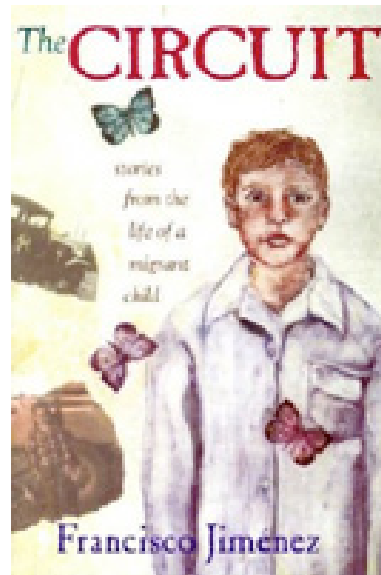


Francisco Jiménez takes us into a way of life encompassing both sweetness and sorrow. As his family moves from one labor camp to the next.



The Circuit

Francisco Jiménez
University of New Mexico Press 1997

Grade Levels

9-12

Curriculum Area

Language Arts • Social Studies

National Language Arts Standards

NL-ENG.K-12.8

DEVELOPING RESEARCH SKILLS

Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

Objectives

To provide a range of culturally diverse literature meeting students' needs to understand themselves, understand worldviews and other cultures.

To provide meaningful, authentic opportunities to read vocabulary in a variety of contexts; language in a cultural context.

Overview

The Circuit follows a migrant family through its circuit of picking over a number of years. Jiménez takes us into a way of life encompassing both sweetness and sorrow. As his family moves from one labor camp to the next, it grows from four to 10. Uncertainty and poverty define their lives, but so also do faith and hope.

Breaking Through begins where *The Circuit* ends. Jiménez chronicles his teenage years where, among other things, he and his family are caught by immigration officers and forced to leave their California home. Jiménez explores prejudice right alongside the universal teenage experiences of school dances and romances.

Activity

Discussion Questions

What are some examples of racial prejudice in these two stories?

What are some examples of power in these two stories? How is power used?

There is a great controversy in many communities today about "English-only" education. What are the arguments about it? Who is making the arguments? Who has the power in these arguments, and how are they using this power? What do you think about the "English-only" debate?

If you were born in this country, how has your life or your family's been different or similar to that of the Jiménez family? If you were born outside this country, what similarities — and differences — do you have with the Jiménez family?

What teachers have made an impact in your life and why?

Activity

Francisco's lack of understanding of English contributes substantially to his difficulties. Discuss one specific example of this, pointing out not only the misunderstandings and emotional trauma caused, but also the way in which such lack leads Francisco into alternate ways of communication.

"I was so proud I felt like bursting out of my skin" (Page 25). Analyze the simile in this passage according to the close reading suggestions.

"I wanted to wake up and find it was only a dream" Stories are very important to Francisco, both hearing them and making them up. How do dreams, visions, and illusions alter and affect reality?

Discuss the importance of family in this odyssey, pointing to both the family's growing numbers as well as their increasing strength despite their continuing adversity.

10. Look closely at Ms. Ehlis's prompting the class to memorize one section of The Declaration of Independence. Show why this is ironic and why it is so important in creating "hope" for the Jimenez family and for all of us. After dark in a Mexican border town, a father holds open a hole in a wire fence as his wife and two small boys crawl through.

So begins life in the United States for many people every day. And so begins this collection of twelve autobiographical stories by Santa Clara University professor Francisco Jiménez, who at the age of four illegally crossed the border with his family in 1947.

These independent but intertwined stories follow the family through their circuit, from picking cotton and strawberries to topping carrots--and back again--over a number of years. As it moves from one labor camp to the next, the little family of four grows into ten. Impermanence and poverty define their lives. But with faith, hope, and backbreaking work, the family endures.

The Circuit beautifully captures the rhythms of everyday life and the dreams and aspirations of a migrant family. Jiménez writes credibly in the voice of his young protagonist. Pancho is a

compelling and memorable character, at the emotional center of a book that will appeal to both adult and teenage readers. [MultiCultural Review]

Internet Websites

Francisco Jimenez

<http://www.scu.edu/SCU/Programs/Diversity/frjim.html>

Francisco Jimenez-Biography

<http://www2.scholastic.com/teachers/authors/andbooks/authorstudies/authorhome.jhtml?authorID=207&collateralID=5196&displayName=Biography&requestid=121463>

Francisco Jimenez-Study Guide

<http://www.scu.edu/ethnicstudies/fjimenez/study/thecircuit.cfm>

Multicultural Literature-Introduction

<http://www.uh.edu/hti/cu/2003/v04/05.htm>