato Lainez, René. 2009. *René Tiene Dos Apellidos* / *René Has Two Last Names*. Arte Publico Press (Bilingual)

René, a young Salvadoran immigrant is teased at school for having two last names, until he presents his family’s project celebrating his heritage, he doesn’t understand why his name has to be different in the United States.

Age level: 5+ Grade level: K+


This magical tale introduces the Latino tooth hero, El Ratón Pérez, a charming and
venturous mouse who collects children’s teeth in Spain and Latin America. When the Tooth Fairy and El Ratón Pérez arrive to claim Miguelito's tooth, sparks fly under the Mexican-American boy pillow. Who will rightfully claim his tooth?

Age Level: 3+   Grade Level: P+


René’s true story about crossing three countries to arrive to the United States is timely and inspiring. 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.

Age Level: 7+   Grade Level: K – 3
Source: [http://myshoesandi.weebly.com/](http://myshoesandi.weebly.com/)


A boy has a good time attending a fair with his grandmother in San Luis de la Paz, Mexico, as she teaches him Spanish words and phrases and he teaches her English.

Age Level: 4+   Reading level: P+
Source: [https://sites.google.com/site/playingloteria/](https://sites.google.com/site/playingloteria/)


As Beto looks at the eight candles on his birthday cake, he knows that his wish is always the same. Beto wishes that he could be with his father every chance he gets. It has been three years since he and Mamá left El Salvador. Lurking in his mind are the memories of the losses they suffered before leaving: the bombing of a factory, the burning of the family home, the loss of all their possessions, but most of all, he thinks of the father that he has left behind. In the United States, Mamá has found a job in a sewing factory making jeans, and they are trying to bring Papá to the United States with the help of an immigration lawyer. But this is only the beginning, and for Beto, it seems that his father cannot come fast enough. One day in school, Beto is given the opportunity to write his father a letter. When he is invited to read his letter on RADIO Voz del Inmigrante, his heartfelt homage to home spurs a surprising chain of events that even the imaginative Beto could not have expected.

Age level: 5+   Grade level: K+
Source: [http://waitingforpapa.weebly.com/](http://waitingforpapa.weebly.com/)

Six teenagers—Diego, Patricia, Arturo, Jorge, Ana and Dulce—tell the story of why they immigrated to the United States and how the cross-border move has affected their lives. The stories give an insider's view of the problems the teenagers face, the difficulty of getting work and cultural and language differences. The author includes a 10-page text-and-photo introduction to Mexico, the Mexico/United States relationship, and immigration. A teacher in Mexico gave the book high marks for reflecting "the real situations of many Mexicans."

Grades 5+
Source: Kitty Reeve and L. Nicole Russell


Poetry. This is the story of a small family of Mexican migrant workers. In this story, the boy tells the story of his childhood growing up as a Hispanic in the U.S. His mother was a great cook and also healed all animals, including doves.

Reading Level 1-3. Grades: 2 – 5  Age Level: 6 +  Grade Level: 1+
Source: http://www.amazon.com/Calling-Doves-canto-las-palomas/dp/0892391669


This is Juan Felipe Herrera's memoir of the year his migrant family settled down so that he could go to school for the first time. Jaunito is bewildered by the new school and 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 speaks English. But his sensitive teacher and loving family help him find his voice through poetry, art, and music.

Age level: 6 +  Grade level: 1+


When Esmeralda Sinfronteras learns her mother, an American citizen, has been stopped at the border for lack of a green card, she transforms into Super Cilantro Girl. Turning green like a bouquet of cilantro, salsa verde, and the earth in spring, Esmeralda the super hero is able to leap over border walls, scale control towers and turn everything cilantro green so the border will disappear, ("sin fronteras") and her mother can return home. Super Cilantro Girl examines themes of cultural duality, immigrant status and national borders as they affect children. This entertaining, imaginative and brightly illustrated story can be used to initiate classroom explorations into these timely issues with young students.

Age level: 6 +  Grade level: 1+

When falling crop prices threaten his family with starvation, fifteen-year-old Victor Flores heads north in an attempt to "cross the wire" from Mexico into the United States so he can find work and send money home. But with no coyote money to pay the smugglers who sneak illegal workers across the border, Victor must struggle to survive as he jumps trains, stows away on trucks, and hikes grueling miles through the Arizona desert. Victor's journey is fraught with danger, freezing cold, scorching heat, hunger, and dead ends. It's a gauntlet run by millions attempting to cross the border. Through Victor's often desperate struggle, Will Hobbs brings to life one of the great human dramas of our time.

Age: 8+


Carmen's memories of growing up in Kingsville, TX, near the US/Mexico border. In My Family/En mi familia is Carmen Lomas Garza's continuing tribute to the family and community that shaped her childhood and her life. Lomas Garza's vibrant paintings and warm personal stories depict memories of growing up in the traditional Mexican-American community of her hometown of Kingsville, Texas.
Bilingual, Translation into Spanish. Age level: 6 and up

Grade level: 1 and up


Esperanza Ortega lives a life of pampered luxury in Aguascalientes, Mexico, on her father's ranch (Rancho de las Rosas). A sudden tragedy forces Esperanza and her mother to flee Mexico. They find work in a Southern California labor camp. Munoz-Ryan gives a very realistic portrayal of what it's like to have to leave your home, and survive in a country that is not necessarily welcoming. She also does a great job of portraying the hardships that many migrant laborers experienced, during the Great Depression. Esperanza Rising has received numerous awards including the Jane Addams Children's Book Award, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Publisher's Weekly Best Children's Books 2000, and the Pura Belpre award.

Grade level: 6-9
Source: Kitty Reeve and L. Nicole Russell


A critically acclaimed tearjerker from a master storyteller: On one side of the border is brutality and heartache; on the other side--a new life. Fourteen-year-old Manny is an orphan in Juarez, Mexico. He competes with his bigger, meaner rivals for the coins American tourists throw off the bridge between Texas and his town. Across that heavily guarded bridge await a different world and a better existence. On the
night when Manny dares the crossing--through the muddy shallows of the Rio Grande, past the searchlights and the border patrol--the young man encounters an old stranger who could prove to be an ally or an enemy. Manny can't tell for certain. But if he is to achieve his dream, then he must be willing to risk everything--even his life.

Age: 11+
Source: http://www.amazon.com/Crossing-Gary-Paulsen/dp/0439786614/ref=sr_1_4?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1366331174&sr=1-4&keywords=The+Crossing

Clara, 14, leaves her Maryland home to spend the summer with grandparents she has never met in a tiny, remote mountain village in Mexico, where she lives in a small shack among indigenous people. She meets Pedro, who becomes her companion in adventure. Clara's story alternates with that of her grandmother, a healer. This lyrical coming of age story will intrigue readers with its adventure and insights into the lives of indigenous people. The author, an anthropologist and ESL teacher, lived in Oaxaca.

Age: 10+
Source: Kitty Reeve and L. Nicole Russell