

Approved for use in 8th Grade English

Summary of the Work:

From www.willhobbsauthor.com

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.

Rationale:

This text is to be used in a literature circle setting, where students will choose to read this text among others on and about Latin America. Students will research the history, culture, customs, music, art, architecture, etc. of the setting of this novel. They will discuss the text, its issues, and present on the book and their research to the rest of the class.

Professional Reviews and/or Critical Essays:

From School Library Journal

Grade 5 Up-- Ever since his family moved to the tiny village of Los Árboles, Victor has been best friends with Rico. When Rico tells him that he has enough money to pay for a coyote to help him cross into El Norte, Victor is unable to decide if he, too, should go along and look for work or try to feed his family with the pitiful annual corn harvest. The decision is made for him the next day when he discovers that the corn prices have bottomed out and that there is no point in even planting this year. Readers suffer with the 15-year-old as he makes his painful decision to leave his mother and younger siblings and attempts the dangerous border crossing, jumping trains, fleeing thieves and border officials, and suffering from thirst and hunger. His desperation and fear are completely believable as he faces near-death situations and must decide whom to trust. The author deftly weaves information concerning the local geography and customs into the plot. The story is well paced, sustaining readers' attention throughout. Pair this novel with Ann Jaramillo's *La Línea* (Roaring Brook, 2006) for another fictional view of young people crossing the border between the U.S. and Mexico.

* Print resources are available from the library media center and libraries in the district. Contact any library media specialist to view the scholarly sources.

* Scholarly reviews are also available online through Books in Print and Gale. Contact the library media specialist to obtain username and password information to access the subscription database of full-text reviews.

Noted Distinction:

- Junior Library Guild Selection
- Southwest Book Award
- Notable Books for a Global Society (IRA) 2007
- New York Public Library Books for the Teenage
- Americas Award Commended Title

Readability:

- Lexile Score: 670L
- Readability Level:

Learning Resources Guidelines:

- The novel meets the Learning Resources Guidelines.

Standard Alignment:

Literature:

Content Standard 1—Students construct meaning as they comprehend, interpret, analyze and respond to literary works.

Content Standard 2—Students recognize and evaluate how language, literary devices, and elements contribute to the meaning and impact of literary works.

Content Standard 3—Students reflect upon their literary experiences and purposefully select from a range of works.

Content Standard 4—Students interact with print and nonprint literary works from various cultures, ethnic groups, traditional and contemporary viewpoints written by both genders.

Content Standard 5—Students use literary works to enrich personal experience and to connect to the broader world of ideas, concepts and issues.

Writing:

Content Standard 1—Students write clearly and effectively.

Content Standard 2—Students apply a range of skills and strategies in the writing process.

Content Standard 3—Students evaluate and reflect on their growth as writers.

Content Standard 4—Students write for a variety of purposes and audiences.

Content Standard 5—Students recognize the structures of various forms and apply these characteristics to their own writing.

	<p>Content Standard 6—Students use the inquiry process, problem-solving strategies, and resources to synthesize and communicate information.</p> <p>Reading:</p> <p>Content Standard 1—Students construct meaning as they comprehend, interpret, and respond to what they read.</p> <p>Content Standard 2—Students apply a range of skills and strategies to read.</p> <p>Content Standard 3—Students set goals, monitor, and evaluate their progress in reading.</p> <p>Content Standard 4—Students select, read, and respond to print and nonprint material for a variety of purposes.</p> <p>Content Standard 5—Students gather, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information from a variety of sources, and communicate their findings in ways appropriate for their purposes and audiences.</p> <p>Speaking:</p> <p>Standard 1—Students demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the communication process.</p> <p>Content Standard 2—Students distinguish among and use appropriate types of speaking and listening for a variety of purposes.</p> <p>Content Standard 3—Students apply a range of skills and strategies to speaking and listening.</p> <p>Content Standard 4—Students identify, analyze, and evaluate the impacts of effective speaking and evaluative listening.</p> <p>Approval: Submitted to Committee: Approved for Adoption:</p>
<p>Notes on the Text: <i>(The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)</i></p> <p>I found this to be an action packed thriller that is based in our modern day life. To describe a personal story of a person crossing the Mexican-American border and place good reasoning and explanation to a modern "issue" in American politics and culture. It is also a story of family, values, and survival. This is a good book, and could be read very quickly. I found nothing objectionable, except that it makes it seem alright for a person to break the immigration laws.</p>	<p>Connection to the Curriculum:</p> <p>Please see rationale.</p>
<p>Additional Connections: <i>(AP, Honors, Essential/Applied, Dramas, Films, etc.)</i></p>	