Barrio Boy Study Guide

Barrio Boy by Ernesto Galarza

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Plot Summary

Barrio Boy is a true story of the author's cultural transition from a small Mexican village to a barrio in the United States. Ernie Galarza's story is constructed from memory, beginning when he is about four years old and ending just before he begins high school. His detailed perceptions of the world around him paint an insightful picture of how socio-political factors and cultural experience can shape one's life and future.

In the first section of the book, Ernie describes village life in Jalcocotbn in detail. He talks of the daily routine, from how to cook tamales to how to interact with adults. In doing so, he builds a context with which to compare the experiences that follow. Those experiences come as a direct result of the escalating revolution between the Mexican government and its working class. To Ernie, the fighting occurs in the background and he learns of the danger to his family only by eavesdropping on adult conversations. While he doesn't completely understand the factors behind the revolution, he is forced to deal with the consequences. The primary consequence is that he and his family must give up their farming lifestyle and learn to support themselves by working for pay.

The journey of the Galarza family takes them from Jalcocotbn, Tepic, Acaponeta, Casa Redonda, Mazatlbn, Nogales, and Tucson before they finally land in Sacramento, California. The early legs of these travels show that cultural transitions occur not only between countries, but also between cities and villages within a single country. The lifestyle Ernie and his family adopt in Tepic is much different from that they experience in Jalcocotbn. In each new environment, the Galarzas have to adjust to new ways of doing things, as emphasized by Ernie's descriptions of daily activities such as shopping and working. These experiences foreshadow the ultimate cultural transition that awaits the Galarzas, learning to live in America without losing touch with their Mexican heritage.

The Galarzas leave the revolution behind once and for all when they cross the border into the United States. Unfortunately, life in America offers its own sets of problems. They all must learn what it is to be culturally out of place in a country that does not understand them.

Ernie describes the diverse sights and sounds of the barrio as a reporter would, documenting the people and places that stand out in his memory. In total, these experiences shape Ernie's mindset about his own future and stimulate his desire to make something of himself. At the close of the book, Ernie has become an educated young man who understands work ethic, familial responsibility, and every man's right to be treated with dignity.

Introduction and Part One, Section 1 (through page 6)

Introduction and Part One, Section 1 (through page 6) Summary and Analysis

The introduction begins with the author explaining, in first person, why he has decided to write the novel. Having been in the habit of telling his family anecdotes about the mountain village where he was born, he repeats one of these stories at a scholarly meeting. The story circulates among a small audience and it is suggested to him that he write a book. He cites two reasons for pursuing this suggestion, one historical and one psychological. First, he acknowledges the importance of his experience historically, since many families have migrated from small Mexican villages and landed in the United States. The psychological side is the author's desire to communicate his confidence in his self-image as a Mexican immigrant.

The story begins with a description of the physical characteristics and history of Jalcocotbn, the mountain village where Ernie is born. Indian ancestors originally founded the village, called Jalco for short. They chose the location because it offered natural protection from intruders and the harsh wind and sun. Jalco is reachable only by steep, rocky trails. Secret footpaths lead from the village into the forest and higher up the mountain, providing an escape route in the event of an attack. The forest around the village is immense and heavily populated with a variety of birds. Villagers rely on silent turkey vultures, or buzzards, to pick up household garbage that is thrown out in a ditch alongside the street.

The description emphasizes Jalco's separation from other communities as well as its rural, undeveloped atmosphere. From the beginning, the text is peppered with Spanish words, underscoring the underlying cultural difference between the English-speaking world and the Spanish-speaking world.

Part One, Section 2 (through page 15)

Part One, Section 2 (through page 15) Summary and Analysis

The author describes the layout of the village and his family's adobe cottage. The village consists of one street of hard-packed ground and a row of cottages on either side of the street. Each cottage has a front doorway and a back doorway, which leads to a backyard corral. The roofs are made of thatch. Piles of stones define the back corrals.

The public places of the village are the street, the chapel, and the plaza. The chapel is a simple adobe building with a small front yard. The plaza is an open square decorated with a few trees.

Jalco has no resident priest or defined system of government. The existence of a chapel in town is merely a formality. Serious worship is taken to a basilica in Tepic, 40 kilometers north. Weddings and baptisms are held at the shrine of Nuestra Sesora de Talpa.

The street and the plaza have no name and the houses have no addresses. There are no streetlamps either, because it is customary for villagers to be home after dark. The main street has a single gutter in the middle. Families keep the portion of the street in front of their cottages clean by sprinkling water to keep down the dust and sweeping trash into the gutter. Rainfall periodically washes the gutter clean.

A creek runs the length of the village. On both banks of the creek, boulders form small ponds. The women of the village use these ponds for washing clothes. A large walnut tree stands at the edge of a pond. The arroyo, like the street, has no name. It delivers driftwood and clean drinking water to Jalco.

Just before the sun sets every evening, the men and working boys return to the village and their cottages. At sundown, women prepare dinner and the air is filled with smells of tortillas, beans, chile, and coffee. After supper, if the weather permits, the men sit outside against their cottages smoking while the women clean up.

The author's cottage is the last one on the street on the opposite side of the arroyo. The forest begins about fifty yards behind the author's home. The one-room cottage is twelve feet wide by thirty-six feet long and is constructed of thick, adobe walls. The fire pit and stove are made of stacked adobe bricks. Curtain walls divide the space, creating two bedrooms. A hanging platform called a tapanco provides sleeping space for the author and his cousins. The cottage has a thatched roof and no ceiling. A small space between the roof overhang and the top of the walls allows smoke from the stove to escape the cottage. The corral behind the cottage is decorated with a willow tree and potted flowers and herbs.

The author, Ernie, estimates that there are probably forty cottages in the village. Despite small differences in each cottage, all have a similar appearance from the street.

The first-person description of the village underscores the difference between Jalco and modern life in a more urban setting. Jalco is without many things that modern American culture takes for granted, including addresses, landmark names, windows, and street lighting. On the inside of the cottages, a single room serves as kitchen, parlor, closet, etc. Interestingly, Ernie's ability to make these distinctions is an early indication of how moving away from Jalco has changed his perspective. Had he never moved out of the village, it would not be noteworthy, for example, that the cottages have no addresses. It would simply be a normal fact of everyday life.

The simple, routine quality of life in the village is also noteworthy. The villagers follow a daily pattern of activities and deviation from this pattern is infrequent. A man drunk in the street, for example, is an event in Jalco. Without government or a recognized authority, the villagers take it upon themselves to live gainfully and peacefully.

Part One, Section 3 (through page 27)

Part One, Section 3 (through page 27) Summary and Analysis

Ernie's mother and her two brothers, Gustavo and Josy, arrive in Jalcocotbn shortly before Ernie is born. Ernie explains the primary reason why the move to Jalco. His parents, previously married in a civil ceremony in San Blas, had recently divorced.

Ernie describes how he is told, years later, of the divorce arrangement. His mother, pregnant with Ernie, is allowed to keep the gold ring and her sewing machine. These items are to help her support herself and her son. Because Ernie's grandparents had passed away, his mother and her two brothers decide to move to Jalco where their older sister lives. The older sister is Ernie's aunt, known to him as Aunt Esther.

Aunt Esther is married to Don Catarino Lupez. Don Catarino and his father and brothers are field workers in the mountain's corn patches. Don Catarino and Esther have two sons, Jes's and Catarino Junior. Their cottage in Jalco is large, and they agree to take in Ernie and his family.

Don Catarino is the head of the household. Aunt Esther, whom Ernie calls Aunt Tel, is a serious and emotionally strong woman. Ernie's mother, Dosa Henriqueta, is cheerful, yet rebellious in nature. She demands respect from the children, but forbids them to show fear. Uncle Gustavo, younger than Esther and Henriqueta, has a cheery sense of humor and a volatile temper. Gustavo takes on much of the responsibility within the family, be it traveling for work or manual labor within the household. Gustavo also teaches Ernie the language of gesture, a common means of communicating in the village. Ernie's youngest uncle is Josy, who is twelve years older than Ernie. Josy is artistic and intuitive about people and relationships.

Ernie's earliest memories are of the sights and sounds of the village when he is between three and five years of age. He recalls the knick-knacks and heirlooms his mother keeps in a cedar chest, which is only taken out on special occasions.

Each morning, thirty minutes before dawn, the family rooster, Coronel, wakes everyone in the cottage. The calls of other roosters in the village follow. Ernie and his cousins climb down from their sleeping area on the raised platform and greet the rest of the family. Breakfast is eaten in silence. After breakfast, the men ready themselves for work and the children start on their chores.

Ernie and his cousins are responsible for making their beds and feeding the animals each morning. They feed the chickens first and then the family dog, Nerun. The boys then chase the chickens out to the street where they can scratch in the litter. Ernie and his cousins keep watch over the dog, the rooster, and the chickens throughout the day, resolving any fights with other village animals as quickly as possible.

Ernie then describes his dog Nerun, the rooster Coronel and the town donkey, Relbmpago. The dog is an energetic mutt who had joined the family when Ernie was about one year old. The rooster is a massive and colorful animal that Ernie and his cousins believe is the finest rooster on the mountain. Relbmpago, the slow-witted donkey, is something of a village pet. The children ride him and he occasionally spends the night in the Lupez corral.

Don Chano is introduced to the context of the village. Don Chano, an elder who once visited Guadalajara, is overheard saying that "nothing ever happens" in Jalcocotbn. Ernie marvels at this comment, because he does not agree.

Each afternoon, the boys hear their mothers and aunts calling them home. The boys respond by herding in the chickens and the dog and tending to chores until supper is ready. Don Catarino, Gustavo, and Josy come in from working in the fields. They are served dinner first, as the boys tend to them. Once the men leave the table, the boys take their seats and are fed.

The men later sit outside the front of the cottage, smoking and talking quietly. Ernie and his cousins are sent to bed, where they eavesdrop silently on the men's conversation.

The lifestyle Ernie describes is very static. Kids, women, and men follow the same schedule daily. The women tend to the household, the kids are in charge of feeding and watching over the animals, and the men head off to the fields to work. In the evenings, the men are afforded free time to sit outside and talk, presumably unwinding from a long workday. Notably, this daily routine does not seem the least bit boring to Ernie himself, as indicated by his disagreement with Don Chano's assessment of the village. Here, the author contrasts the perspective of a sheltered child with that of an adult who has seen more of the world.

Ernie's descriptions thus far demonstrate that he is happy with his carefree lifestyle. He feels a strong sense of community within the village. This is indicated by his way of defining things and people in terms of their relationship to others. He introduces the family network first, and then details his aunts and uncles from oldest to youngest. Each new character or animal is brought into the story with a specific relationship to something else: The burro is a member of the family, the chickens are the wives of Coronel and the dog is both Ernie's pet and his responsibility.

Cultural cues include the reference to the use of gestures to communicate and the way household responsibilities are divided. His Uncle Gustavo teaches Ernie the common gestures, and then he and Gustavo create their own private code. With respect to the household responsibilities, they are divided up in a traditional way. Women are in charge of the households, while men are to work outside the home. There is no indication by Ernie or his family members that anyone would think to disagree with this division of responsibility.

Part One, Section 4 (through page 32)

Part One, Section 4 (through page 32) Summary and Analysis

Ernie and his cousins begin the day as usual. Coronel, proud and confident, watches over the corral and his hens. The boys finish their morning chores and return to the corral to lead Coronel and the hens out to the street. As Ernie watches, Coronel jumps on the back of one of the hens in an attempt to mate. Ernie, not understanding the situation, is alarmed. When he calls for his aunt, she advises him to leave the rooster alone. Ernie's surprise at the rooster's action indicates that this is his perhaps his first perception of masculinity and sexuality. The incident ends quickly.

Later, the hens are in the street picking among the garbage. Nearby, a buzzard, or zopilote, is intently chewing on some piece of waste. One of the hens, curious, moves in on the buzzard and attempts to pick at its meal. When the buzzard retaliates, Coronel attacks. A brief rustle between the rooster and the buzzard results in the buzzard flying away and landing in a nearby tree.

Ernie returns to the cottage to tell the story of the fight in somewhat exaggerated terms. His mother, also a witness to the fight, listens to him in silence. Later that night, Ernie overhears his mother describing the fight to Catarino. She notes that the boys are impressed with the rooster's bravery. Catarino comments that the rooster is smart enough to know that buzzards are 'chicken.'

The next day Ernie asks his mother what Catarino means by the word 'chicken.' She explains that 'chicken' means cowardly. Ernie then questions Coronel's bravery, but his mother quickly reassures him that Coronel is the bravest rooster in the area. The idea that Coronel is brave is extremely important to Ernie and his cousins. It seems to be part of their own identity, a way for them to define their place within the village. When Ernie doubts Coronel's bravery briefly, he feels unsettled because this reflects on him as much as it does on the rooster.

The events of the day reinforce the traditional roles of men and women to which Ernie has already alluded. Coronel is clearly the head of his 'household,' just as Don Catarino watches over Esther and her family. Interestingly, in the role of protector, Ernie views the rooster's bravery as more important than intelligence. This becomes clear when Ernie nervously questions his mother about Coronel's bravery after he overhears Don Catarino state that the bird was not daring, just smart about attacking the buzzard.

The use of the words gallo and chicken also add to the sense of division between men and women. Ernie understands gallo, the Spanish word for rooster, also to mean brave or daring. Chicken, however, is a slang term for cowardly. The usage of these words in the village indicates that masculinity is associated with bravery, while femininity is associated with weakness.

Part One, Section 5 (to page 41)

Part One, Section 5 (to page 41) Summary and Analysis

Building on the last section, Ernie introduces the start of his transition from a boy to a young man. There are no schools in the village, so his education comes from learning and watching the behavior of those around him. At one time, the villagers had petitioned the government in Tepic to provide a teacher, but many years had passed without result. The adults of Jalcocotbn value basic arithmetic and language skills, however. Those who have some education pass on these skills to their children.

Ernie's mother has one printed book. Though it is a cookbook, Dona Henriqueta reads the book to Ernie and he learns to pick out certain words. He seems to understand the value of basic education and is curious about language. He remarks that he is somewhat fascinated by the relationship between written words and the things those words described. Although Ernie's exposure to the written word is limited, his interest in the cookbook indicates that he is both bright and inquisitive.

For the most part, Ernie receives his 'education' from watching those around him. He learns how to cook, how to treat guests and how to eat atole and panocha like a man. Clearly, these things are beginning to form Ernie's perspective of the world and his belief system about the roles of men and women in the household.

His narrative moves through descriptions of roasting coffee, cooking rice, roasting pinole, brewing atole, steaming tamales, and barbecuing bananas. Coffee beans are roasted on the comal until they turn a rich brown color. Toasted beans are stored in a pot; daily, a measured portion of beans would be ground up for the family's needs. Ernie's mother makes rice by first frying it lightly in oil and then covering it with boiling water. The rice is seasoned, salted and peppered, then left to simmer. Making pinole is a job on which Ernie and his cousins take the lead. It is a mixture of roasted and dried corn, ground up with vanilla pods, lemon leaves, dried raisins and a bit of chocolate. The resulting powder, a special treat, is reserved for birthdays.

On Sunday evenings and birthdays, the family is served atole with panocha. Men eat the atole quickly and chew through the hard panocha. The boys, however, sip the atole gently and lick the panocha. On special occasions, the atole and panocha are served with tamales, which are cooked in layers in a large clay pot.

Less frequently, the family has banana barbecues, called tatemas. These occasions begin when Gustavo brings home a stem of plbtanos grandes and hangs it from a beam on the backside of the cottage. The men dig a large hole in the corral and put a layer of rocks at the bottom. Pine kindling and charcoal are burned on top of the rocks. Layers of banana leaves and bananas are placed on top of the hot stones. The hole is sealed

with a pad of leaves and dirt. The bananas are then cooked overnight in the hole. The next day, the family takes them out to enjoy and share with the neighbors.

Ernie considers his future by watching how adults in the village make their living. He talks of Don Chencho, a maker of bedstands, and Don Aparicio, who makes crates and ropes. There is also a butcher in the village, and a man who makes shoulder bags.

The skills available to girls include sewing and embroidery. Ernie pays no attention to these things, but he is interested in letter writing. His mother tells him that in the city there are men who make their living by writing letters for the illiterate. Ernie's interest in letter writing as a profession again indicates his fondness for language and the written word.

People passing through town expose Ernie and his cousins to other types of professions. These include the regal Administrador, the "manager of the hacienda de Los Cocos" who oversees farm workers, and the traveling salesman who arrives at the cottage with various knickknacks. Ernie's strongest aspiration, however, is to drive a donkey train. Ernie and his cousins are fascinated by the worldly arrieros with their foul language and their seemingly exotic travels. These men, who transport goods up and down the mountain via a pack of burros, periodically camp at the edge of the village. At one point, Ernie and his cousins pretend they are arrieros, emulating the men's habits. Esther overhears them and orders them inside, each receiving a pull on the ear. The incident demonstrates that although the boys are eager to grow up and be men, they are still under the protection and rule of their mothers.

Part One, Section 6 (to page 45)

Part One, Section 6 (to page 45) Summary and Analysis

Without books and wide-scale literacy, the history of Jalco must be documented by word-of-mouth. The village history is kept by Don Cleofas. The chain of communicating the oral history is clearly stated. Cleofas tells the tales of the village to the adults, who then pass the stories on to their children. Freedom is the central theme in Cleofas' version of Jalco's history. He introduces the separation between the landowner and the land worker and advocates man's freedom to work for himself as a basic human right.

Cleofas is a very old man who was born long before Don Porfirio becomes president. Cleofas has short, white hair, a sharp nose, and a white moustache. His eyebrows are dark in color and thick. Interestingly, Cleofas' age and last name are unknown. He is known only as the eldest and the father, grandfather and great-grandfather of descendents through the Sierra Madre. Presumably, Cleofas' status as the eldest overshadows the more common forms of identification; specifically, his name and age.

Through Cleofas's stories, Ernie learns of an era known as Before the Conquest, when Indian tribes had their own system of authority. This authority is taken away from them when the Spaniards violently invade the tribes. The Spaniards forcefully take ownership of the quality farming land and establish plantations. Some of the Indians are forced into slave labor. Cleofas himself had once run away from one of these farms and hid in the mountains.

According to Cleofas, the ancestors of Jalcocotbn fight bravely against the Spaniards. When they are overtaken, they flee into the mountains and settle in free villages, which is the beginning of Jalcocotbn. Cleofas also tells the story of the war against the French, when General Porfirio Dnaz helps conquer the invaders and then becomes president.

While Cleofas passes on the stories of history, Dosa Eduvijes tells stories to keep the mysticism of the culture alive. She tells the children of the village about the Weeping Woman, whose presence in the village foreshadows death, and the Devil, who collects un-baptized children in a bag and carries them off. Her spooky tales provide the children with an early initiation into the concepts of good and evil. As well, the stories provide additional structure to the children's perception of the world around them.

Eduvijes has a routine for her story telling. When the children see her walking up the street to sit on a brick bench in the plaza, they know she is ready to share her tales with them. Once the children gather around her, Eduvijes slowly rolls a cigarette, lights it and begins her story. She tells of a captain who rides an impressive horse. The captain finds an Indian treasure, only to lose it. After his death, he returns on his white horse to haunt the Sierra Madre. Eduvijes draws the last puff of her cigarette and wipes the ashes from her lap. With this sign, the children understand that the story is over. They slowly

separate and walk home. Ernie admits being affected by the tale, as he looks nervously around for the ghost on his walk home.

Part One, Section 7 (to page 51)

Part One, Section 7 (to page 51) Summary and Analysis

Once a child reaches the age of six in Jalco, it is customary for adults and neighbors to take part in the child's discipline. Ernie describes how family friends and acquaintances, and even those adults who are not family friends, often correct the children's behavior when they see an infraction. Jalco children learn that someone is always watching them. If the grievance is bad enough, word will get back to their parents and they will be punished. Manners and respectful behavior are highly valued by Jalco adults.

Children are expected to assist when called upon by an adult, particularly by the mothers in the village. It is common for an adult to ask neighbor children to run errands. The prevailing rules of acceptable behavior require the children to use a specific greeting when running these errands. Ernie calls it the "messenger system" through which most neighborly actions were implemented.

Another special task for children is the collection of milk. The village has one cow, shared by all families. Each family takes what it needs, but not more. The cow is milked straight into a pitcher and Ernie knows to be careful not to spill any on his way home. He acknowledges that no one pays attention to the flies, manure, or cornhusks in the corral.

Ernie's stories thus far build on one another to provide an increasingly complete picture of the Jalco culture.

The raising of polite and respectful children in Jalco is a task taken on by the whole village. Disciplinary action is not the responsibility of parents alone, but of all adults. Ernie and the other children learn the proper way to speak and carry themselves because they are constantly reminded by any adult who may be watching. This group disciplinary approach is quite different from how children are typically raised in the U.S., where it is considered impolite to discipline someone else's children.

Music in Jalco is provided by an untalented neighbor who owns a guitar, as well as Ernie's Uncle Josy, who plays the harmonica, and the work songs of the women. Josy is a gifted, self-taught musician, who can duplicate whistles, ballads, poems, birdsongs, and animal noises on his harmonica. The women commonly sing while washing clothes and doing chores. There are specific songs for rocking and feeding babies. These songs tell moral tales, serving as the baby's first exposure to the rules of behavior in the village.

Men in the village only sing when drunk. Ernie describes how the boys hear the men's voices becoming louder and louder as they continue to drink. The men sing tales of Catalino, a hero who once fought off the mounted police until he was captured and

beheaded. Ernie refers to liquor as aguardiente, or burning water. He notes that aguardiente is harmless until ingested, when it turns a man's "guts into rattlesnakes, ready to strike with the deadly fang of a machete".

Twice yearly, the priest visits Jalco. Josy sings for the choir until he is expelled for making up Spanish translations of a Latin ritual that the priest deems disrespectful. Following the priest's action against Josy, Ernie's family is somewhat distanced from the priest. He does not pay them visits and they do not present him gifts, as other families in the village do. The Lopyz household is increasingly critical of the priest's practices, which appear to be focused on making money rather than saving souls. Ernie and his cousins vow never to be priests.

For most of the villagers, the priest's visits are taken seriously. In the speech and stories of the villagers, the Devil and Death are commonly personified. The villagers see the Devil and Death as predators, from which they need protection. The priest provides this protection with his holy water, official garments, sign of the cross, and images of the two revered saints, Our Lady of Talpa and the Holy Child of Atocha.

Ernie describes the memory of a playmate's funeral. The boy who died was about Ernie's age at his passing. Ernie recalls the funeral procession going by, and the adults responding with whispered prayers and signs of the cross. Ernie, not knowing the prayers at that time, imitates them with made-up whispers and mumbles. The next day, Ernie and his mother visit the dead boy's mother to give her flowers and offer their sympathies, as is the village tradition. Ernie's mother holds his hand tightly as they walk home and Ernie sees that she has been crying.

Ernie's voice thus far is relaxed and straightforward. The stories of his childhood are woven together lightly, recreating the Jalco lifestyle for the reader. He does this via a combination of describing events, people and influences as well as showing his own emotion and the emotions of his friends and family.

Part One, Section 8 (to page 59)

Part One, Section 8 (to page 59) Summary and Analysis

Before a Jalco boy reaches five or six, his days mostly consist of playtime and running errands. The opening paragraphs of this section discuss the playtime activities of the boys in Jalco. Older boys participate in more adventurous games, while the younger boys watch in awe.

Ernie talks about the pond where he and his cousins play in the reeds and mud. They chase small reptiles through the mud until they jump into the water. The boys also make up stories about poisonous snakes and alligators. Older boys from the village sometimes swim and dive in the pond. Using a rope hanging from a branch of the walnut tree, the boys swing over the water and drop in. Younger boys watch this activity from the swimming hole, where they paddle around under the instruction of the divers.

Sometimes, the older boys let the younger boys take part in play bullfights. These games are set up in a pasture. The bullfight play requires pretend bulls, matadores, picadores, and fans. Each role is assigned to the boys depending on their age. Younger boys are only allowed to be fans, and cheer on the action. The staged bullfight proceeds with a boy holding a steer skull who pretends to be the bull. A cactus leaf is tied between the horns on the skull. The cactus leaf is the target for the matadores and picadores who are armed with wooden and bamboo spears. These bullfights would sometimes deteriorate into rough play, with the younger boys wrestling each other on the ground. When necessary, an adult would walk over to the pasture and send all the boys home.

Ernie contrasts the boy's rough play with the development of girls in the village. The girls have specific chores, such as carrying water up from the arroyo, that men and boys would never consider doing. Boys are only responsible for the traditionally feminine chores when there are no girls in the household. Notably, Ernie admits that boys realize that girls are lower class around the age of five or six. This is also the age when boys begin taking on small jobs involving manual labor. These include gathering firewood and picking coffee beans.

Between the ages of seven and fourteen, Jalco boys begin to exhibit signs of approaching manhood. One such sign is the watching of girls as they bathe at the arroyo. Ernie describes how younger boys could watch the girls without anyone noticing. This in fact is how Ernie learns of the physical differences between boys and girls. The older boys, however, watch the girls under the cover of a tree. When someone walks by, they pretend they are doing something else.

Courtship among youths in Jalco is extremely formal. A boy picks out a girl and begins to watch her. He watches from a distance at first and then slowly moves closer over

time, so that eventually everyone in the village understands that the boy likes her. Between the ages of twelve and sixteen, the boy asks the girls parents for her hand. The parents can, at any time during the courtship, let the boy know that they don't like him. He would then be forbidden to watch the girl any longer.

Before the boy can begin this courtship process, however, he must learn to work as his father does. Ernie explains the traditional way a boy learns work through the story of Jacinto. Jacinto is seen walking into the forest daily with his father, to learn how to work the land to produce bananas, peppers and coffee beans. The younger boys understand what task awaits Jacinto and his father by the tools they carry as they walk out of the village.

Ernie notes that when a boy becomes an apprentice to his father, he moves a notch above younger boys in status. This is because these young apprentices are building the courage and stamina to become men. Here, the narrative moves into the relationship the villagers have with the forest. Just as all of the mothers take part in the raising of children in the community, the forest plays a role in the development of men. The people of Jalco have a deep respect for the forest. It provides them nourishment and a training ground so that future generations can learn to support their children. Knowing that the forest must be an ongoing source for them, Jalco farmers never take more from the land than what they need.

The forest is not, however, the only source of sustenance on the mountain. Other communities have haciendas, or commercial farms where men work for money. The conditions are difficult on the farms. The men receive low hourly wages and are required to work seven days a week. Supervisors, called capataz, watch over the workers continually, ensuring that they are always working efficiently.

Ernie develops a sense of anger towards the haciendas and capataz through the stories he overhears. Talk of blood debts and a division between workers and their employers fuel Ernie's growing suspicion of authority. He describes learning to associate emotion with certain words, an admission that foreshadows the important role that language will eventually play in Ernie's future. He also builds up a sense of growing conflict for the reader, much in the same way he experienced it as a child. The comment that the world is divided into two types of men, those on horseback and those on foot, relates back to Ernie's repeated descriptions of Jalco men walking in and out of the forest to cultivate the land. In Jalco, the men rely on only their own work output to survive. In contrast, the hacienda supervisors on horseback rely on the work output of other men.

Part One, Sections 9 and 10 (to page 71)

Part One, Sections 9 and 10 (to page 71) Summary and Analysis

Ernie cites three memorable events that occur during the last year he lives in Jalco. By opening the section with this statement, Ernie makes it clear to the reader that he and his family will be moving on from the village he so clearly loves. As of yet, he has not explained to the reader why they must leave.

The events that precede Ernie's departure from Jalco are the death of his dog Nerun, the flooding of the arroyo, and the sighting of Halley's Comet. Ernie begins his recount of Nerun's death by describing the dog's daily routine. Nerun typically stays in the family's corral at night, growling only when he senses prowlers coming in from the forest. In the daytime, the dog would lie in the sun, play with other dogs, and sometimes trot into the woods to pass the time. It is Catarino's belief that during one of these trips into the forest, a rabid animal bit Nerun. Ernie recalls seeing Nerun hobble into the corral and growl at Aunt Esther. Catarino and Gustavo are called in to see what's wrong. They assess the dog's physical weakness and aggressive behavior as rabies.

Ernie and his cousins, overhearing the conversation about Nerun, are confused. As the boys watch, Josy crushes the dog's head with a stock. He then puts Nerun in a sack and walks away into the forest. Nerun's death is Ernie's first experience of loss, and it happens quickly and without warning. The incident emphasizes how abruptly circumstances can change, and the role of the forest in the dog's death underscores the give-and-take relationship the villagers have with nature.

On the night of the flood, Ernie and his cousins are not sent up the ladder to bed. They stay downstairs, huddled together and ready to leave, as the hurricane blows outside. Ernie flashes back to earlier in the day, describing how the rain and wind had spooked the animals and brought the men home early from the fields. By late afternoon, the street in Jalco was flooded and the arroyo was swelling.

The hurricane itself passes that night, but the roaring creek still poses a danger to the village. A man comes to the door of the Lopyz cottage and announces that the rising waters have knocked down Don Evaristo's corral. The men of the Lopyz household and the Evaristo household work together to move Evaristo's food and belongings to the Lopyz house.

When Ernie wakes up the morning, the sun is shining. The men are in the process of returning Don Evaristo's belongings to his cottage, and the danger has passed. The villagers spend the day working together to clean up the damage. Don Evaristo's cottage and corral are in a state of disrepair.

The boys hear that Cleofas tells stories of other floods, far more treacherous than this one. Ernie and his cousins don't believe that it could have been worse than this one. The boys' outlook shows that they have been largely sheltered from pain and fear.

News of conflicts between workers, their employers and the government begins to reach Jalco through letters and word-of-mouth. The government is forcing young men into military duty and Don Francisco Madero is campaigning against Don Porfirio for the presidency. Trouble is brewing in the countryside, as the Madero supporters, or Maderistas, join forces against the Porfirio supporters, or Porfiristas. Hacienda farmhands are running away and Administradores are disappearing. Rumors circulate about small incidents of violence and guerilla groups living in the hills.

A sense of fear pervades Jalco. The word-of-mouth grapevine brings news that the rurales are coming to Jalco from Ixtapa. One evening, a group of men arrive at the Lopyz cottage carrying machetes. They are friends and relatives of the Lopyz family. These men talk quietly with the adults in the cottage and leave later that night. After dinner, rations are prepared for Josy and Gustavo, who must hide from the rurales to avoid forced military duty. They leave the cottage silently, traveling on foot in opposite directions. Josy heads into the woods and Gustavo walks towards Tepic.

The next day, Don Porfirio's mounted police ride into Jalco before dawn. One of them comes to the door of the Lopyz cottage to deliver orders from his sergeant. He states that no one is to leave the cottage and that the family is to prepare breakfast for the troops outside. Ernie and his cousins are told to stay in the cottage and keep the hens in the corral.

Esther makes breakfast. Henriqueta takes her clay pig bank and a leather wallet from the cedar box. Ernie helps her hides them in a hole in the ground, which is concealed by a flowerpot. She tells Ernie not to tell anyone about the money. Ernie's involvement in this incident points to his growing maturity. He perceives the fear felt by his family and the distrust of the mounted police.

Some of the armed soldiers gather in the plaza, while others search the cottages. They ask the villagers if they own weapons and how many people live in each house. The Lopyz', knowing that a lie would be dangerous, admit that there are two more men living in their cottage. They tell the officers that Josy and Gustavo are not home because they are working.

The officers' search for young men and weapons turns up nothing in Jalco. At noon, the soldiers leave. Some of the villagers head out on secret trails to spread the word of the approaching rurales to neighboring villages.

Josy returns to Jalco, after having spent a day or two talking with villagers from other communities on the mountain. He brings word that many villages are forming guerilla groups. Political tension is clearly building in and around Jalco. When Halley's Comet appears in the sky, Cleofas interprets it as a sign of an approaching revolution.

Gustavo returns to Jalco with news from Tepic. He describes how soldiers are taking young men and fighting has already begun between the Maderistas and the Porfiristas. The Lopyz family decides that they must form a plan to protect Gustavo and Josy from the fighting. After much discussion, it is decided that Gustavo will go to Tepic to find work. Henriqueta, Ernie, and Josy will follow once Gustavo makes living arrangements. Gustavo leaves the village one morning before dawn.

The narrative in Part One reveals the culture of Jalco as learned through the eyes of a young boy. The author uses little dialogue, but instead relies on describing the world as he saw it growing up. His vignettes build a description of villagers who are proud, respectful, hard working, and self-sufficient. Were it not for the brewing political events, life for Ernie in Jalco may have remained as it was for many years. As the political climate changes, Ernie's perspective of the world matures detectably. The cultural stories of Catalino the bandit begin to take on a more concrete meaning for Ernie as he develops opinions about the relationships between laborers and their employers and citizens and their government.

Part Two, Section 1 (to page 85)

Part Two, Section 1 (to page 85) Summary and Analysis

Gustavo is not heard from for several weeks. A traveling salesman eventually passes through Jalco with news that Gustavo has found work and a place to live. Ernie sees Henriqueta and Esther having serious conversations, but he and his cousins are kept away from earshot.

Catarino returns from work one day with a horse and mule. Ernie sees Henriqueta working long hours at her sewing machine, the Ajax, and he perceives of a dark and serious atmosphere in the cottage. Ernie feels a sense of adventure about his approaching move to Tepic, but his spirits are dampened when he learns that Relbmpago, Coronel, and the hens will be staying in Jalco.

The family rises before dawn one morning and proceeds with the preparations necessary for the journey. Esther, Jes's, and Catarino Junior say their goodbyes to Henriqueta, Ernie, and Josy. Henriqueta and Ernie mount their horse and the caravan is off before sunrise. Ernie falls asleep to the gentle plodding of the horse's steps. When he awakens, it is light outside.

Ernie's narrative of the journey continues in his descriptive style. The travelers stop at one point for lunch, at which point Catarino explains their plans. He plans to cross the pass before dark and then camp overnight, so they can arrive in Tepic in broad daylight and avoid the suspicion of the soldiers. As he continues, Ernie describes the landscape around him, a stream meeting the sea in the distance, the sheer canyon walls in the forest, and trails crisscrossing the mountain. He sees wooden crosses marking spots where previous travelers had died. The forest has a mystical quality for Ernie and his emotions are affected by the changing landscape. Dark and gloomy patches are broken up with sunlight clearings and hot meadows with swarming flies.

Ernie asks his mother where Jalco is and is disappointed with her vague response. All of the things that have defined Ernie's place in the world, Relbmpago, Coronel, and Nerun are left behind. His need to know Jalco's location is his attempt to place himself within his new environment. He expresses anger and hatred towards his mother, Catarino, and his surroundings for being displaced from Jalco and put into a situation he does not fully understand.

At mid-afternoon, the caravan arrives at the most dangerous part of the journey, Devil's Backbone. Ernie describes the rocky path at the peak of a dam, which he guesses to be hundreds of feet high. Catarino provides instruction on how they are to navigate the path. As the horse carrying Henriqueta and Ernie picks its way across the rocky trail, Ernie sees rocks slip loose and clatter down to the bottom of the canyon. Halfway across the path, the mountain meets the path on one side. A steep drop remains on the

other side. Here there is a danger of rocks falling from the mountain onto the path and falling on the riders or spooking the horses. Fortunately, Ernie and his mother reach the other side without incident. They wait silently for Josy to cross, fearful that excess noise or motion could set off a rockslide. Once Josy makes it across safely, the family begins to discuss the last leg of the journey.

Catarino has arranged for them to camp at a rancho overnight. They reach the rancho before sunset and Ernie notes that it reminds him of ranchos he had seen around Jalco. Catarino follows the traditional procedures to request permission to camp by speaking directly with the man of the household.

Later, the family eats and sets up a small camp outside. Ernie looks towards the house, curious about the children inside. He notes they have a rooster and hens, as well as a dog the color of Nerun.

The rest of the trip is downhill. As the family approaches the city, they see more and more travelers, many of whom are on foot. Ernie sees a burro train and a young boy about his age helping the arrieros. Just as he did at the ranchero, Ernie is taking note of the things familiar to him, because so much around him is unfamiliar. Closer to the city, the road becomes busier. Ernie sees red and white buildings in the distance, next to two gray towers. Henriqueta tells him that that is Tepic and its cathedral. Ernie quickly realizes that the city is home to more people than he has ever seen in one place before.

The caravan comes to a street paved with stones. Catarino leads them to a smaller street, where they stop near a low, whitewashed wall. He enters the house and returns with the landlady. She opens the doors and they ride into a corridor lined with adobe rooms.

Catarino and Josy proceed to unpack. After the long ride, Ernie's groin is very sore from being bumped against the saddle horn. He is relieved that his mother senses what is wrong, because he doesn't want to describe his pain in the presence of the landlady. He is allowed to sit on a straw mat while the men unpack.

Don Catarino leaves for Jalco the next morning and Josy leaves to find Gustavo. Ernie and Henriqueta are left alone to inspect the rooms that Gustavo had arranged for them. They have two rooms, one for Henriqueta and Ernie, and the other for Gustavo and Josy. The rooms have adobe walls, dirt floors, and minimum furnishings.

Ernie begins the process of learning how life is managed in the city. He notes the landlady has a helper, a boy two or three years older than himself. The boy's chores are similar to those Ernie took responsibility for back in Jalco. Ernie also briefly describes the daily duties of cooking, laundry, and bathing. The most significant difference from what Ernie knows is how the laundry and bathing in tubs and washbasins, rather than in the arroyo.

Part Two, Section 2 (to page 128)

Part Two, Section 2 (to page 128) Summary and Analysis

Ernie communicates the greater sense of danger in the city relative to Jalco by noting how the landlady bars the doors of the patio at night. Each family within the small complex also locks the door of its adobe room. Ernie relates this danger to the visible presence of the military throughout the city.

A week after Ernie arrives in Tepic, Gustavo arrives. They learn that Gustavo has a job in the sugar mill north of the city. On Sundays, he walks to Tepic to visit the family and then returns to the mill the same day. Family conversations on these Sundays revolve around saving money, working, and reuniting with the family in Jalco. They also discuss the ongoing political developments.

Josy does not have regular work in Tepic, but rather earns money by picking up day labor.

Now living in the city, Ernie remains under his mother's supervision at all times. Without saying it directly, Ernie is again alluding to the dangers of living in the city. In comparison, Ernie was relatively independent in Jalco, spending his time exploring, playing, and running errands.

Henriqueta and Ernie make an effort to find distant relatives in the city, so they can better adjust to their new surroundings. Ernie describes how they do not know where to keep their savings, and have to locate a cousin to ask her advice. They end up accepting the cousin's offer to keep the money for them in a secret place. Henriqueta also uses these family connections to obtain sewing and mending work.

Ernie describes the city's layout at length, much as he did for Jalco. Tepic's main landmark is a central park, called the plaza de armas. People use the plaza for walking and being seen or just sitting on the benches and relaxing. The crowd includes upper class gentlemen in suits, women with braided hair and babies, and working class men. Vendors sell snacks and drinks. During Ernie's visits to the plaza, his mother gives him one penny to spend. His usual choice is an economic one, a brown sugar stick that offers more licks per centavo than the other options available. Ernie already demonstrates a sense of economy, which he's learned indirectly from watching and listening to the concerns of the adults around him.

The marketplace flanks two sides of the square. Vendors sell sarapes, huaraches, yardage, books, and more. An elderly man in the plaza offers writing services for those who don't know how. Ernie enjoys watching this man make curvy letters on the page. The man's decorative handwriting is contrasted with his customers' signatures, a cross at the bottom of the document.

Ernie and Henriqueta shop for food in the mercado in front of the Palacio de Gobierno. The sights and sounds of the high-ceilinged mercado fascinate Ernie. He again demonstrates his appreciation for structure and order by describing the most efficient system of purchasing goods in the market.

Supplementing the goods purchased in the mercado are items brought to the adobe rooms, or zagubn, by salesman. These street criers, as Ernie calls them, stand outside the courtyard yelling their slogans so that the residents inside know to come out.

To get away from the noises of the city, Ernie and his mom take to visiting a quiet park called the Alameda and the river on the far side of the valley. These natural sites remind them of Jalco.

Another lesson Ernie learns from living in the city are the differences between the lifestyle of the rich and that of the poor. He steals glances at the townhouses near the plaza and the cathedral, and sees carriages, servants, and stables on these estates. He notes how maids and servants run all the errands and the barbers and hairdressers make house calls.

Although Ernie is curious about the rich, he relates more to the activities going on in the market. He describes seeing a boy eating fire, a man peddling medicines, oxen pulling carts of sugarcane and a mariachi. He takes in these new experiences and uses them as storylines for his imaginative games at home.

Organized education in the city is available only to rich children. Again, Ernie has a clear perception of the class difference between his working family and rich landowners. The comparison he makes between the boys carrying books to school and the boys who work selling goods and shining shoes in the plaza underscores the class difference that is evident to him even as a child.

Ernie's own education is in the hands of his mother. Henriqueta sets up a classroom in their apartment and begins giving Ernie lessons whenever possible. His education starts with unstructured demonstrations on a slate and abacus. These later transition into formal lessons in language and arithmetic. He describes learning basic math and putting syllables together to form words.

Ernie's lessons fuel his natural curiosity about the world around him. He develops a habit of asking questions of his mother, his uncles, and the landlady. Through trial and error, he learns there is a fine line between curiosity and nosiness. He also learns the etiquette of when to ask a question and when to wait until later.

The family attends a military ceremony at the plaza. The plaza is filled with soldiers, carriages, ladies in formal dress, gentlemen, the Autoridades and a band. When a uniformed officer stands up and praises Mexico and President Dnaz, the crowd cheers. After the upper class return to their carriages and are driven away, the working class are allowed to walk through the plaza as the band plays.

Josy talks about the ceremony later that night. Ernie learns that the soldiers had been present to protect the rich from the poor. Josy also talks of the guerilla groups in the mountains called bolas, and Ernie admits that he doesn't understand the connection between the ceremony and the bolas. Josy predicts that the bolas will enforce their will and make the rich people work just as the poor have to.

Tepic is peaceful, but talk of approaching violence continues. Henriqueta is constantly worried about Josy being picked up by the military. The military presence is felt, as patrols guard the borders of the city and platoons and regiments are stationed nearby. Ernie even feels the conflict close to home, because Tepic and the troops are pro-Porfirio, while Josy is pro-Madero.

Josy brings home news daily of what is happening around the city. Propaganda begins to appear in public places, praising either Madero or Porfirio. Josy describes seeing soldiers crossing the bridge towards the penitentiary with a group of military draftees. There is also news of a revolt against the federal soldiers in Ixtlan del Rno.

Work is becoming increasingly scarce in Tepic as more villagers are migrating from the mountains into the city in search of work. When Gustavo is laid off, the family must make a new plan for their future. Ernie, older now, is allowed to listen to these discussions. Much of it is beyond his comprehension, but he senses fear and excitement. He also senses that things are difficult for the family economically.

The family's plan to leave Tepic takes shape when Gustavo and Josy find work with a labor recruiter for the Southern Pacific Railroad. Gustavo and Josy must move north and, under the work agreement, the company will provide an advance to cover the living expenses of Henriqueta and Ernie. Later, the men would earn passes on the train and arrange to reunite with Henriqueta, Ernie, and Esther's family in Mazatlbn. They decide to contact a cousin in Mazatlbn who can help them find work and shelter.

The family prepares for the trip. First, Henriqueta collects the savings from the cousin in Tepic and then carefully plans out a budget. She writes a long letter to the family in Jalco and has it and some money delivered to Esther.

Gustavo and Josy leave one morning before Ernie wakes. Ernie and Henriqueta remain in Tepic until a letter arrives from Gustavo instructing them to move to Acaponeta. Henriqueta packs up their belongings and ships her sewing machine to her cousin in Mazatlbn. Ernie is comforted before embarking on another unknown journey in knowing that the sewing machine would be waiting for them in Mazatlbn. The cedar box is to go with them on the stagecoach. For Ernie, the cedar box and the sewing machine are the things that have grounded him since leaving Jalco.

Before leaving, Ernie and his mother clean their adobe room, leaving it ready for its next occupant. In the morning before daybreak, they pack up their things and walk to the stagecoach terminal. Ernie, never having seen a stagecoach before, is somewhat impressed. He describes its appearance in detail.

Most of Ernie and Henriqueta's things are placed in the luggage compartment of the coach, but Henriqueta insists that the cedar box be placed under a seat inside the coach. They and the other passengers board. For Ernie, the ride that follows is long and uncomfortable. He describes his changing emotions, which shift as quickly as the landscape outside. The coach makes a few stops to let the passengers stretch, but otherwise continues until dark, when it stops at a motel for the night. The passengers are served supper. Ernie and his mother remain quiet, but overhear the other passengers sharing animated stories about stagecoach tragedies.

Ernie is wakened in the morning while it is still dark. They eat breakfast and get back on the coach. The journey monotonously continues, broken up only by the crossing of a river in the afternoon. Near dark, the coach stops at a square adobe house. Ernie and Henriqueta get off the coach and collect their belongings. One of the coachmen walks them to their destination, the home where Gustavo had arranged for them to stay.

In the morning, the hosts explain the living arrangements to Ernie and Henriqueta. The hosts' cottage is next to an orchard, which is surrounded by an adobe wall. There are cottages built into the adobe wall, and Henriqueta and Ernie would be staying in one of these cottages. The cottage has a dirt floor and simple furnishings.

Ernie quickly adapts to his new living arrangement. He plays on the mango tree outside, learns to pour the water from the well's bucket, and imagines games of war in the open spaces. He describes a depression in the ground near the well, where he believes a cursed treasure is buried. Henriqueta, when questioned, does not encourage his superstitions. Instead, she dumps her wash water in the pit. To the reader, this indicates that it is the dumped water that causes the depression. Ernie, however, with a child's imagination, is stumped by his mother's actions and responses to his questions.

Ernie describes three main points of interest in Acaponeta: the river, the market, and the railroad station. The river is a Sunday afternoon destination for him and Henriqueta. There they would see traveling donkey trains, women washing clothes and children playing in the water. He enjoys the countryside outside Acaponeta, but finds the market, or mercado, far less interesting than the one in Tepic.

The railroad station is two blocks from the orchard. Hearing a train whistle shortly after arriving in Acaponeta, Ernie and his mother follow the noise to the station. Knowing that the rail line employs Gustavo and Josy, they are naturally curious to learn more. When the train arrives, they look it over carefully, along with a group of other spectators. Ernie's description indicates he is impressed with the big, black smoking machine, though initially frightened by the noises it makes. As his fear fades, he comes to feel that he has a strong connection to the railroad and every train that departs.

Ernie comes to believe that the train station is the center of the revolution. He sees men carrying weapons, soldiers climbing out of the cars, and large shipments of weapons, all made possible by the rail line. Since the street from the depot passes in front of the orchard, Ernie would frequently see peasant fighters walking on foot past his cottage. These peasants often traveled with their wives, who would sometimes come to Ernie's

door to ask for fire kindling or water. Henriqueta is polite and supportive to the peasant fighters, indicating that she, like Josy, sympathizes with the working class side of the revolution.

One evening, a man comes to the door. Henriqueta opens the door after being assured that the man has peaceful intentions. A tall, uniformed soldier enters the cottage and exchanges pleasantries with Henriqueta. She is suspicious and fearful of the visitor. She makes tortillas and coffee while Ernie spies on the man from the corner, deciding that he must be a captain. The man eats and then leaves without incident.

Ernie talks of his respect for the bravery of the fighters. He knows that his mother and Josy respect this bravery as well. Still just a young boy himself, he briefly daydreams about proving his own bravery by joining a bola.

One night, a neighbor comes to Ernie's cottage, asking for Henriqueta's help in tending to someone who is sick. Deciding that Ernie would be in the way if he goes with her, Henriqueta goes alone and leaves Ernie at the cottage. As night falls, Ernie's imagination runs wild and he becomes scared. Despite his mother's instructions to go to bed when sleepy, Ernie is determined to stay awake to avoid being kidnapped or attacked by a ghost. He crawls under his bed to hide. Later, Ernie awakens to voices. He hears his mother instruct someone to look in the well. When he crawls out from under the bed, Henriqueta is angry with him. The incident is significant because Ernie realizes his own lack of courage and feels shamed.

Ernie and his mom are increasingly exposed to signs of the escalating revolution. At one point, they are awakened at night by the sound of gunfire. In the morning, the neighbors gather to talk about it. Someone reports that two men had been captured and shot, and their bodies were being driven around the city on display in an open cart. Following the episode, Ernie sees his mother write letters to his uncles and to her sister in Jalco.

A letter from Gustavo arrives. In it, he provides instruction and money for Henriqueta and Ernie to move to Urnas. He also tells Henriqueta that he is sending money to Jalco so that Esther and her family may move to Urnas as well. Ernie and his mother prepare to make another journey. They pack up their things, clean the cottage, and arrange for a train ride to Urnas.

A neighbor helps them take their things to the train station. Amid great confusion, Ernie and Henriqueta find the third-class coach and board. Ernie falls asleep and awakens later when the sunlight is coming through the window. As he did on the stagecoach, Ernie passes the time by looking at the passengers and the landscape outside. At one point, his mother points out swampland and the Pacific Ocean, which does not impress him. When they arrive at Mazatlbn, they gather their things and move off the train with the crowd. In the station, they meet with Gustavo and Josy.

The narrative shifts forward to Ernie waking up on the wooden floor of a tent. Henriqueta begins pointing out the new living arrangements. They have army cots,

boxes that can be used as chairs, benches, or shelves. The cots are equipped with mosquito netting.

The camp, called Casa Redonda, houses rail line workers and their families. Ernie explains how the steam whistle of the roundhouse defines the schedule in the camp, including the workers' thirty-minute lunch break. Clearly, the men are living a life of hard physical labor.

Ernie and Henriqueta take walks every afternoon and Ernie quickly learns the lay of the land. He describes the placement of his tent, the lean-to's where the washing is done, and the moat-like swamp surrounding the camp. There are also boxcars on a siding providing shelter for other families.

The roundhouse where Gustavo and Josy work is a short distance from the camp, next to the train and boxcar repair shop. A policeman on duty guards the roundhouse, checking everyone and everything going in and out of the roundhouse. Inside the roundhouse, Gustavo works as a handyman in the parts department and Josy cleans out fireboxes and washes out train engines.

Henriqueta settles into the camp community and begins making lunches for men who do not have families in the camp. Because Ernie delivers these lunches, he has the opportunity to talk to the guard, whom he believes is the most important person at the camp. Ernie enjoys talking to the guard and watching the roundhouse activities from the guard's station.

The superintendent of the yard is a tall, slim white man who amiably jokes with the workers. From the superintendent, Gustavo learns English phrases and shares them with the family, making fun of the man's accent. Ernie explains how white people are called gringos, or bolillos. From his perspective, the main difference between whites and Mexicans are their preferences for bread over tortillas, and their tendency to sunburn and freckle.

Ernie passes the time with walks and his imagination. He begins collecting scraps from the roundhouse, the start of his own roundhouse where he and his uncles would hold the main positions.

Henriqueta and Ernie begin seeing more soldiers on the trains and Henriqueta questions Gustavo and Josy about this. The men explain that there has been fighting up north. Ernie overhears this and senses that his family is worried. Bits and pieces of information about fighting circulate around the camp from arriving train crews, the telegraph operator, and the other campers.

One afternoon, Ernie joins Josy to deliver tools via a handcar to a crew working on a line to the north. On their way back to camp, Josy is driving the handcar along a trestle that crosses over a forested gulch when they hear a voice challenging their political views with the question, "Quiyv vive?" Ernie recognizes this as the call used by the pro-Porfirio patrols in Tepic. Josy replies rebelliously with "Viva Madero" and a shot rings out. Josy must pump the handcar furiously to get away as more shots are fired. They

make it back to the camp unharmed and Josy orders Ernie not to tell his mother what happened. Ernie admires Josy's courage for expressing his support of Madero in the face of the enemy.

Henriqueta asks about the trip at supper. Josy glosses it over, explaining that the shots fired were possibly from hunters. The next day, she gets Ernie to tell her the whole story. Ernie finds out later that a track hand had told an exaggerated version of the story in the camp, and this was why Henriqueta was suspicious.

As the weeks pass, it becomes more certain that the revolution is coming to Casa Redonda. Gustavo and Josy are laid off and given the choice of going north to do maintenance work on the line. The evening family conversations are solemn. Eventually, a plan is arranged. It is decided that the family in Jalco will not come to Casa Redonda after all. Gustavo is to go north and accept work, while Josy is to travel to Mazatlbn with Henriqueta and Ernie. Catarino, Esther, and the boys are to join them in Mazatlbn later when things settle down. Ernie suspects that Josy would prefer to stay and join the bola.

The family money is counted and divided and they set off for Mazatlbn. Upon arrival, they visit their cousin, Dosa Florencia. Florencia's husband, a merchant, rents the family a single room on Calle Leandro Valle. Josy goes back to Casa Redonda and returns with their belongings.

Part Two, Section 3 (to page 171)

Part Two, Section 3 (to page 171) Summary and Analysis

This final section of Part Two walks the reader through Ernie's assimilation into the culture of Mazatlbn, the building of war tension in the city, and the events that lead to their departure from Mazatlbn. Ernie's narrative style continues as it has up to this point; he moves from one description to another in order to build a complete picture of the culture in the family's new hometown. He begins by describing his family's room, how it has a window onto the street and a small kitchen/balcony with a brick stove. The balcony connects to a community courtyard. It is in this courtyard that the young neighborhood children would wash themselves during the rainy season.

The street where Ernie lives, Leandro Valle, is at one of the highest peaks in the city. In some areas, the sidewalks rise six or seven feet above the street. These sidewalks are fenced and used by the residents as porches. From these high places, locals could look out over the main landmarks of the city.

The residents of Leandro Valle are the poor, working class. Many are employed in factories, stores, and waterfront warehouses. Others work independently in their homes making cigars, candles, cabinets, candy, and other goods. Goods not made locally are brought into the neighborhood, or barrio, from neighboring communities. These tradesmen would walk up and down the street calling out their products and services, which include things like roasted peanuts and welding services.

The largest employer in the area is the brewery, La Cervecerna del Pacnfico. Employment is also available at the wharf unloading shipments and at the cigarette factory.

Josy begins picking up day labor jobs and soon learns a variety of trades. He and Henriqueta view his daily missions to earn money as a match between the family and the city. Each day he is successful is a round won, while the days he finds no work is a round lost. Ernie and Henriqueta would know whether Josy had 'won' for the day, because he would whistle on his way back to the room.

The sewing machine finally arrives in Mazatlbn, having been shipped when the family was still living in Tepic. When Josy brings it home, the family unwraps it carefully, fearful that this source of income would be damaged. It is not damaged, and Henriqueta begins sewing and mending for pay once again. Ernie takes up his role as her assistant, but he insists that the door must be kept shut while he does these chores. This is because Ernie feels strongly that sewing is girls' work and he doesn't want the neighborhood boys to see him helping.

Ernie obtains a paying job with a sidewalk restaurant that serves garbanzo chowder. His duties are to water down the street and help set out the tables. For this, he earns 10 centavos weekly, plus a meal and a pot of the chowder to take home. Henriqueta would add onions and water to the chowder to make it last longer for the family. Ernie saves his earnings in a pig bank.

Some days, Ernie and Josy would go out to the tidewater salt flats north of the harbor and search for fish or clams. If they don't catch anything, they stop on the way home to help the fisherman clean their catch. In return, the fisherman would give them enough seafood for supper. Having no refrigerator at home, Ernie and Josy never took more from the fisherman than they could eat that day. At one point, Ernie and Josy also collect various goods that had washed ashore from a wrecked sailing ship. Josy sells some of these things on the black market.

Ernie describes how the family relies on pawning Henriqueta's gold wedding ring when work is scarce. Pawning goods is a common practice in the neighborhood, as the local harbor distrust for banks. The Chinese grocer also helps the family get through rough times by extending credit.

It is important for the family to avoid getting sick, because the Galarzas have no credit with medical practitioners. One morning, Ernie wakes up with a toothache, and he is taken to a dentist who pulls the tooth for 50 centavos. Ernie's pain gets worse after the incident, and the family turns to Florencia for advice. Florencia loans them two pesos and sends them to her dentist. This dentist pulls another tooth and informs Henriqueta that the other dentist had taken out a perfectly good tooth.

Neighborhood residents are largely suspicious of doctors and prefer to remedy themselves with herbs and ointments. Henriqueta learns of an emulsion called Wampole for people with thin blood, which she administers to Ernie in hopes of helping him gain weight. For colds, Ernie would be given sugar soaked in diluted turpentine. For gas, he would have warm wax rubbed on his skin.

When families in the neighborhood need money, they would often borrow a small sum from Florencia. Henriqueta explains that Florencia's money comes from the treasure of Don Delfino. Don Deflino, Dosa Florencia, and their daughter Theresa are the richest family on the block and own most of the properties.

Ernie frequently plays with Theresa when Henriqueta visits with Florencia. On one of these occasions, Theresa leads Ernie to Don Delfino's treasure. The treasure is hidden in Delfino's office, a room the children are forbidden to enter. They sneak into the office and crawl through heavy drapes to reach a compartment hidden beneath a table. There they find two large clay pots, which Theresa says are filled with silver. The children almost get caught, but play it off as if they were merely playing hide-and-seek. Ernie understands that he needs to keep the secret of Delfino's treasure, because, as he imagines it, bandits will come in and murder Delfino for the money. This imaginative outcome is based on the stories told to him by Eduvijes in Jalco and the novels read by his mother.

Ernie is now beginning to feel comfortable in Leandro Valle. He comes to know that he can rely on certain things, like the Chinese grocer giving him a piece of candy and when the milkman and night watchman would walk by. As Ernie has demonstrated throughout his narrative, his sense of familiarity with the things around him directly relates to how comfortable he feels in his environment. Leandro Valle at this point is becoming his new home, particularly after he is admitted into the local gang.

The four block area on Leandro Valle is called the Barrio of the Brewery. The gang refers to itself as the boys of the brewery. Ernie briefly mentions neighboring gangs and describes the order of loyalty the boys have. They are loyal first to their gang, second to their city and third to their country. He speaks of the gang as the only place where they have true friendships.

El Perico is the leader of the gang. About three years older than Ernie, El Perico is considered the protector of the group of twelve boys. Ernie's two nicknames in the gang are El Huilo and El Wampole. He becomes a member of the brewery boys through a series of actions demonstrating his toughness. The most significant is a rock fight with El Perico. Ernie is clobbered in the head and then wakes up in his bed. When a policeman comes to the door, Josy and Henriqueta refuse to file a compliant against El Perico.

The gang boys meet every night to share stories and discuss rock throwing and fighting. Their games include make-believe battles between the maderistas and the fighters of the reigning government. Ernie notes that the games, stories, and imagined plots of the brewery gang give his life social importance. He compares the gang to his home life, indicating that the two have a similar sense of community.

The main difference between the gang and his family is his mother's determination to teach Ernie manners. She diligently teaches him the ceremonies of respect, mainly focusing on how to speak and interact with adults.

Ernie is soon enrolled in the first grade. He describes his first day at school, being taken to the director's office and then off to class. His teacher's name is Sesora Profesora Catalina Bustamante. Ernie quickly becomes bored with the recitation of cultural facts he already knows. He describes how Don Salvador, the school director, would provide dramatic speeches about historic events. During one such speech, Salvador announces that the school will be staging a military drill and mock defeat of the French in celebration of Cinco de Mayo. Ernie and several other students are chosen to participate.

Henriqueta creates an elaborate costume for Ernie. Before the show, he is taken backstage and becomes weary with the activity as he and others prepare to play their parts. The show begins to lively music and the crowd is enthusiastic. As the events proceed, Ernie is feeling more and more fatigued. He follows his scripted actions somewhat sloppily. At his cue to exit, he begins to head across the floor and drops his knapsack. His bandolier snaps and he drops his musket, using his hand instead to hold

up his pants. Eventually, he gathers himself and runs of the stage. He hears the crowd calling for him, 'the little soldier,' but he is filled with embarrassment.

After the show, Ernie and his family return home to celebrate. He is congratulated on his valiant efforts in the mock war. Ernie's success in the show solidified his reputation with the Brewery Boys and he acknowledges that Mazatlbn is becoming his home.

In Mazatlbn, the main events are held at the Plaza de Armas. Ernie describes the bare-footed boys who run around the plaza selling snacks and knickknacks. He talks of the concerts of the regimental band and the performance of "El Niso Palacio" which makes him want to become a clarinet player. It is in the plaza too that Ernie sees the captain of the rurales and the burning of the Judas. The burning is a ceremony celebrating the burning of Judas, betrayer of Our Lord.

Daily life proceeds for Ernie in Mazatlbn. Ernie and Josy are sometimes allowed to gamble in the market, playing a game resembling Bingo. By this time, Ernie is learning to read. He memorizes book titles in the school supply store, the place where his mother buys him his first book. Ernie quickly memorizes most of the stories in the book, which is kept in the cedar chest between readings.

Ernie's new knowledge of words opens up a new world for him around the city. Newspaper headlines, posted flyers and signs over shops begin to make sense to him in a way they hadn't previously.

Mazatlbn also offers the opportunity for travel. On special occasions, Ernie, Josy, and Henriqueta take rides on two-wheeled carriages and the mini-train. They also explore the city on foot. These explorations bring new experiences to Ernie, which again underscore the class difference between the rich and the poor.

During Christmastime, a rich woman makes it known that she plans to hold a party for the poor. Several children from Leandro Valle are escorted to this party by one of the neighborhood mothers. Upon arriving at the front door, Ernie is not allowed to enter. The woman says that because he is wearing shoes, he must not be poor. He, therefore, may not join the party. Another boy is turned away as well. All of the Leandro Valle children are escorted back to the neighborhood. Florencia hears the news and decides to throw her own party the next day.

Another major event for Ernie is seeing a motion picture for the first time. He describes a crowded hall with no seats. The image on the screen is of a ship at sea during a storm. Someone from the audience cries out to be aware of the ocean, and the crowd panics. Eventually, a man convinces the spectators that the water isn't real by touching the screen with his hand.

Henriqueta stays in touch with Gustavo and the family in Jalco by way of letters. She reads these letters aloud to Ernie and Josy. They receive news of increasing tension in Tepic and along the rail lines where Gustavo is working. Gustavo also reports that the revolution is spreading towards Mazatlbn. Neighborhood gossip provides them with

additional information about Generals Osuna, Tirado, and Carrasco, who are gathering troops and readying for fighting.

Ernie explains that he is now 100 percent on the side of Madero, as are his fellow gang members. The boys no longer play imaginary war, because no one is willing to be on the administration's side of the battle.

Army patrols in Mazatlbn indicate the increasingly tense climate. Distant relatives from mountain villages begin arriving to stay in the Leandro Valle with Ernie's neighbors. The restaurant where Ernie works closes down and he loses his job. As well, the Chinese grocer closes his shop and the Galarzas lose their grocery credit line.

The city comes under attack by the revolucionarios. The fighting lasts many weeks. During this time, the school is closed and work dries up for Henriqueta. Food and water become limited and the mail service is stopped. Locals stay out of the street as much as possible. Josy still leaves the room daily in search of work, and Ernie and Henriqueta fear for his safety. A gun battle nearby prompts Ernie and Henriqueta to hide all night in a kitchen corner as bullets whiz by their house. Ernie later sees a dead man being carried by on a stretcher. The siege ends when pro-Madero troops ride into the city. A ceremony and celebration are held in the plaza.

Work, unfortunately, has become scarce because many of the businesses have closed. Josy comes home one day to announce he has found work, building stone markers around a mining area in the mountains. He and another man walk two days to the worksite and spend two weeks building the markers. On their way home, someone shoots at them. Josy ducks into the bushes and recognizes the attacker as the foreman of the employer. Josy had been attacked so that the employer wouldn't have to pay the wages.

Although Josy wants revenge, he goes with Henriqueta and Ernie to the man's business and demands payment of the wages. The man, angry and possibly fearful, complies. Josy makes a parting verbal shot, telling the man that if he wants to kill someone for his wages, he should do it himself.

Fearing the family's safety, Henriqueta makes the decision to leave Mazatlbn and move north to the United States. They save all their earnings while they arranging to move. It is decided to leave the sewing machine in Mazatlbn with a neighbor until further notice. The chapter closes with Ernie, Henriqueta, and Josy walking with their belongings in hand to the rail station.

Part Three (to page 191),

Part Three (to page 191), Summary and Analysis

This section of the story details Ernie's journey north from Mazatlbn through Tucson, Arizona to Sacramento, California. Ernie, Henriqueta and Josy arrive at the train station with their belongings, including the cedar box, and fight through a crowd to board. Ernie and his mother are traveling in the passenger cars, while Josy is riding up front as a worker on the train. Armed soldiers are on board to guard the train.

After sleeping overnight, Ernie walks to the front end of the train car and runs into Juan-Chon, the Chinese grocer from Mazatlbn. They exchange pleasantries. Ernie notices that Juan-Chon has cut off his long braided hair, which was formerly his personal trademark. Upon returning to his seat, Ernie tells his mother about the braid and she orders him not to speak of it. Later, Henriqueta sends Ernie to Juan-Chon with two tacos. Juan-Chon provides Ernie with a piece of candy, as he used to do in Mazatlbn. To Ernie's surprise, Juan-Chon brings up the subject of his missing braid and they talk of it briefly and quietly.

The train ride is slow and the trip is interrupted with two major events. First, the train is stopped due to an outbreak of measles, which Ernie contracts. All the affected children are quarantined in a camp in a clearing in the forest called El Nanchi. The passengers waited for days at the camp, first for the children to recover and then for another train to arrive. Another train finally does arrive, but only has room on the freight cars. The families scramble on board, fighting for the limited space. The train proceeds on the track very slowly and moves only during daylight.

The next interruption is a break in the tracks, caused by someone setting off dynamite to halt the rail line. The passengers get off the train once again and set up camp. The evening passes uneventfully. During the following day, Ernie makes friends with another boy after he moves to Josy's bunk. Ernie and his new friend enjoy the freedom of staying in the countryside, doing little more than sharing stories about their past. By the second day, the track is repaired and the train moves on slowly. Several days pass and the train arrives in Nogales at night in the pouring rain.

Two American soldiers help Ernie and Henriqueta off the train. Ernie is scared of them, but Henriqueta reassures him. They are ushered into a crowded waiting room, where they are served soup and hot coffee. Josy joins them, carrying their belongings in a trunk. Josy is planning to sleep on the train, but he takes Ernie and his mother to a nearby mesun for the night.

The next day, Ernie and Henriqueta walk back to the train station. They see the American flag and the Mexican flag, and Ernie comments on the colors of each. His mother explains that they are now in the United States. That night, Josy explains the exchange rates for American money.

Josy plans to stay on with the train until he arrives in Sacramento, where he will meet Gustavo. Before leaving, he tells Ernie that he is now the man of the family and coaches him on a few English words and phrases. Ernie and Henriqueta make their way to Tucson, arriving at a small hotel where Gustavo had made arrangements for them. It is here that Ernie learns of American innovations: specifically, electricity and plumbing. He plays 'lightening' with the light bulb, jumps on the mattress and flushes the urinal several times just for fun.

On the next day, Ernie and Henriqueta find the family from whom they are to rent a room. The room is located halfway down a muddy alley, amid homes with drooping porches and rickety fences. The room itself is shabby. During their stay in Tucson, Ernie and Henriqueta keep to themselves, only socializing with the old couple that owns the property. The elderly couple traded stories of Tucson for Henriqueta's stories of Jalco and Mazatlbn.

Weeks later, instructions arrive from Gustavo. There is a brief, but touching goodbye with the old couple before Ernie and Henriqueta are traveling again. The conditions on this train are far more comfortable than what Ernie had experienced in Mexico. Ernie notes the letters on the conductor's hat spell the Spanish word for 'conductor'. He and his mother converse briefly and conclude that the English word and the Spanish word must be the same.

On this train ride, Ernie sees many differences between Mexicans and Americans. He eats his first sandwich and finds it distasteful. He describes the difficulty of asking the conductor what time it is. Henriqueta warns him never to laugh as loud as the Americans. He is surprised at the way the Americans put their feet on the seats and leave their hats on while inside.

Just outside of Sacramento, the train passes through vineyards, pastures with cattle, and orchards before it starts to slow its pace. They come to a stop and Ernie and Henriqueta exit the train. The station, filled with noise and activity, frightens Ernie. They manage to get to a waiting room while carrying their own luggage. Henriqueta makes Ernie ask for directions, which he does twice by pointing to a piece of paper with an address on it and saying "Plees." At the close of the section, Ernie and Henriqueta arrive at the Hotel Espasol.

Part Four (to page 245),

Part Four (to page 245), Summary and Analysis

The day spent at Hotel Espasol is unpleasant for Henriqueta and Ernie. They are intimidated by the activity and the traffic on the street. Being afraid to venture outside, they stay in the hotel all day. Dinner is served, and they marvel again at the eating habits of Americans.

Josy and Gustavo arrive later in the day. Together, the four walk to a house nearby. Mrs. Dodson, the landlady, greets them. The family's new apartment is on the first floor of Mrs. Dodson's building. It consists of a large room, a kitchen, and a bathroom that has been converted to a bedroom for Ernie. All of the first floor tenants share a bathroom located down the hall. Ernie refers to the apartment by the address, 418 L, and it becomes the family's safe place in the strange city.

Once Ernie and Henriqueta clean and organize the apartment, they begin taking short walks to learn the city. These short walks gradually lengthen as they become more comfortable. They learn the location of the lumberyard, grocery store, saloon, theater house, the cathedral, the state capital, and Capitol Park. In Capitol Park, Henriqueta assures Ernie that Christopher Columbus not only discovered America and Mexico, but also Jalco.

The lower part of town, where Ernie lives, is defined by Fifth Street, the river, the railway yards, and the Y-street levee. By Ernie's description, it is clear that they are living in the slums. Neighbors talk of the old days, when the barrio was populated with estates. These estates have since been chopped up to create rental housing for low-income families.

Ernie is introduced to many different cultures in the barrio. He sees the different habits of the Japanese, Chinese, Filipinos, Hindus, Portuguese, Italians, Poles, Yugo-Slavs, and Koreans. He notes that there are Americans in the barrio as well. These Americans are typically the rent collectors, police, insurance salesmen, and teachers, all in positions of power unlike the minority groups. Ernie also meets other families from Mexico, who've had travels similar to his own. Over time, more and more refugees from Mexico arrive at the barrio, finding shelter in basements, alleys, and shanties. Josy and Gustavo would occasionally bring these new immigrants home for dinner, where they would talk of the ongoing revolution in Mexico. It is common for Mexican families in the barrio to provide food and shelter for the new immigrants until they establish themselves.

Word of job opportunities spreads quickly throughout the barrio, either through labor recruiters or working men who've returned from seasonal jobs. The goal is always to find work close enough to reach by foot or bicycle, rather than traveling hundreds of miles for farm work.

American habits and customs are strange to Ernie and the other immigrants in the barrio. He compares the grocery stores to the mercados of Mexico. He notes the lack of community events and celebrations. Family discussions categorize American habits as either acceptable or disgusting. They find American laughter disgusting, but are pleasantly surprised that the garbage collector picks up their waste.

The older population of the barrio assimilates as little of the American culture as possible. These elders speak only Spanish and continue to perform traditional celebrations and activities.

The government is distant from the barrio, only present in the form of the police officers walking the streets. The exception to this is the Comisiun Honornfica, which helps organize celebrations for Mexican holidays. Volunteer residents who speak English and Spanish provide daily assistance to the Spanish-speaking community. Ernie becomes one of these volunteers after he finishes the third grade at Lincoln School.

Pochos is the term used for Mexicans who have grown up in California. Most of the pochos become Americanized to the point that they know more about Californian culture than Mexican culture. Culturally, they are in a gray area, between Mexican and American cultures. Chicanos, like Ernie and his family, suspect that pochos believe they are too good for the barrio.

Ernie starts his schooling at Lincoln School. On his first day, he meets the friendly principal Miss Hopley. Miss Hopley quickly earns Ernie's respect. With the use of a student translator, she interviews Ernie and creates his student file. He is then taken to Miss Ryan's first grade class. Miss Ryan is a pleasant and encouraging instructor and counselor to her multi-ethnic group of students. She provides Ernie and other non-English speaking students with private language lessons.

The demographic at Lincoln School reflects the diversity of the barrio itself. Ernie's buddies in the second grade include a Japanese boy, an Italian boy, and a Portuguese boy.

Miss Ryan and the other teachers send a constant message to the students that they are being schooled to be good Americans. Racial tensions are handled immediately, and students are sent to the principal's office for using racial slang. The school staff, however, does not attempt to wash out the ethnic culture of the students. Teachers respect the students' foreign names and allow them to speak their native language on the playground.

One of Ernie's most enduring lessons on American culture comes from a mock election held at school. He runs against a boy named Homer for third grade president. Homer wins, and Ernie subsequently figures out that Homer had voted for himself. Ernie is surprised. His cultural teachings of honor and respect had prompted him to vote for Homer and to assume that Homer would vote for him.

Ernie moves through Lincoln School under the tutelage of his teachers, Miss Campbell, Miss Beakey, Mrs. Wood, Miss Applegate, and Miss Delahunty. Miss Campbell

introduces Ernie to the public library. Other significant school experiences include the death of a fellow student, the departure of Miss Applegate, and a naturalist's presentation to the student body.

The Galarzas make another attempt to reunite with the Lopez family. The Lopezs' travel by boat to Sacramento and are placed in quarantine at Angel's Island. Esther now has three additional children, including twins who were born during the trip. The reunion is reserved, but sincere. An immigration officer and interpreter arrive to explain that the Lopez's cannot enter the country and must return to Mexico. Goodbyes are shared and they go.

Ernie, his mother and his uncles are puzzled and confused. They ask many questions, but have no answers. Ernie naively suggests they all return to Jalco together, but Henriqueta does not respond. They later receive a letter from Esther stating that she and her family had made it home.

There are about twenty tenants living at 418 L. These tenants include the Old Gentleman, Mr. Grover, Mr. Brien the printer, Mr. Hans the carpenter, Mr. Howard the labor union delegate, Mr. Chester the military officer, and Big Ernie, the son of Mrs. Dodson.

The characters of 418 L and the barrio are a collection of unique individuals, each with his or her own distinctive habits. The Old Gentleman knocks on the wall to signal Ernie to come over and help him with his necktie. Big Singh, the Hindu who operates a boarding house next door, frequently leans on the railing between the two addresses, chatting in his broken English. Up the street, Miss Florence sings and plays piano loudly in her apartment. Stacy, the blacksmith, makes jokes with the kids as he works. The Chinese laundryman who employs Ernie as an errand boy only speaks in short nods. Lettie, a dance girl, walks to work wearing her glitzy make-up and flashy costumes. Ernie also mentions other barrio characters that are less familiar to him, including Frisco, Speedy, and Shorty Lopez.

Mr. Howard, the union delegate, encourages Ernie's ongoing studies by giving him books. One day, Mr. Howard gives Ernie a copy of *Commentaries on the Common Law of England,* in the event that Ernie decides to be a lawyer. Ernie admits that he cannot make sense of it. He asks Mr. Howard if he could find a copy of Tio Tonche, a book Ernie had lost on the trip to Sacramento.

Descriptions of the barrio residents continue. Mr. Charley is an old man who takes out his pistols to tell the story of his charge up San Juan Hill. On the Fourth of July, under the cover of firework noise, Mr. Charley fires his pistols into the floor of his apartment, entertaining himself and his children. Girolamo is a pasta maker at the factory three blocks from 418 L.

The barrio educates Ernie as much as Lincoln School does. He makes a connection between Mrs. Dodson's role in the tenant house and Miss Hopley's role at the school.

The barrio teaches him about Sumo wrestling, street fights, fires, and the activities of policemen and firemen.

The boys in the neighborhood group themselves together by age and interests. Ernie, Russell, Sammie, and Catfish follow suit and create their own short-lived gang. Prompted by a barrio drifter named Van, they organize themselves as a unified front against the looming security guard of Weinstock's. The boys' meeting place is behind a loose fence plank. Hidden from public view, they smoke and talk of shoplifting. Their club, and Ernie's gang career, ends when Henriqueta gets word of the secret hideaway. Ernie remains friends with Sammie and Catfish, but stays focused on work and school from this point forward.

The lifestyle of the working man or boy in the barrio reminds Ernie of Mazatlbn. Now that he is older, Ernie focuses more energy on the endless search for ways to make money, particularly since Henriqueta is without her sewing machine. Letters sent to the Mazatlbn neighbor are never answered, and Henriqueta must assume that the prized Ajax is lost. Gustavo, Josy, and now Ernie too, fight the daily battle with the city to find work.

One of Ernie's jobs is selling newspapers on the corner. As part of his pay, he is allowed to keep one copy for himself, thus bringing the family its first daily newspaper. He also works for tips as a bellhop and house boy in the rooming house. Both the Old Gentleman and Big Singh employ Ernie for a time as an errand boy.

On Saturday afternoons, Ernie is often left with the day to himself. He spends the time collecting scraps and bottles. In this way, he meets an African American neighbor who throws loud parties behind 418 L. She agrees to leave out her empty beer bottles for Ernie. His most fruitful scrap collecting, however, is along the waterfront. He also fishes off the bank of the river.

Ernie learns about losing jobs in the barrio when three of his regular employment activities dry up. The African American woman is arrested and never returns. Henriqueta forces Ernie to quit his job with Singh after Singh throws a drunken guest over his porch railing. Not long after this, the Old Gentleman passes away.

Through Josy, Ernie gets a deckhand job on a stern-wheeler, giving him his first experience with sailing and independence from Henriqueta. During this time, Josy is picked up by immigration because he isn't carrying his registration card. Ernie must go to the telegram office and contact his mother. Through much confusion, he is able to write an English telegram to Mrs. Dodson, who translates the message to Henriqueta. Josy's papers arrive and he is allowed to go. Henriqueta and Mrs. Dodson are impressed with Ernie's English telegram.

At about this time, Henriqueta remarries. Ernie's new stepfather, a chicano, moves into the apartment at 418 L.

One of the primary difficulties for Ernie and other chicanos in America is the language and the various pronunciations of common words. To Ernie and others, English is free

flowing and unstable. Everyone has his own pronunciation, which makes learning and using the language challenging. Mexican adults in the barrio only learn the most important words, while others adopt their own versions of the most-used phrases.

Family conversations indicate that Ernie is getting used to American customs. Henriqueta has the most opinionated perspectives on American habits, and the adults in the household continue to comment and complain about American behavior. Ernie has the understanding that he is not to duplicate the crass ways of Americans in his own demeanor. He is not to wear his cap inside or yell across the street. Most importantly, he is always to respect adults.

Ernie understands that his family is Mexican, even though they are surrounded by America. He cites the cedar box and its heirlooms as evidence that the family is the same as it was in Jalco. Ernie, Gustavo, and Josy purchase and read Spanish books, from novels to history books. Family conversations still reminisce about the days in Jalco and Ernie relives the days of the zopilotes, and Coronel and Nerun. Looking back, he now begins to understand more of the revolution.

Only in the uptown area does Ernie feel like a foreigner. Within the barrio, however, Spanish is the common language and Mexican culture influences most ways of doing things. The culture is even more concentrated at family parties, which disregard American culture entirely. During one of these parties, Duran, an immigrant from Sonora, tells the neighborhood families about the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.). The I.W.W. has begun to organize laborers.

Once a year, the entire community gathers in celebration of the Sixteenth of September. One year, Josy is appointed to the committee to arrange the party program. Ernie helps Josy by hanging decorations and other minor tasks. The party proceeds well until the dance. Before the dancing begins, it is tradition for the women and girls to line up in front of the men. The men then move forward and pick out a dancing partner who is available. As the party wears on, the sips of tequila taken in the bathroom begin to have an effect on the crowd. At one point, two men collide on their way to dance with the same girl. The two head off to the bathroom where a fight ensues. The fight escalates into a brawl until someone warns that the police are coming. The hall empties out quickly.

These Mexican experiences are contrasted with Ernie's increasing exposure to the American way of life. He learns about product offers, like the free dishes that come with Carnation cereal, bank accounts, safe deposit boxes, Sunday morning pancakes, newspaper comics, and motion pictures. Together, Ernie's family enjoys the adventures of Charlie Chaplin who communicates his emotion without words.

Music is all around Ernie in the barrio, so much so that he buys a violin at the pawnshop. Josy arranges for a fiddler to give Ernie two lessons per month. Shortly thereafter, Ernie is accepted as a piccolo player for the Sacramento Boys Band. With the band, he tours the region playing at community events, rallies, fairs, and contests.

Along with the band, the opening of the YMCA introduces Ernie to another part of California. After a family discussion, he is allowed to join the Y. He then obtains a scholarship to attend a two-week summer camp in the Sierras. All of these experiences lead Ernie to a broader part of the world, where his family cannot go, both literally and figuratively. He is still grounded, however, by Gustavo and Josy, who spend their little leisure time teaching Ernie new skills. Together, the uncles and their nephew repair things around the house and things others have discarded using simple tools, enhancing their own lives with a little ingenuity.

Part Five (to page 265),

Part Five (to page 265), Summary and Analysis

The family decides to move to a house in Oak Park on the outskirts of town. Mrs. Dodson explains that if they don't keep up with the house payments, they will lose the deposit and the house, but they are not deterred. A real estate broker arrives at the apartment with the contract and explains things in detail. Little is understood by the Galarzas. Henriqueta watches the man's face intently as he speaks. She asks Ernie to pose one question to the banker: How long it will take to pay for the home? The answer, twenty years, is shocking, but the Galarzas sign the contract anyway.

Before leaving the apartment, Ernie digs a hole in the backyard and buries his marble collection. As part of this ritual, he tamps the ground and lays a curse over anyone who removes it without his permission.

The new home has five rooms. It is located between an orchard and an empty lot. They plant flowers, vegetables and fruit trees in their yard. The Galarzas are the only Mexicans in the neighborhood. Some of the neighbors are nice, while others ignore them. Ernie makes friends with a neighbor boy, Roy. Ernie enjoys the companionship of another boy, particularly because he now has two younger sisters.

Ernie persuades his family to help him purchase a used bicycle. The bicycle allows him the freedom to explore the countryside with Roy. As a bonus, he is able to pick up a paper route with the *Sacramento Bee*. Roy and Ernie also earn money by assisting another neighbor who bakes in his basement.

Ernie is transferred to Bret Harte School, which lacks the diversity of Lincoln School. Here he learns sentence diagramming, which furthers his interest in reading. Ernie's personal library of English and Spanish books is growing, and he feels confident in his ability to translate between the two languages. Gustavo tells Ernie that with diagrams and dictionaries, he could someday be a doctor, lawyer, or professor. These professions offer a far easier life than that of hard laborers like Gustavo and Josy. To encourage Ernie's development, Gustavo has a telephone installed in the home.

Despite the relative luxury the family now enjoys, they miss the barrio. Ernie has far fewer opportunities to earn money via small jobs and no one on the street speaks Spanish.

Henriqueta has another son, which places more responsibility on Ernie. Ernie notes that Henriqueta is far less strict with the daughters and the youngest son than she was with Ernie.

The men begin to floor and partition the basement of the house, in anticipation of bringing the Lopez's to stay with them. Unfortunately, a flu epidemic puts these plans out of their reach. Gustavo takes ill first, fainting in the front yard after he is sent home

from work. A doctor orders him to the hospital, where he dies three days later. The message of his death is delivered via the telephone. Most of the family is too sick to attend his funeral. Henriqueta passes a few days later, while Ernie himself is feverish.

On the day of Henriqueta's funeral, Mrs. Dodson takes one of Ernie's sisters home. The other sister and his brother go to stay with a neighbor. Josy gets drunk in the barrio, buys a pistol, and gets arrested for shooting up Second Street. Mrs. Dodson must bail Josy out of jail.

A month later, Ernie collects his things and moves into a basement room in the barrio with Josy. Ernie becomes friends with his new neighbors, Dosa Trbnsito and her son Kid Felix, a professional boxer.

When a child in the neighborhood is sick, Trbnsito calls a healer to assist. Ernie watches the ritual with curiosity. The healer mixes up two different concoctions with herbs, oils, powders, and lard. A picture of the Virgin of Guadalupe is hung on the wall and the light is turned off. The girl, lying naked on the bed, is surrounded with cactus leaves. The powdered herb mixture is rubbed on her feet and the paste is used to draw a cross on her forehead and her chest. A blanket is laid over her. The healer prays. Sometime later, the healer gets up and looks at the child. She comments that the girl is not sweating and then leaves. The girl dies in the morning.

Through Ernie's friendship with Trbnsito, he meets other people in the barrio. He describes Don Crescensio, an old man who tells stories of buried treasure, the Ortega family, who grow vegetables, and Trbnsito's son, the Kid, who lectures and demonstrates various boxing moves. When barrio residents have trouble with the government, they enlist Ernie's help to translate between them and the authorities.

Ernie attends Hearkness Junior High School. Josy supports Ernie's efforts to obtain his high school diploma, but Ernie is also expected to work when he is not at school. Ernie becomes close to Mr. Everett, his high school civics teacher. Mr. Everett encourages Ernie with comments about his future in academics.

During the weekends and school breaks, Ernie spends his time working. Like Josy, he learns how to seek out various temporary jobs. One summer, Josy finds Ernie a job as a water boy on a track gang. Ernie becomes Josy's apprentice, learning how to do the physical work efficiently. The scene is reminiscent of the father-son relationship Ernie had described back in Jalco, when the boy first enters his working years.

Ernie finds other work as well. As a farmhand, he is taught to drive a tractor by Roy, an alcoholic taxi driver with a knack for mechanics. Roy smokes hand-rolled cigarettes that remind Ernie of Eduvijes in Jalco and Trbnsito in the barrio. Roy teaches Ernie an important lesson about getting right back on the horse after falling off, when he orders Ernie to continue driving the tractor after he almost topples it over.

During these days, Ernie is relatively independent. Josy's presence fades somewhat, as he constantly is either working or looking for work. Ernie, too, spends his time either at

school or in search of work. They still live together, but begin to develop separate patterns of activity.

Ernie describes other work he obtains in his junior high years. He works for a drugstore, office supply store, and Western Union, among other things. He even plays his violin for pay in a dance hall. One of his teachers, Miss Crowley, helps him earn money as an illustrator decorating Christmas cards. These varied experiences demonstrate Ernie's intelligence and his diverse talent set.

The last significant event in Ernie's life before he begins high school occurs over the summer, while working in the countryside outside Sacramento. He describes how he and other people from the barrio spend these days moving between labor camps in search of work. In each of these work opportunities, the workers are in the complete control of the employer. They often don't know what they're getting paid or what the living conditions will be like before they arrive at the jobsite. Supervisors frequently skim money off the top by misrepresenting each worker's production.

In this environment, Ernie experiences his first direct conflict between a group of farm workers and their employer. An outbreak of diarrhea, which actually kills one child in the camp, prompts one of the women to guess that the water is tainted. The water used for washing, drinking and cooking comes from a stream that runs by the stables upstream. Ernie is appointed to go to the city and report the situation. There, he meets Mr. Simon Lubin, a man he had heard of through Mr. Everett's civics class. Mr. Lubin listens to Ernie's complaint. Before Ernie leaves, Mr. Lubin instructs Ernie and the other workers to organize. Ernie doesn't quite understand what this means. An inspector arrives, and a water tank is parked by the irrigation ditch. Shortly after, Ernie is fired.

Ernie returns to the barrio via a slow and contemplative ride on his bicycle. When he gets back to the city, the barrio seems empty. He decides to ride to the high school, where he will start his studies again in one week. Still contemplative, he thinks about the debating team and his future.

Characters

Ernie Galarza

Gustavo

Henriqueta

Josy

The Lopez Family

Mrs. Dodson

Miss Hopley

Miss Ryan

Mr. Howard

Mr. Everett

Don Porfirio Dnaz

Don Francisco Madero

Objects/Places

Jalcocotbn

Jalcocotbn is the mountain village where Ernie is born and lives out his early years. It is located in the mountains of the Sierra Madre de Nayarit and reachable only by way of steep, rocky trails. On the backside of Jalcocotbn, called Jalco for short, is a forest, which provides the villagers sustenance by way of hunting and farming. The village is simply laid out, consisting of one main, dirt road, lined with adobe cottages on either side.

Much of Part One deals with describing the main physical and cultural aspects of Jalco. Because this is where Ernie's life begins, the village is his main point of reference throughout the story. Even long after Ernie has left Jalco, he is clearly reminded of his times in the village by the scent of his mother's cedar box. More importantly, his experiences in Jalco form the basis of his opinions about certain dichotomies that become important later in life. These include the worker versus employer, government versus citizen and man versus woman.

Tepic

Tepic is the closest city to Jalcocotbn, reachable by a long day's walk. Tepic is the first resting place for Ernie, Henriqueta, Gustavo, and Josy on the extended journey that eventually leads them to Sacramento. It is in Tepic that Ernie is first exposed to city life, which is far more complex than anything he'd experienced in Jalco. The problems of working and saving money, which are to plague the family throughout the story, become clear in Tepic. Unlike in Jalco, the Galarzas must pay rent and buy produce, rather than farm their own food. These two conditions keep the family struggling to get ahead economically. Tepic also introduces Ernie to the visual signs of a brewing revolution, including the presence of troops and military ceremonies.

Acaponeta

Acaponeta is a temporary home for Ernie and Henriqueta as they move north from Tepic to Mazatlbn. Ernie adapts quickly to Acaponeta, because it has similarities to Jalco. The community is small and close, and the landscapes around their cottage are natural and friendly. At first, this is a peaceful resting place for Ernie and Henriqueta because they are seemingly far removed from war. Unfortunately, the activities of war follow them, and Acaponeta's safe atmosphere disappears when gunfire and shootings occur nearby.

The Train

Ernie sees his first train at the station in Acaponeta, though he has by this time come to feel a sense of kinship with the rail line. The train plays many roles in Ernie's story. It is a source of employment for Gustavo and Josy. It is also the vehicle that drives the family, figuratively and literally, all the way to Sacramento. In the figurative sense, Gustavo and Josy are following rail line work until they finally land in Sacramento. At one point in the story, Ernie also comes to believe that the train is delivering war to all parts of Mexico.

Casa Redonda

Casa Redonda is a train yard outside of Mazatlbn. After the situation in Acaponeta deteriorates, Ernie and Henriqueta move to Casa Redonda and live in a tent. Gustavo and Josy are already there, both employed by the rail line. Ernie feels a sense of adventure, watching and participating in the activities at Casa Redonda. Unfortunately, the revolution violence follows them once again, leading to their departure from the train camp.

Mazatlbn/Leandro Valle

The last section of Part Three deals with the Galarzas' stay in Mazatlbn. They live on a street called Leandro Valle near a brewery. As time passes, the family develops a sense of home in Leandro Valle, for the first time since leaving Jalco. Henriqueta builds her sewing business, Ernie earns the respect of the neighborhood boys, and Josy picks up many day jobs that provide him with a variety of experiences. The skills of budgeting and finding work that the family had learned in Tepic are again put to use in Mazatlbn. Ernie, older now, starts school and obtains his first work experience in Mazatlbn.

Tucson, Arizona

Ernie and Henriqueta stay in Tucson for only a few weeks before moving north to Sacramento. Their stay provides them with limited exposure to American customs, simply because they keep to themselves. Their only companionship is the elderly landlords. Although Ernie and Henriqueta stay's is short, they become close with the elderly couple, privately referring to them as grandparents.

418 L

A sense of community returns to the Galarzas at 418 L. This is their basement apartment in the barrio of Sacramento. The building itself reminds Ernie of a school, gang, or other organized institution, led by the supportive Mrs. Dodson. The apartment is a place where the Galarzas can shut out America and discuss the many odd habits

and customs of Americans. It also is a source of income for Ernie, who assists his neighbors with various tasks in return for tips.

The Barrio, Sacramento, California

The basement apartment of 418 L is located within a downtown neighborhood in or near Sacramento, called the barrio. For Ernie, the barrio is a constant source of education. He learns of culture, interpersonal interaction, finding and losing work, being rebellious and getting caught, having close friends and losing those friends, and many other essential life lessons. Older neighbors and acquaintances appear to recognize Ernie's intelligence and charisma and, therefore, are constantly encouraging him with visions of a bright, professional future.

Lincoln School

Lincoln School is an extension of the barrio, offering many of the same experiences. Ernie, proving to be a quick learner, earns the respect of his teachers. Some of these teachers look out for Ernie, offering him advice, encouragement, guidance, and support when he needs it. At Lincoln, his education encompasses not only his studies, but also the practice of cultural acceptance. Experiences that come to Ernie by way of his enrollment at Lincoln include an introduction to the public library, the death of a fellow, and a naturalist's presentation to the student body, which piques his interest in birds.

Oak Park, Sacramento, California

The family's stay in Oak Park is marked by tragedy. Although the Galarzas move to Oak Park as part of the ongoing effort to reunite with the Lopezes, things do not proceed as planned. It seems like a good move for them, as they now have a small bit of land to farm and a bigger home to suit the growing family. Surprisingly, though, Ernie is no longer comforted by the countryside as he was in Acaponeta. He misses the activity of the barrio. After the deaths of Gustavo and Henriqueta, Ernie and Josy return to the barrio and Ernie does not mention Oak Park again.

Bret Harte School

Ernie attends Bret Harte School while living in Oak Park. Here he learns sentence diagramming and becomes even more comfortable with the English language. Ernie's academic progression while at Bret Harte impresses the family to the point that they are all convinced that Ernie will be able to avoid the working life when he gets older.

Hearkness Junior High School

Ernie completes his middle school education at Hearkness Junior High School. One of his teachers, Mr. Everett, appears to be a significant influence in Ernie's life. Mr. Everett encourages Ernie by staying after school and having long talks. He tells Ernie he can join the high school debating team and someday go to Stanford University. It is one of Mr. Everett's lectures that leads Ernie to Mr. Lubin to complain about tainted drinking water at an employment camp. Significantly, the story ends with Ernie contemplating the encouragements of Mr. Everett.

Themes

Laborer versus Employer

Throughout the story, repeated references are made to an imbalance in the power structure between laborers and employers. Even as a young boy in Jalco, Ernie perceives that laborers are often powerless to resist unfair wages and working conditions. When the family moves to the city, Gustavo, who works in a sugar mill outside of the city, regularly receives only one day off. Each Sunday, he makes the long walk from the mill to Tepic, spends an afternoon with his family, and then returns to the mill that same day. In Mazatlbn, one of Josy's employers tries to have him shot rather than pay the wages that Josy has already earned. The issue becomes more concrete for Ernie when he joins the working class. In the farmland outside of Sacramento, Ernie is exposed to work camps where the living conditions are poor at best and life-threatening at worst.

Typically, workers like Ernie arrive at these camps and begin work before knowing what the wages will be. Once the work has begun, there is little leverage for the worker to argue about the rate of pay. To make matters worse, supervisors and managers notoriously lie about a workers' production, thus pocketing some of the earnings for themselves. Ernie describes the relationship between the worker and employer succinctly: "There was never any doubt about the contractor and his power over us. He could fire a man and his family on the spot and make them wait days for their wages .... The worst thing one could do was to ask for fresh water on the job, regardless of the heat of the day" (p. 263).

Organization

In most of the social systems Ernie describes, he defines an organizational structure. The village of Jalco has a specific hierarchy, beginning at the top with the eldest, Cleofas, and running all the way down to the youngest female child. Men have more influence than women, while boys have more influence than girls. In the Lopez household, Don Catarino is clearly in charge. The mothers' realm of control is only over household chores and children up to a certain age.

Moving outside the world of Jalco, Ernie is exposed to other systems of organization. In particular, he notes his own household after leaving Jalco, the Brewery Boys gang, the tenant building at 418 L, and Lincoln School. Each of these systems has a defined leader. The members of the systems know and respect that leader's authority. Ernie never questions his mother's rule over him, nor does he waver on El Perico's right to be the recognized leader of the Brewery Boys. At 418 L, Mrs. Dodson is the organizer among her multi-ethnic collection of tenants. At Lincoln School, it is Miss Hopley who keeps her teachers and students in line.

Ernie's understanding of systems of hierarchy may be a factor in his later curiosity about workers organizing under labor unions. This is a natural progression for him, given that he has direct experience with the lack of rights afforded to workers. He is initiated to this concept in stages; first by Mr. Howard, then by a neighbor named Duran, and lastly by Mr. Lubin, who takes Ernie's complaint about the contaminated drinking water. The most obvious political statement of the story is made when Mr. Lubin directly tells Ernie that he and his fellow workers must organize to secure their rights. When Ernie repeats this advice to the camp, he names it his first organizing speech, indicating that Ernie's future probably holds more of the same.

Industrialization

Industrialization is a factor that runs in the background through much of the story. Ernie and his family are directly affected, both positively and negatively, by the ongoing development of the rail lines throughout Mexico and California. On one side, the rail line provides Gustavo and Josy with regular employment over a period of several years. Once Gustavo is laid off from the sugar mill in Tepic, the rail line labor recruiter brings the Galarzas an answer to their immediate problem of making of living. Both Gustavo and Josy accept this new venture as a doorway to a better future where they will finally be reunited with the Lopez's.

Henriqueta, too, accepts this vision of their future. In Acaponeta, she and Ernie are drawn to the train station, and both seem to feel both fascinated by it and indebted to it. When the time comes to travel again, the rail line makes the long journey possible. At Casa Redonda, the rail line provides them with a safe shelter. The family even for a time entertains the idea of reuniting with the Lopez's at the train camp.

While the rail line presents the Galarzas with opportunity, it also exacerbates the problem of the revolution. Using the train system, soldiers and weapons travel further distances in less time. The fighting, therefore, spreads far and wide throughout the country. In Acaponeta, Ernie perceives that the train is somewhat part of the war, because of the constant flow of soldiers riding the rails. At Casa Redonda, the presence of soldiers on the trains is an early sign that the fighting is moving closer and the family will have to leave the camp. Therefore, as the train facilitates the journey of the Galarzas as they avoid the war, it also allows the fighting to catch up with the Galarzas wherever they go. Later, the rail lines are basically overtaken by the war, becoming too dangerous for the Lopez's, who end up traveling to Sacramento by boat.

Style

Perspective

Barrio Boy is an autobiography, written in the first person. The author, Ernesto Galarza, explains in the introduction why he chose to write his story. As an immigrant from a rural Mexican village, Ernie is brought to America by circumstance. He subsequently adapts to American culture and becomes a rising star within the American education system. This adaptation however, does not come at the expense of Ernie's Mexican heritage. While the story points to some conflicts between the two cultures, Ernie clearly states that he feels it is possible to be a Mexican living in America. His descriptions of the ceremonies and habits of other families within the Sacramento barrio indicate that others were able to do the same. These Mexican families learn what they have to about America in order to get by with the daily tasks of living, buying food, paying rent, and finding work. By and large, though, they return again and again to the customs they learned as children. One of the purposes of the book, then, is to counter the common idea that early-to-mid 20th century America was a melting pot that blended many cultures together. The Mexican experience, as described by Ernie, is characterized by a dedicated protection of cultural tradition.

The intended audience for the book is the American public. It is intended to be a resource and documentary for anyone trying to grasp a deeper understanding of the Mexican-American. The author, recognizing that his experience was not all that unique, expresses his desire to publish his story. Not only does he offer his acculturation experience, but Ernie's position as an outsider gives him a different perspective on American habits. This perspective underscores that Americans are as different to the Mexican immigrants as Mexicans are to Americans.

Tone

The author's tone throughout the story is subjective. It is his own life story, so it wouldn't be possible for Ernie to tell the story without incorporating his own opinions and beliefs. That said, however, Ernie's narrative refrains from emotional detail. As an example, he does not speak of his own grief after his mother passes away. He refers to Josy pain by describing a drunken escapade on the night of Henriqueta's funeral. The reader only learns of Josy's tears when Ernie explains that Josy did not want Ernie to see him crying. Ernie's emotions only come to be known indirectly through his actions, rather than by direct reference. For example, when Nerun dies, Ernie does not talk of being sad or crying as many boys would. Instead, he recalls the story with an unusual level of detail, indicating that the incident has stuck in his mind over the years. Throughout the rest of the book, he periodically refers to Nerun as representative of his life in Jalco. In this way, Ernie expresses his own quiet, contemplative emotion. Because of this stoic tone, the book has a weightier, more relevant impact. To the reader, Ernie establishes himself as a humble, honest, and trustworthy authority on the Mexican-American

experience. For this reason, Ernie's story is almost generic, representative of the experience of the many young boys who landed in America under similar circumstances.

Structure

The book is arranged with five parts, some of which have defined subsections. Part One: In a Mountain Village begins with Ernie's earliest memories in Jalco. Much of this section describes Jalco in general terms. He moves through the daily routines and traditions, using just a few specific incidents to highlight certain points. An example is the story of Coronel fighting with the buzzard, demonstrating the high value the villagers place on courage in the face of danger. There is little dialogue in Part One.

Part Two: Peregrinations begins with Ernie's journey to Tepic and follows the family through Casa Redonda and Mazatlbn. As with the first part, the story is primarily told in chronological order, though Ernie does make some minor deviations as he moves through the narrative.

Parts Three, Four, and Five are somewhat shorter than Parts One and Two. Part Three: North from Mexico represents the family's transition period, moving from Mazatlbn north through Nogales and Tucson, before finally settling in Sacramento. This part of the book doesn't provide the detailed descriptions of the surroundings as had Parts One and Two. This is out of necessity, because Ernie doesn't seem to stay on one place long enough to being the acclimation process.

Part Four: Life in The Lower Part of Town documents Ernie's life in the barrio of Sacramento. It is here that the commentary on the interaction between American and Mexican cultures is most significant. The last section of the book, Part Five: On the Edge of the Barrio details Ernie's brief life in a suburban home and his return to the barrio.

Quotes

"Unlike people who are born in hospitals, in an ambulance, or in a taxicab I showed up in an adobe cottage with a thatched roof that stood at one end of the only street in Jalcocotbn, which everybody called Jalco for short." p. 3

"Somewhere between my third and fifth birthdays I began to have a memory. The forest trail, the street, the zopilotes, the arroyo, my mother's potted garden, the summer showers, Josy whistling an imitation of a song bird - these were some of the earliest pictures and sounds which for some reason I could recall whenever I wanted to." p. 20

"Coronel was standing on one foot, erect and watchful, under the willow. I knew something that he didn't - that people were talking about him as the only gallo that had ever beaten up a zopilote - something to be proud of even if a zopilote was, in some fashion, chicken." p. 32

"Out of the forest a man took out only what he and his family could use. Not all the campesinos in Jalcocotbn, or in all the pueblos on the mountain together took out so much that the monte and the arroyo could not replenish themselves." p. 57

"With the crowd of admiring spectators we ran to the spot where the locomotive stopped and examined the marvelous monster. It belched great puffs of smoke from a stack adorned with a polished headlight. The main part of the black giant looked like a barrel with two humps on top. From inside the boiler there came clanking noises and now and then a deep, sad cough." p. 110

"Two remarkable things about the American bolillos were the way their necks turned red with sunburn, and their freckles, both good reasons why no Mexican could ever become an American, or would want to." p. 125

"She looked me up and down and said: 'Not this boy. He is not poor. He is wearing shoes.' Another boy from our barrio was turned away because he was wearing a pressed cotton suit and new sandals. There was an argument between our chaperone and the guards. They were adamant: we were not poor and we could not go in." pp. 162-163

"I shrank back for he was certainly a gringo, and a gringo soldier besides, the kind Don Salvador had taught us were the mortal enemies of our country." p. 183

"The school was not so much a melting pot as a griddle where Miss Hopley and her helpers warmed knowledge into us and roasted racial hatreds out of us." p. 211

"It was easy for me to feel that becoming a proud American, as she said we should, did not mean feeling ashamed of being a Mexican." p. 211

"The Americanization of Mexican me was no smooth matter. I had to fight one lout who made fun of my travels on the diligencia, and my barbaric translation of the word into

"diligence." He doubled up with laughter over the word until I straightened him out with a kick. In class I made points explaining that in Mexico roosters said "qui-qui-ri-qui" and not "cock-a-doodle-doo," but after school I had to put up with the taunts of a big Yugoslav who said Mexican roosters were crazy." p. 212

"One thing that wasn't taught at the Lincoln School, but which I learned from experience, was that a place has to have somebody in charge to decide things and organize them." p. 218

"In our musty apartment in the basement of 418 L, ours remained a Mexican family. I never lost the sense that we were the same, from Jalco to Sacramento." p. 237

"It was at the family parties that the world of the Americans was completely shut off." p. 239

"He pointed out to me that with diagrams and dictionaries I could have a choice of becoming a lawyer or a doctor or an engineer or a professor. These, he said, were far better careers than growing up to be a camello, as he and Josy would always be. Camellos, I knew well enough, was what the chicanos called themselves as workers on every job who did the dirtiest work." p. 250

"The sign language and simple words my mother had devised to communicate with the Americans at 418 L didn't work with the housewives on 7th Avenue." p. 251

"But being a boy, the female chores seemed outrageous and un-Mexican." pp. 251-252

"And here's another thing, Ernie. If nobody won't listen to you, go on and talk to yourself and hear what a smart man has to say." p. 258

Topics for Discussion

Compare and contrast the roles of men and women in Jalcocotbn.

Why is Ernie upset when he overhears Don Catarino saying that Coronel only fights with the zopilote because the rooster knows the zopilote is a coward?

When Ernie gets in a rock fight with El Perico, the police come to his door and ask Josy and Henriqueta to file a complaint. Why do they refuse?

Which factor ultimately has a greater influence on Ernie's life and development, his culture or his environment? Explain why.

How is Henriqueta changed by American culture? How does she resist American culture?

Why doesn't Ernie express grief over the deaths of Gustavo and Henriqueta?

Ernie writes the story of his childhood perspectives from memory as an adult. Does he try to minimize the presence of his adult perspective in the narrative? Explain your answer. If no, why not? If yes, does he succeed?