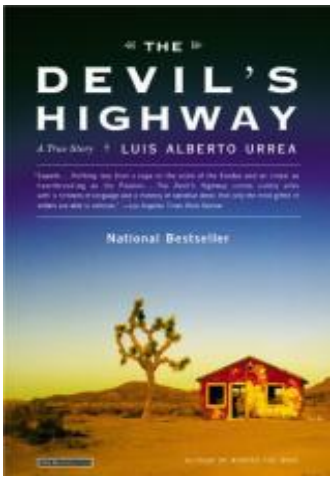
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The Devil's Highway

by Luis Alberto Urrea



About the Book

Selected as one of the best books of the year by the *Los Angeles Times Book Review*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Arizona Republic*, and the *Chicago Tribune*.

In this work of grave beauty and searing power-one of the most widely praised pieces of investigative reporting to appear in recent years-we follow twenty-six men who in May 2001 attempted to cross the Mexican border into the desert of southern Arizona, through the deadly region known as the Devil's Highway, a desert so harsh and desolate that even the Border Patrol is afraid to travel through it, a place that for hundreds of years has stolen men's souls and swallowed their blood. Only twelve of the men made it out.

Discussion Guide

1. At its heart, **The Devil's Highway** is the story of a journey in the hope of starting a better life. Every family in the United States arrived here from somewhere else. What is your family's story?

2. The Devil's Highway is the story of the U.S.-Mexico border, but it is also about many other invisible borders. Aside from the physical border itself, what other borders separate the people in this story?

3. What borders separate all of us as people? If these borders exist, is there any way to bridge them? Or do we need these borders?

4. Is Jesus Antonio Lopez Ramos, aka Mendez, the villain of the story? Did he get what he deserved?

5. The theme of survival may be evident for the walkers, but how does it also apply to the Border Patrol and the smugglers themselves? To what lengths would you go to feed your family?

6. There seems to be a theme of occult and spiritual forces behind the scenes in the Arizona desert. Are these references offered symbolically, or are these presences an actual reality?

7. Luis Alberto Urrea writes that some of the Yuma 14/Wellton 26 were "aliens before they ever crossed the line." What does this statement mean?

8. In the opening pages of **The Devil's Highway**, the author draws a parallel between the issues of today's border and the United States' treatment of Chinese "coolies" in the nineteenth century. Can you think of historical parallels to any other current hotbutton issues?

9. The Devil's Highway examines the border from many different points of view. Do you think the author approached the topic with a truly objective eye?

10. Imagine that you have been granted the ultimate power to set border policy. What would you do? Why would your solution work? Why might it not?

Author Bio

A finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for his landmark work of nonfiction THE DEVIL'S HIGHWAY, now in its 34th paperback printing, Luis Alberto Urrea is the author of numerous other works of nonfiction, poetry and fiction, including the national bestsellers THE HUMMINGBIRD'S DAUGHTER, GOOD NIGHT, IRENE and THE HOUSE OF BROKEN ANGELS, a National Book Critics Circle Award finalist. A recipient of an American Academy of Arts and Letters Award, among many other honors, he lives outside Chicago and teaches at the University of Illinois Chicago.

Critical Praise

"The book's rare power is that it is both epic in scope-a trek through the wilderness in search of 'the promised land'-and intensely personal. . . . Urrea writes about U.S.-Mexican border culture with a tragic and beautiful intimacy that has no equal."

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