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Dear Eighth Graders and Families,

Welcome to eighth grade - your best and final year at Penn Alexander!

Reading is both a crucial skill and one of life's greatest pleasures. For both of these reasons, we in the Middle School, want to encourage our students to read as much as possible. In an effort to promote literacy and maintain reading skills, it has been decided to require summer reading for incoming eighth graders.

Incoming eighth graders are required to read one text, *Enrique's Journey*. This book will be discussed in class during the first weeks of school, and one of the first assignments in Literacy will be centered around *Enrique's Journey*.

One of the skills we encourage is that of active reading. With that in mind, students are asked to annotate and mark the assigned reading. Some strategies to keep in mind:

- ~Track the people discussed in the assigned non-fiction text. Being sure to pay attention to their descriptions, motivations, changes over time, etc.
- ~ Mark (underline, circle, or bracket) important moments in the text. These markings should be accompanied with marginal notes as why you circled, underlined, or bracketed the specific pieces of text. (Feel free to write in the actual texts.)
- ~At the end of a chapter/section, write about the important concepts or key details that occurred in that chapter/section.

The skill of annotating a text, which is practiced throughout middle school, continues to be an expectation in eighth grade. This work will provide a way to enter into the work and book conversations that will begin in September, so a cursory, casual read will not be sufficient.

Enjoy your summer! Explore your neighborhood, spend time with your family and friends, be read to and read--- any and everything, whether magazines, newspapers, brochures, books, etc. Even in the middle years, many children still enjoy having someone read to them.

Happy Reading!



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Resources & Other Pertinent Information - please read*

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>.

An Epilogue recounts many interviews that the author conducted with Enrique, Lourdes and their family in Honduras since *Enrique's Journey* was initially published in 2006. It reveals Enrique's battle with drug addiction, his fractured relationship with his mother, and his struggles to be a husband and father in an environment that is often hostile to illegal immigrants. In many ways, Enrique is emblematic of many of his countrymen who came to the United States illegally. Finally, the epilogue poses questions and offers solutions to address the socio-economic issues raised by Enrique's story.



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Map of Mexico and its States



An Interview with the Author that addresses her inspiration for the the book, stereotypes, and ethical dilemmas.

<http://facingtoday.facinghistory.org/interview-with-sonianazario>

How did you learn about Enrique and other children who are making dangerous journeys every day in order to reunite with their families in the United States?

Sonia Nazario: *Enrique's Journey* began with a story I heard in my kitchen. I asked my housecleaner, Carmen, if she wanted to have more children. Carmen, normally chatty, began sobbing. She told me she had left four children behind with her mom in Guatemala in order to go north to work. That was 12 years ago. I remember standing in my kitchen, stunned, thinking, *What kind of desperation would it take for a mother to walk away, go 2,000 miles, not knowing when or if she would see her children again?* A year later, one of Carmen's sons came to find her on his own. He said he and thousands of other children were making perilous journeys through Mexico in search of their mothers in the U.S. I started doing research, traveling to



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Honduras and up the migrant routes through Mexico, and discovered a small army of children heading north to the U.S. unlawfully. At the time, 48,000 children made the trek each year. In the past three years, that number has risen tenfold. I wanted to find someone to speak to that was typical of teenagers making this journey. A nun at a church in Nuevo Laredo put Enrique on the telephone with me. I liked him because he was honest, open, and had been through many of the typical, difficult experiences these children face.

Historically, U.S. immigration policy has often been influenced by racial and cultural stereotypes. Enrique's journey helps break down some of the stereotypes that are prevalent in our culture. How do you think Enrique's story helps people see beyond stereotypes and judgments?

I believe that if I can put you in someone else's shoes, help you understand their life and circumstances, it creates understanding and empathy. Empathy is what changes perspectives. That doesn't mean you agree with all the choices someone has made, but you can begin to understand what, in their past and present, brought them there, and how you might make similar choices. I ask questions of people that help me better understand certain issues, and their answers and stories in turn help my readers better understand and invest in the characters I portray.

With Enrique's story, I felt it was important to show what is pushing people out of their countries and what children are willing to do to make this journey to America, especially during this time of the greatest hostility toward immigrants since the Great Depression. Enrique is deeply flawed, and I think that fact helps those opposed to immigration accept his story as truth. But also I think people connect with the story because of the way in which it is told—in the first person. I always hope to educate people about the biggest issues of our time in a compelling, engaging way. I want to grab them by the throat and take them on a ride, take them inside a world they might not otherwise see, and educate them about that world. This kind of immersive, non-fiction storytelling not only engages readers, but also brings about change. Stories that help us better understand our reality spur us to want to improve our world.

What were some of the ethical dilemmas you faced as a writer and reporter while researching and telling Enrique's story?

I lived in near constant danger of being beaten, raped, or robbed. All along the way, I encountered gangsters, bandits, and corrupt police officers. Despite everything, the hardest part was having migrants ask me, each day, for help—money or food. Since I was there as a journalist, unless a migrant I encountered was in imminent danger, I had to tell them I couldn't help. That was by far the hardest part of this journey.

Reporters often witness subjects in distress when they report stories. Whether the suffering is due to a civil war, an environmental disaster, poverty, or crime, a journalist's job is to stay on the sidelines and report what he or she sees. We are not supposed to change reality and then report on the reality we have altered; that is considered dishonest to readers.



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You've traveled the U.S. to tell this story, and heard from many people who have been inspired to action after reading this book. Can you share some of those stories, or do you have any tips for students or educators who want to stand up and take action?

The story Enrique—of one boy—has gotten students to act and try to improve conditions. They have built schools in Mexico and Central America, water systems, homes for single mothers. A high school in California raised \$9,000 selling cookies and used the money to provide a microloan to women in Guatemala so she could expand her coffee growing business and hire more workers so fewer women would have to leave for the north. In classrooms, schools, and communities young people are having conversations around an immigration solution focused on addressing the exodus at the source—a solution that would help create change in countries where violence, corruption, and bad governance are pushing people to leave. Students have confirmed my unshakable belief that with knowledge, people can change perspective and act to make things better.

What changes in readers or in the world do you hope the book will continue to contribute to?

I hope the book opens readers' eyes to the living history of Honduras and the evolving story of all immigrants from Central America. I hope readers become educated and involved in politics so there are more people arguing for increased U.S. financial support for Central America and better treatment of unaccompanied minors being held in immigration detention centers. I hope that readers who have anti-immigrant ideas at least become more open and tolerant of their immigrant neighbors and co-workers.