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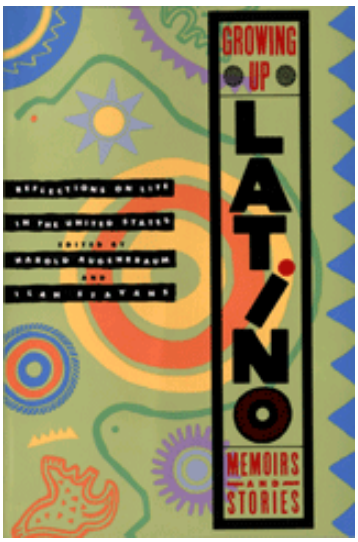
Whittier Public Library's

Book Club in a Box

GROWING UP LATINO

About the Book



From the mean streets of the barrio to the house on Mango Street, from the Mambo Kings to the Garcia Girls, the authors who contribute to this volume transport us across geographies and through cultures in an attempt to articulate the joys, struggles, defeats, and triumphs of the Latino experience in the United States. Growing Up Latino offers, for the first time, a comprehensive collection of classic and recent Latino writing in English, converging in sometimes shocking, often funny, and always stirring memoirs and stories. Religion, sex, love, language, and family are some of the topics explored in this compelling anthology of fiction and nonfiction. With its laughter and tears, its beauty and power, it is a thoroughly enjoyable book and an unforgettable contribution to the Latino tradition of letters. This diverse collection shatters the myth of a singular U.S.- Latino experience, proving the existence of a rich tradition whose writers, active for more than forty years, are only now being recognized by a rapidly growing audience.

Source: *Houghton Mifflin*

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About the Editors

Ilan Stavans

Writing is like breathing. I write every day, generally at night because I'm not interrupted. Besides, at night I'm tired, which gives the mind a special sharpness.

Ilan Stavans teaches at Amherst College. His books include *The Hispanic Condition* (Harper Collins) and *Tropical Synagogues* (Holmes and Meier). He is currently editing *The Oxford Book of Latin American Essays*. The stories included here at Web del Sol are from his collection, *The One-Handed Pianist* (University of New Mexico Press).

Harold Augenbraum

A graduate of Boston University and fluent in Spanish and French, Augenbraum is considered one of the country's foremost scholars on Latino literary studies. He has edited numerous anthologies of Latino literature and has also translated two books by Latino authors, both for Penguin. His reviews and articles on a range of topics including Latino fiction, Edgar Allan Poe, Proust, and Asian-American writers have been widely published and he also lectures frequently on these subjects. In 2000, he received the Raven Award from the Mystery Writers of America "for contributions to the field."

Who are the Latinos? This is a question that comes to the fore time and time again, as the United States seems to be in the midst of a "Latin Explosion" spanning music, sports, and politics that has caught the imagination of the U.S. in the last decade. There is Ricky Martin, Henry Cisneros and Sandra Cisneros, Jennifer López, and Christina Aguilera, and of course, Sammy Sosa and Orlando "El Duque" Hernández who have been at the center of the recent media coverage. The images provided by the media invite a second look of this group of Americans, who are heterogeneous as the images suggest and yet share the common burden of being, by and large, almost universally misunderstood by the mainstream U.S.

The popular images of Latinos circulated within the mainstream have tended to represent them as recent arrivals, crossovers, and exotic foreigners, regardless of where they come from, or how long they have been citizens of this country. Latinos are already the largest minority in the country with the potential for great contributions to the nation's common future.

Latinos in the United States share a common language, culture and, in some instances, similar histories; however, there are differences in how each community arrived and settled in the United States. There are also political, economic, and social conditions characteristic to each of their countries of origin in Latin America. In addition, the individual and collective experiences, which have shaped the growth, development and ongoing struggles of Latinos, play a key role in defining the community's viability and role for the future.

Dr. Adriela Fernandez

College of Arts and Sciences
Governors State University

Photos:
http:www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/espanol

Critical Praise

Publisher's Weekly:

Written in English, all 26 essays and stories in this anthology of contemporary Hispanic American writing focus on coming of age within two conflicting cultures. The pieces show as much variety as they do similarity, representing the work of writers with Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, Colombian, and other Latin American ancestry. Some of the pieces, including Nicholasa Mohr's "Mr. Mendelsohn," were originally published as short stories, while others, such as Judith Ortiz Cofer's "Silent Dancing," are excerpted from full-length works. Many other contributors, including Piri Thomas, Sandra Cisneros, Oscar Hijuelos, Rudolfo Anaya, and Julia Alvarez, will be familiar to most readers. This anthology belongs in contemporary literature collections in both public and academic libraries and should also be considered as a text for advanced high school and college literary courses.

Library Journal:

Augenbraum, a librarian, and Stavans (Imagining Columbus: The Literary Voyage) have gathered together the best in autobiographical reflections and fiction by Latino authors to produce this intriguing and excellent volume. These pieces raise the question: What does it mean to grow up Latino in the United States, where there are so many nationalities of Spanish origin? Is a pan-Hispanic identity being forged? A brief excerpt of Oscar "Zeta" Acosta's The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo is about growing up during WW II, the son of a Mexican father who has become an enthusiastic American and a mother who sings songs from the homeland. A selection from Jose Antonio Villareal's seminal novel Pocho tells of a strike by farm laborers during the Depression through the eyes of a young boy . Masterful stories are also collected from Rudolfo Anaya, Sandra Cisneros and Gloria Anzaldua. Edward Rivera's seriocomic tale of his first Communion and Nash Candelaria's tale concerning the nature and cultural character of hero worship deserve to be singled out. The introduction, a fine overview of Latino autobiography, helps put the selections into their cultural context.

Further Reading

If you liked *Growing Up Latino*, you might like:

The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love
by Oscar Hijuelos

How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accent
by Julia Alvarez

Caramelo by Sandra Cisneros

Rain of Gold by Victor Villasenor

Bless Me, Ultima by Rudolfo Anaya

The Milagro Beanfield War
by John Nichols

Contributors

Oscar “Zeta” Acosta
Julia Alvarez
Rudolfo Anaya
Gloria Anzaldua
Nash Candelaria
Denise Chavez
Sandra Cisneros
Jesus Colon
Genaro Gonzalez
Oscar Hijuelos
Rolando Hinojosa (Smith)
Patricia Preciado Martin
Nicholasa Mohr
Judith Ortiz-Cofer
Americo Paredes
Edward Rivera
Tomas Rivera
Richard Rodriguez
Gary Soto
Piri Thomas
J.L. Torres
Ed Vega
Alma Villanueva
Jose Antonio Villareal
Helena Maria Viramontes