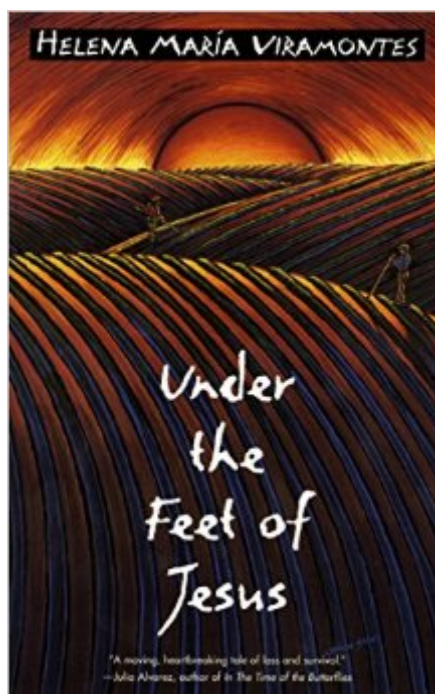


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Under The Feet Of Jesus



Synopsis

With the same audacity with which John Steinbeck wrote about migrant worker conditions in *The Grapes of Wrath* and T.C. Boyle in *The Tortilla Curtain*, Viramontes (*The Moths and Other Stories*) presents a moving and powerful vision of the lives of the men, women, and children who endure a second-class existence and labor under dangerous conditions in California's fields. This first novel tells the story a young girl, Estrella, and her Latino family as they struggle with arduous farm labor during the summer months, and still manage to latch onto the hope of a liberating future. Viramontes graces the page with poetic touch, artfully describing poverty conditions and bringing to the reader a panoramic view of social consciousness and unforgettable characters.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The scorching hot midday sun beats down upon the bare necks of migrant Mexican workers, ready to do back-breaking work for meager wages. One of the characters of the story, Perfecto, observes the scene described in wonderful detail: clouds ready to burst like cotton plants, an old decaying barn nearby, and a silence interrupted only by the wisps of wind that ruffle the peach trees. As he observes these images, reality quickly sinks in: "The silence and the barn and the clouds meant many things. It was always a question of work, and work depended on the harvest, the car running, their health, the conditions of the road, how long the money held out, and the weather, which meant they could depend on nothing" (4). Set in the harsh, poverty-stricken world of the migrant Mexican worker, *Under the Feet of Jesus*, by Helena Maria Viramontes, is a story about a Latino family in

California, trying to get by in a society that turns a cold shoulder to their every woe. As the characters endure hardship upon hardship throughout the book, the author's own ideology manifests itself in their slow loss of faith. Religion is no substitute for gritty human spirit in times such as these. By the end of the novel it seems clear that Perfecto's observation holds partly true: they can depend on nothing but themselves. The novel centers primarily around Estrella, a young girl on the verge of womanhood, and her relationship with Alejo, another migrant worker of the same age. Throughout the story, the characters are confronted time and time again with hardships they must endure, each time further questioning their faith. After Alejo is poisoned by a crop duster and falls ill, the family takes care of him, spending what little money they have for his treatment.

I read this book in my eleventh grade. My English teacher knew that I liked to read, especially from Latino writers so he suggested I read *Under the Feet of Jesus*. What a great book that is. It's written by Helena Maria Viramontes. She is so detailed in her writing. She vividly describes sensations and experiences. This story is about a young Mexican girl named Estrella who lives her life traveling with her mom, step dad, and four other siblings. They follow the agricultural crops. Like in many other families, if you were old enough to carry a sack of cotton you were old enough to work. Estrella and her family moved from place to place working in strawberry fields, cotton fields, etc. Viramontes describes how even though her and her siblings were American born citizens, they still got nervous of seeing the immigration officers who are always looking for those persons without papers. They don't want immigrants living here illegally. It's true what Viramontes emphasizes, they have prejudice feelings toward immigrants who do nothing but work hard to make a better living for themselves. Immigrants are the ones who pick the vegetables they eat at dinner. They despise them. That's not fair because Mexican immigrants, as well as other immigrants, are the ones who make this nation grow. Viramontes describes Estrella's feelings toward her family, her life, this nation's hardships and the experience of her first love. I learned through this novel that this is what my father went through when he first came to this country. He still tells me what it was like to come as a stranger to this country carrying nothing but the clothes on his back and a couple of dollars in his pocket. Although he is now an American made citizen, he never forgets where he came from and what he had to go through to get where he is now.

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