

# Solito: A Memoir



## About the Author

Javier Zamora is a Pipil Salvadoran author, poet, and activist. He has written three books related towards his migration to the United States.

Zamora was born in San Luis La Herradura, El Salvador in 1990. When he was a year old, his father fled El Salvador due to the US-funded Salvadoran Civil War. His mother followed her husband's footsteps in 1995 when Javier was about to turn five. Zamora was left at the care of his grandparents who helped raise him until he migrated to the US when he was nine. He currently lives in Tucson, AZ.

## About the Book: (from Goodreads)

Javier Zamora's adventure is a 3,000-mile journey from his small town in El Salvador, through Guatemala and Mexico, and across the U.S. border. He will leave behind his beloved aunt and grandparents to reunite with a mother who left four years ago and a father he barely remembers. Traveling alone amid a group of strangers and a "coyote" hired to lead them to safety, Javier expects his trip to last two short weeks.

At nine years old, all Javier can imagine is rushing into his parents' arms, snuggling in bed between them, and living under the same roof again. He cannot foresee the perilous boat trips, relentless desert treks, pointed guns, arrests and deceptions that await him; nor can he know that those two weeks will expand into two life-altering months alongside fellow migrants who will come to encircle him like an unexpected family.

A memoir as gripping as it is moving, *Solito* provides an immediate and intimate account not only of a treacherous and near-impossible journey, but also of the miraculous kindness and love delivered at the most unexpected moments. *Solito* is Javier Zamora's story, but it's also the story of millions of others who had no choice but to leave home.

## Suggested Reads:

- Children of the Land by Marcelo Hernandez Castillo
- Detained: A Boy's Journal of Survival and Resilience by D. Esperanza
- My Side of the River by Elizabeth Camarillo Gutierrez

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## Discussion Questions

1. What did you learn through Javier Zamora's experience? What surprised or shocked you? How did you feel at the end?
2. This memoir is told from the perspective of the author as a nine-year-old boy. How do you think that adds to the narrative? Would the book have a different effect if it was the story of an adult's journey?
3. From Don Dago to others who remain unnamed, Javier relies on a network of coyotes to get him to America. What was your opinion on these coyotes? Did it change over the course of the memoir?
4. There are many legs to this journey: boat, bus, on foot. Which leg struck you as being the most challenging, and why?
5. Aside from Javier, which characters stayed with you, and why?
6. The author is a poet. How do you think this serves the story he tells, and how does it affect the interplay between intense circumstances and beautiful images and writing?
7. The natural world is a character itself in *Solito*, particularly in the scenes in the desert. Which natural elements stood out for you, and why?
8. How do you think Javier survived during the seven-week journey? How did you think he sustained himself mentally and emotionally?
9. How does Javier change throughout the book?
10. Javier's story is also the story of millions who have had no choice but to leave home. Have you or someone you've known faced similar circumstances? If so, how has this shaped your life or theirs?
11. How much did you know about America's immigration system before reading *Solito*? Did your view of the issue change? Why or why not?