



Discussion Questions

Crossing Over: A Mexican Family on the Migrant Trail by Ruben Martínez

Source: Madison Public Library

1. When you think of migrant workers, perhaps you think of workers following the crop seasons across the country, harvesting our nation's fruits and vegetables. Were you surprised there is this other sort of migrant worker?
2. Martínez gives us strong visuals describing Cherán, Michoacán: men in cowboy boots and western shirts standing next to baggy-panted, hip-hop looking youth; cinder block homes as the most coveted dwelling. Were you surprised by the look and feel of the hometown of these immigrants?
3. Crossing Over was written in 2001. The lifestyle of the migrant worker Martínez describes pre-dates the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Current news tells us the border has tightened significantly since then. Which parts of this narrative have changed since, do you suppose? Do you think there is as much traveling back home? How do you think it is affecting families on both sides of the border?
4. Many Americans ask themselves "Why do they [illegals/undocumented workers] keep coming here if the risks in just getting here are so great?" Does Martínez answer that question?
5. Were you surprised to encounter the Wisconsin meat packing plant featured in the book? Were you aware of migrant and/or illegal workers in Wisconsin? In Madison? Where do you see them?
6. Do you have any personal experiences with illegal/undocumented/migrant workers? Did the book mirror your own understanding of their lives, or was it different?