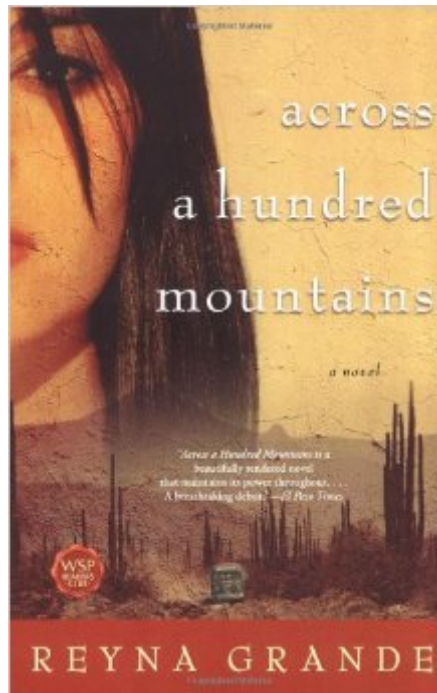


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Across A Hundred Mountains: A Novel



Synopsis

Winner of the American Book Award, *Across a Hundred Mountains* is a stunning and poignant novel about a young girl who leaves her small town in Mexico to find her father, who left his family to find work in America—a story of migration, loss, and discovery. After a tragedy separates her from her mother, Juana García leaves in search of her father, who left them two years earlier. Out of money and in need of someone to help her across the border, Juana meets Adelina Vasquez, a young woman who left her family in California to follow her lover to Mexico. Finding themselves in a Tijuana jail in desperate circumstances, they offer each other much needed material and spiritual support and ultimately become linked forever in the most unexpected of ways. In *Across a Hundred Mountains*, Reyna Grande puts a human face on the controversial issue of immigration, helping readers to better understand those who risk life and limb every day in pursuit of a better life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As the public discourse over undocumented immigration becomes more heated and, at times, outright ugly -- particularly in the blogosphere -- attacks on such immigrants are often made in broad strokes and with gross generalizations. This should not be a surprise, because it is easier to denigrate and reject a group of people if you dehumanize them and make them faceless. But that's where talented writers come in: With skillful prose, they can focus on a small group of undocumented immigrants and make their struggles and humanity real to the reader so that it becomes difficult to dismiss their plight with a bumper-sticker slogan or the waving of a flag. Two

years ago, Luis Alberto Urrea did exactly that with "The Devil's Highway" (Little, Brown), in which he brilliantly chronicled the plight of 26 Mexican men who, in 2001, crossed the border into an area of the Arizona desert known as the Devil's Highway. Only 12 made it safely across. The book received wide acclaim and was a finalist for the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for general nonfiction. Now comes a fictionalized story of undocumented immigration in Reyna Grande's debut novel, "Across a Hundred Mountains" (Atria Books, \$23). Grande tells her story in evocative language that never falls into pathos. In the nonlinear narrative, chapters alternate between her two female protagonists, Juana Garcia and Adelina Vasquez. First, we have Juana, a young girl who lives in a small Mexican village in extreme poverty. When a flood leads to yet another death in her family -- a death that Juana feels responsible for -- Juana's father believes that he must earn more money to house his family in safer quarters. He believes that there are abundant opportunities "en el otro lado," based on a letter from a friend: "ApÃ¡'s friend wrote about riches unheard of, streets that never end, and buildings that nearly reach the sky. He wrote that there's so much money to be made, and so much food to eat, that people there don't know what hunger is." With such dreams, Juana's father decides to leave his family and enter the United States by relying on a fast-talking coyote. He makes numerous promises to send money once he's found employment. But Juana and her mother hear nothing for years, leading to further poverty. Worse yet, Juana's father had to borrow money from Don Elias to pay the coyote's exorbitant fee. Once Juana's father embarks on his journey, Don Elias swoops down on Juana's beautiful mother with ideas as to how repayment can be made. A few years later -- after no word from her father, and after her abused mother has fallen into alcoholism -- Juana decides to leave home to find her father. Juana eventually crosses paths with a young prostitute, Adelina, in Tijuana. They make plans to join forces and sneak into the United States together. For Juana, there's a chance to find her long-lost father. For Adelina, there's hope to cast off the shackles of her abusive boyfriend-pimp. This friendship is perhaps one of the most affecting elements of Grande's narrative. And, after a twist reminiscent of Dickens, these brave young women end up insinuating themselves into each other's life more than one could imagine. The publisher tells us that Grande was born in Guerrero, Mexico, in 1975, and that she entered the United States as an undocumented immigrant at age 9. Despite such obstacles, Grande earned her bachelor's degree in creative writing from the University of California at Santa Cruz and was a 2003 PEN USA Emerging Voices Fellow. In other words, Grande is living the American dream and has offered a striking and moving story about people who have traveled the same dangerous journey that she did. "Across a Hundred Mountains" is a beautifully rendered novel that maintains its power throughout because Reyna Grande keeps control over her language and does not feel a need to trumpet emotionally volatile

scenes of alcohol and drug abuse, rape, poverty and infant mortality. This is a breathtaking debut.[This review first appeared in the El Paso Times.]

This book was selected for One Region, One Book in Southeastern Connecticut, where I used to live. That is how I became interested. The novel has a cross-generational appeal and speaks to issues of our day. It effectively combines family history with the controversial subject of immigration reform. It is full of poignant drama, class and racial tensions and a heartwarming story of hope amidst despair. I would recommend it without reservation, both as a good read and an appeal to practice the golden rule!!

The story is compelling and well told. The allegory is sometimes too obvious, yet the book speaks with a voice not heard often enough. The allure and promise of the US to an immigrant population that is exploited, ignored and vilified driven by poverty and lack of opportunity. These people of the Americas are the people who understand the true meaning of the American dream, and who suffer and die for what most Americans have long taken for granted.

This was an excellent book, full of unsparing detail and sharp images. The two stories coincide and cross in a surprisingly possible way, with haunting twists and turns. After just reading Enrique's Journey, the crossing to El Otro Lado in this book reiterated the inhumanity of the border situation for me. A riveting book. Highly recommended.

This was a beautifully-written book, but the narrative alternates between two characters and one has a much more interesting story than the other. Also, there are some twists at the end that made the book confusing and frustrating. Read Grande's memoir: that one deserves ten stars.

I met this author at a recent conference, and bought the book. I read it in one day. It was one of those books you can't put down, but don't want to end. She has a unique style that is spare yet so vivid that you are transported into the story. The story is so powerful that I cried and was rocked to my core. I bought several copies to give to friends. Ms. Grande is a gifted writer. This book is a must read!

This is a fast read. But prepare for it to catapult you in all directions before you approach the final (very satisfying) scene. For those of you unfamiliar with the actual realities faced by Mexicans who

look north for economic and personal freedom, this book truthfully and unromantically reflects a common narrative. It is a narrative I first heard from my own close friend, who crossed the border illegally at age 12 with her mother and younger siblings. Grande provides us all with a realistic look at the lives of real people, but remembers to add the nonverbal, non-rational to her story in balanced but true measure. Carlos Castenada and Gabriel Garcia Marquez, bow to what the 21st century hath wrought! Reyna Grande. I'm off to read Reyna Grande's next book, *Dancing with Butterflies*. I have a young college student, trying to make her way in the norteno world, stuck between her parents' ways and her American culture's, who dances folklórico like Nora dances the tarantella in *A Doll's House*. Perhaps this will be a good "recommend" for her. *Read Across a Hundred Mountains*. Then share it with a friend.

This story is about Mexicans trying to get into the U.S., but from the point of view of Mexican people. It was interesting to see the two main characters coming closer together as the story unfolds. Story of families, loss, disappointments and strength and determination. I liked it

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