

La Línea
Historical Fiction by Ann Jaramillo
Roaring Book Press
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About the Author

Ann Jaramillo teaches English as a Second Language to Mexican-American seventh and eighth graders in Salinas, California, many of whom are migrants. She says, “My students find very few books that reflect their lives and experiences. I was determined to write one that did.” Her students shared that many were left by their parents in Mexico, only years later to be reunited. *La Línea*

In 1971, she married Luis, a Mexican American, and she learned Hispanic culture through his family. He practices law seeking justice for migrant farm workers.

This is her first book. She has two grown sons.

Roaring Book Press Website:

<http://us.macmillan.com/lalineia>

Note: Author’s webpage, address and email were not found

Annotation:

Ann Jaramillo is uniquely qualified to tackle the tough issues of Mexican Immigration through *La Línea*, her first novel. She comments in the “about the book” section that this book is the “result of the fortunate convergence of my married and professional lives.” She is married to a Mexican-American and teaches primarily migrant students in California. Conversations with students led to this survival story. The book is fiction but is based on real events.

On Miguel’s fifteenth birthday he receives instructions to leave his grandmother and sister behind in Mexico and join his parents in California. It is then that the survival adventure begins, as he faces incredible obstacles on his way to the border. Initially his sister is unwelcome as a surprise traveler, but they learn to face dangers together. Robbers, a dangerous train ride, avoiding police and vigilantes, having little food or water, and a treacherous, exhausting two-day hike across the desert are just part of their journey to *La Línea*. The novel concludes with a phone call between Miguel and his sister ten years after their journey.

The short chapters and the in-depth character development contribute to this high interest novel. The inclusion of Spanish phrases, defined in context, adds to the reality.

Genre: Contemporary/Multicultural Fiction; also Adventure/Survival

Point of View: 1st Person

Theme(s): Courage, Family, Immigration

Interpretation of the Title: The title *La Línea* is full of meaning throughout the book. The main character is faced with “crossing the line” in many ways: leaving home, taking his sister, telling the truth, coming of age, finding himself. It is best expressed in the three final paragraphs of the book:

“I thought I’d find the real Miguel, the one I thought I couldn’t be in Mexico, once I cross *la línea*. I didn’t understand that there are thousands of *líneas* to cross in a life. Sometimes you see the border and you walk right across, eyes wide open. You know you will change. You know everything will be different. Other times you don’t know you’ve crossed a border until you reach the other side. Until you turn, and look back at *la línea*, surprised.

Later I’ll call Papá to let him know what I’ve decided to do next with my life. I’ll tell him all about the next *línea* I’m planning to cross, and maybe the one after that.”

Conflict: Both Miguel and Elena have internal conflict regarding the serious commitment they've made to cross the border to join their parents and what it will entail. The external conflict of dangerous encounters along their journey creates a very tense plot.

Conflict Resolution: When they finally cross the border, it's almost anticlimactic. They see a big highway. The author leaves the ending unresolved, because she does not describe them meeting their parents.

Characters:

Name of Character	Relationship(s)	Personal and Physical Traits
Miguel	Main character (age 15)	Strong, determined
Elena	Sister (13)	Clever, persistent
Abuelita	Grandmother	Kind; raised Miguel and Elena when parents went across la linea
Don Clemente	Paid by Miguel's father to get them out	Scarred face from burns; one eye missing; wealthy and ruthless
Javi	Fellow immigrant	Caring, helpful; becomes a father figure
El Plomero	A coyote- someone who helps immigrants get across the border	Experienced in survival, generous, loyal Nickname: Moisés

Setting: Mexico, Southern Arizona, California; contemporary times

Interest Level: Grades 5-9

Reading Level: 3.5 (Lexile 650)

Booktalk:

Do you like adventure and survival stories? Do you like a real tear-jerker, where a brother and sister living in poverty do not know when they'll ever see their parents again?

This book's storyline is literally "throw yourself on the train after your parents leave to go to another country". It sound like a made for TV movie, but in the case of many Mexican Americans, this may be the true story of their life.

Based on experiences of her students, teacher Ann Jaramillo wrote this, her first novel, about Mexicans immigrating to the United States. Miguel (15) and his sister Elena (13) are being raised by his grandmother, because their parents left for the United States to pursue a better life.

For his fifteenth birthday, Miguel receives a note from his father saying "*It's been six years, eleven months, and twelve days since I left to go north across la línea. It's time for you to come. Go see Don Clemente. He'll help you*" ... signed Papa.

This page-turning novel follows Miguel's journey beginning with his meeting with Don Clemente, surviving thieves, survival living, a dangerous train, and a 2 day trek across the desert to cross la línea, the border of the United States.

Is it worth all the terrors they've faced? Will life across *la línea* fulfill all their dreams?

Discussion Questions for La Linea, by Ann Jaramillo

Pre-reading

1. What is your family heritage? Can you trace your ancestors to another country? If so, where, and how and when did they come to the United States?
2. Do you know anyone who has emigrated from another country? If so, what was their experience?

Chapter 1

3. What is the significance of Miguel's name? (page 2)

Chapter 2

4. What was Miguel's dream, and do you think it will come true? (page 4)

Chapter 3

5. Describe Chuy's father's plan to improve the city. (page 8)

Chapter 4

6. Explain the order for immigration in their family. (page 11)

Chapter 5

7. Why did Don Clemente owe Miguel's family something? (page 16)

Chapter 6

8. How did Miguel spend his day? (page 19)

Chapter 7

9. What was Papa's plan for Miguel? (page 23)

Chapter 8

10. Describe some of the stories that were told at Miguel's going away party. (page 25-26)

Chapter 9

11. What plan did Miguel and his best friends make? (page 30)

Chapter 10

12. Why do you think Abuelita gave Miguel her precious necklace?

Chapter 11

13. On the bus, do you think Miguel makes accurate guesses about who people are? Why or why not? (page 34-35)

Chapter 12

14. Were you surprised at the person who distracted Miguel on the bus? Why or why not? (page 40)

Chapter 13

15. Who enjoyed the conversation between Miguel and Elena? (page 43)

Chapter 14

16. What did Elena give Miguel as a peace offering? (page 45)

Chapter 15

17. What did Javi do to distract Captain Morales? (page 47)

Chapter 16

18. Why do you think Miguel finally told Comillo where he had hidden the money? (page 55-56)

Chapter 17

19. What happened to Don Clemente? (page 60)

20. Why did that mean that Miguel would not go back? (page 60)

Chapter 18

21. What was a story from someone who had tried to board the *mata gente*? (page 62)

Chapter 19

22. Why did Javi suggest that Elena disguise herself as a boy? (page 65-66)

Chapter 20

23. Why did they jump off the train five times in two days? (page 69)

24. When Miguel looked at Javi, who did he see, and how did that make him feel? (page 71)

Chapter 21

25. After they jumped off the train what did Javi encourage them to do? (page 74-76)

Chapter 22

26. What did Elena arrange while Miguel was getting water? (page 78)

27. Why did Miguel disapprove of her plan? (page 79)

Chapter 23

28. Why did Miguel change his mind? (page 83)

Chapter 24

29. What was the information in the pamphlets? (page 87)

Chapter 25

30. What did El Plomero give them? (page 91)

31. Who would they wait for? (page 94)

Chapter 26

32. List several of the things necessary for desert survival. (page 95)

33. Describe Miguel's fantasy. (page 96)

Chapter 27

34. What happened to El Plomero when he went out to scout the area? (page 102)

Chapter 28

35. What two rules did they break? (page 105)

Chapter 29

36. What did they find abandoned in the desert? (page 112-113)

Chapter 30

37. What did Miguel see when they were too weak to walk anymore? (page 119)

The Phone Call

38. How often do Miguel and Elena talk? (page 122)

39. Describe their family situations. (page 121-124)

Post-reading

40. Was the phone call a surprise ending to the book? Why or why not?

41. Would you have been as strong willed as Miguel to leave your country?

42. Explain your thoughts on immigration.

Language/Vocabulary for La Linea, by Ann Jaramillo

Scheme (page 8)- a plan for doing something

Resigned (page 8)- accepting the fact- *Chuy was resigned to the plan.*

Bougainvillea (page 15)- large brightly colored flowers that grow on a vine

Tethered (page 22)- tied up

Offal (page 24)- waste parts of a butchered animal

Portico (page 53)- a row of columns at the entrance of a building

Cadre (page 74)- a group of soldiers

Quota (page 75)- a required amount; *The soldiers arrested their quota.*

Optimism (page 90)- expecting everything to turn out for the best

Wizened (page 109)- become shrunken or wrinkled

Furrowed (page 113)- to wrinkle up; as in wrinkling up eyebrows while thinking

Loomed (page 117)- to appear suddenly, usually large

Obligated (page 121)- forced to do something, in this case forced to take favors from
“Papa refused to be obligated to Don Clemente”

Undocumented (page 121)- lacking permission to live or work in a country

Apprehended (page 129)- take into custody by police; gathered up by police, but not necessarily arrested

Deported (page 129)- to force a person who is not a citizen to leave a country; in La Línea they would be sent back to Mexico

Determination (page 129)- mental strength to do something

Indiana Academic Standards met by novel content

Language Arts 6.3.2, 6.3.3, 6.3.5, 6.3.6, 7.1.3, 7.2.4, 7.3.2, 7.3.3, 7.3.4, 8.1.3, 8.3.2, 8.3.4, 8.3.5

Anticipation Statements

Before		La Linea By Ann Jaramillo	AFTER	
Agree	Disagree		Agree	Disagree
		It would be good give your most prized possession to a friend.		
		It's possible to believe your parents loved you even if they left you with your grandma, and moved to another country.		
		On a dangerous, but necessary trip you would take your little sister, even if it would cause some problems.		
		You should be able to trust someone, if they've been recommended by someone else you trust.		
		Promises should always be kept.		

Read-Aloud Passages

Read Aloud from Chapter 1

pages 1-2, beginning with “I leaned over the side of the bed...”

Importance of this passage: These pages describe Miguel’s 15th birthday present, a note from his father, telling him it was time for him to go north across *la línea*..

Read Aloud from Chapter 19

pages 66-,67 beginning with “Of course Javi had a plan...” ending at the bottom of page 67

Importance of this passage: These pages describe how Javi, Miguel and Elena boarded the mata gente (the “people killer” train)

Read-Alikes

If you like La Línea, by Ann Jaramillo, then you may like:

Fiction about Mexican Americans:

Baseball in April and other stories, by Gary Soto

The circuit : stories from the life of a migrant child, by Francisco Jimenez

Becoming Naomi Leon, by Pam Munoz Ryan

Esperanza Rising, by Pam Munoz Ryan

Immigrants from Other Countries:

Lord Kingle's money by Avi- Maura and her brother emigrate to the US from Ireland during the potato famine. The mother chooses to not go with them.

A house of tailors, by Patricia Reilly Giff.- Dina, age 13, migrates from Germany in 1871, and takes a long time to adjust.

Letters from Rifka, by Karen Hesse- Rifka’s Jewish family emigrates to the United States in 1919 from Russia. Rifka’s parents leave Rifka behind because she does not pass inspection, but she later joins them.

A Step from Heaven. by An Na- A Korean girl finds it difficult to adjust to life in America.

Across the Curriculum Connections Subject and Activities

Social Studies: Citizenship Activity

Materials:

Teacher will print a copy of the Naturalization Test required for citizenship: Civics (History and Government) from the Redesigned Naturalization Test from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

<http://www.uscis.gov/files/nativedocuments/100q.pdf>

Note: this is 100 questions long (11 pages)- print one per group

Teacher will explain the requirements to be a naturalized citizen. One requirement is to pass this test. Only 10 questions are selected from 100, and the individual must answer six out of ten correctly to pass. For this activity, all 100 questions will be used.

Working in groups students will:

1. Take turns reading questions and having the group answer the questions (students can divide 100 by the number of students in the group, to determine how many each one will read)
2. The answers are on the test, so each reader can keep track of how many the group has correct
3. Each group will report number of correct answers for a “winner”
4. Discuss as a class which questions are the most difficult for them.
5. Discuss as a class which questions they think would be the most difficult for an immigrant.

Any questions regarding the process of citizenship may be answered at this site:

<http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis>

IN Academic Standards Social Studies 8.2.5

Health and Wellness:Water Weights Activity

The characters in La Línea lives' were threatened by dehydration as they hiked through the desert. Working in pairs, this activity will increase the student's knowledge about water's role in human health. They will measure the weight and do math to compute the difference between fresh and de-hydrated fruits. They also will compare their own body weight with a number of water bottles, so they can visually see how many water bottles worth of water is in their body, calculating 75% of their body weight.

Complete instructions for this activity are found at:

<http://www.region.peel.on.ca/pw/waterstory/pdf/activities/water-weights.pdf>

Materials needed:

Fresh and dried fruit (apricots, grapes/raisins)

Balance scale

Bathroom scale

Several bottles of water

Recycling bin (or box to hold bottles of water on scale)

Indiana's Academic Standards

Health and Wellness 6.1.7, 6.5.7,6.7.1, 6.7.2, 6.7.3, 7.1.8, 7.5.7, 7.7.3, 8.1.9, 8.5.6, 8.5.7

Science 6.2.5, 6.2.6, 6.4.7, 7.2.6, 7.2.7, 8.2.2, 8.2.7, 8.2.8

Math 6.2.3, 6.2.5, 6.2.8, 7.2.1, 7.2.2, 8.2.1,

Supplemental Resources

Books

The following books provide background information on Immigration:

Ingram, Scott. Mexican Americans. Milwaukee, WI : World Almanac Library, 2007.

Kent, Deborah. Migrant farmworkers: hoping for a better life. Chanhassen, Minn. : Child's World, c2005.

Nevins, Joseph. Dying to live : a story of U.S. immigration in an age of global apartheid San Francisco : Open Media/City Lights Books, c2008.

DVDs- These videos are designed for adults and deal with the American side of Mexican Immigration

Rights on the line vigilantes on the border. Philadelphia, PA: AFSC & WITNESS, 2005.

Border patrol life on the line. Princeton, N.J. : Films for the Humanities & Sciences, 2003.

Book Activities

Book Related Activity #1

La Línea, Ann Jaramillo

Design a Student Ambassador Program- A Persuasive Essay

Ann Jaramillo established an “Ambassador” Program in her school to help new immigrant students. A native born student is assigned to each student to help them, not just the first day, but in their overall adjustment to the school and a new culture. This assignment is to design a program for your school and write a persuasive essay

Materials: Photocopy the Student Ambassador chart for each student; notebook paper to write an essay.

- The students will work in small groups to brainstorm ideas to complete the chart on the next page answering three questions
 - Problems immigrants like Miguel and Elena would have starting at your school
 - Things they would **NEED** to know
 - Things that would be **HELPFUL** to know
- Then, students will brainstorm **HOW** this could be done in their school, writing ideas on the back of their chart
- Students will work individually to write a five paragraph persuasive essay on why a student ambassador program is needed for their school. The essay should:
 - include a well-defined thesis that makes a clear and knowledgeable appeal.
 - present detailed evidence, examples, and reasoning to support effective arguments and emotional appeals.
 - provide details, reasons, and examples, arranging them effectively by anticipating and answering reader concerns and counterarguments.
- Grading: This is a 60 point assignment
 - 10 points for completed chart
 - 10 points for thesis statement
 - 30 points- 10 points for body paragraph topic sentences, content and support ideas
 - 10 points for sentence structure, transitions, grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization

If time allows, these could be presented in class.

IN Academic Standards Language Arts

6.2.4, 6.2.7, 6.2.8, 6.3.2, 6.3.6, 6.4.3, 6.5.5, 6.6.1, 6.6.4, 6.6.5

7.4.1, 7.4.2, 7.4.3, 7.5.4, 7.6.8

8.4.1, 8.4.2, 8.4.10, 8.5.4, 8.6.1, 8.6.5, 8.6.6, 8.6.7

Name: _____

Date: _____

Student Ambassador Program

In your group, brainstorm at least 10 ideas for each column.

Problems immigrants like Miguel and Elena would have starting at your school	Things they would NEED to know	Things that would be HELPFUL to know

Book Related Activity #2

La Línea, Ann Jaramillo

Mexican Immigration- Writing a Summary

This activity will give students a better understanding of Mexican Immigration. The teacher will assign one of three articles to each small group. They will read it aloud, discuss it, fill out a K, W, L chart, and then individually write a summarizing paragraph. Then there will be a class discussion on the three topics.

Materials:

- Article or book for each student
 - Article #1 La Línea, “About this Book”, pages 127-129
 - Article #2 History of Mexican Immigration
Moreno, Barry. "The History of Mexican Immigration." Mexican Americans 2003. Student Research Center. Online. 27 Jun 2008.
<www.inspire.net>.
 - Article #3 Speech by Mexican President
Rojas, Aurelio. "Mexican president calls for immigration reform while addressing California lawmakers ." The Sacramento Bee. 13 FEB 2008. Student Research Center. Online. 27 Jun 2008
<www.inspire.net>.
- KWL Chart
- Notebook paper for summary

ACTIVITY:

- Students will be divided into groups of 3-5 students.
 - They will fill out the “K” and “W” column of their KWL chart
 - They will read aloud the article in the group
 - They will discuss as a group ideas to put in the “L” column
- Students will work individually to write a summary. The summary should:
 - include the main ideas and most significant details.
 - use the student’s own words, except for quotations.
 - reflect underlying meaning, not just the superficial details.
- Grading: This is a 50 point assignment
 - 10 points for participation in the group
 - 10 points for completed chart
 - 20 points for the Summary paragraph (see above for requirement)
 - 10 points for sentence structure, transitions, grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization
- Class will be divided into three larger groups, sharing what they learned.

IN Academic Standards Language Arts

6.2.3, 6.2.4, 6.2.7, 6.3.2, 6.3.3, 6.3.6, 6.4.1, 6.4.5, 6.5.4, 6.6.1, 6.6.4, 6.6.5

7.4.1, 7.2.4, 7.4.1, 7.4.4, 7.4.2, 7.4.3, 7.5.5, 7.6.8

8.2.3, 8.2.4, 8.2.6, 8.4.1, 8.4.2, 8.4.3, 8.4.10, 8.5.2, 8.6.1, 8.6.5, 8.6.6, 8.6.7

Bibliography

Follett Book Company, <http://www.titlewave.com/login/>

“Glossary of Immigration Terms”. Online. 26 June 2008.
<http://www.immigrationequality.org/>

Indiana Academic Standards, <http://www.doe.state.in.us/standards/welcome2.html>

Indianapolis Marion County Public Library, www.imcpl.org/

Ingram Book Company, <https://ipage.ingrambook.com/ipage/hm001.jsp>

Ruis de-Velasco, Jorge. “Immigrants and Schools.” Washington Post. 30 May 2001.
Online. 25 June 2008.
www.washingtonpost.com

In addition, all the Supplemental Resource websites were used to gain background knowledge.