“Prologue” — In this section of Enrique’s Journey, the author allows readers an inside view of her creative process. Nazario reviews her background as the child of immigrants, her inspiration for writing this story, and the process — both logistical and compositional — that she begins as she prepares to research and write Enrique’s story. The writer tells how and where she finds Enrique and how he is representative of the children whose story she desires to tell.

1. How did the author get the idea for this work?

2. What shift, that is a change from the 1980s, has taken place in the face of the modern immigrant population?

3. Why has this change in the profile of the typical immigrant taken place?

4. What were some of the preparations the author took before beginning her research for this story?

5. What “safety nets” did the author wish to have in place for her own personal safety? Why were these “safety nets” necessary?

6. How did the maid’s son make the journey to America?

7. What does El Tren de la Muerte mean?

8. The author says that immigration is “a powerful stream, one that can only be addressed at its source.” What is the meaning of this statement?

“One” — This chapter introduces the characteristics of Enrique that readers will encounter throughout the book — his shyness, his affection for his mother, his inability to understand why his mother leaves him. This chapter also traces Lourdes’ (Enrique’s mother) decision to leave for America and her early experiences in California. In this section of the text, readers see Enrique’s rebellion against the relatives with whom he lives in Honduras and Enrique’s desire to make his own journey to follow his mother.

1. Approximately how many illegal immigrants enter the United States annually?

2. In what Central American country do Lourdes and Enrique live?

3. On what date does Enrique’s mother leave him?

4. Approximately how many children enter the United States each year illegally and without their parents?

5. What is the name of Enrique’s father?

6. What are some of Lourde’s early jobs in California?

7. Why is becoming a nanny difficult for Lourdes?

8. What is the name of Enrique’s sister?

9. With whom does Enrique’s sister live?

10. Why does Enrique end up leaving his father’s home?

11. How does Lourdes lose most of the money she has saved to try to bring her children to her?

12. What negative habits does Enrique develop in his mother’s absence?

13. How does Enrique feel about living with Uncle Marco?

14. Why does Enrique’s relationship with Marco end?

15. At fifteen, Enrique returns to live with whom?

16. What is the name of Enrique’s girlfriend?

17. Initially, what things does Enrique do to win his girlfriend’s affection?

18. With whom does Enrique first try to head north?

19. How does Enrique’s first attempt end?

20. What event precipitates Enrique’s leaving for “el Norte” for good?

21. On what date does Enrique leave his grandmother’s house to begin his journey?

22. What possessions does Enrique take with him?

“Two” — This chapter begins with Enrique’s seventh attempt to reach America. He is battered and bloody. The chapter reviews Enrique’s first six attempts and fills in the details of this attempt that led to Enrique’s injuries. After getting medical treatment, Enrique hitches a ride with a man who turns out to be an off-duty immigration officer. The chapter ends with Enrique being sent back to Honduras.

1. When Enrique is attacked and injured, who helps him?

2. What is the attitude of many Mexicans toward Enrique and other Central Americans?

3. What often is the attitude of the police with whom Enrique has encounters?

4. What is the primary mode of travel for immigrants passing through Mexico?

“Three” — Chapter Three describes Enrique’s eighth attempt to reach the United States. The chapter focuses on the horrors Enrique faces in Chiapas, Mexico’s southernmost state. This chapter introduces the dangers of the trains Enrique must ride to complete his journey. The chapter also introduces Olga Sanchez Martinez, who tries to help those who are injured by accidents on the trains.

1. Describe Chiapas.

2. What dangers does Enrique face on his journey?

3. Why is it not a good idea to sleep on the train?

4. Olga Sanchez Martinez is one of the people along Enrique’s route. How is she different from those who try to hurt Enrique?

5. (p. 72-81) Draw a picture of Enrique. Around his body, write down each of the dangers he faces in “la arrocera.” Connect each danger back to Enrique’s body with a line, and on the line write down the defense Enrique uses against that particular danger.

“Four” — In Chapter Four, Enrique enters the Mexican state of Veracruz and encounters many forms of kindness from the people along his route. Some provide clothes; others, food and shelter. Enrique finds a job to get money to continue his journey. He makes it all the way to Nuevo Laredo, a town on the Mexican/American border.

1. What significant change takes place when Enrique reaches Veracruz?

2. How do the people of Veracruz show their kindness?

3. What does Hipolito Reyes Larios see as his mission?

4. When Enrique finally arrives at Nuevo Laredo, he is on the banks of what river?

5. How does the journey change at the point of this encounter?

“Five” — Chapter Five tells of Enrique’s life, waiting to cross the border into the United States. Enrique has lost his mother’s phone number on his trip, so he must make money to call Honduras to get the number from relatives. Enrique also needs money to pay for help in crossing the border safely.

1. How does Enrique make money to buy a phone card?

2. Why must Enrique call Honduras first?

3. Who helps Enrique cross the border into the United States?

4. Contrast the sides of the Rio Grande. What is Enrique’s life like on his side of the river that in Mexico is called Rio Bravo?

“Six” — Chapter Six tells the end of Enrique’s trek. He enters the United States and reunites with his mother. Chapter Six also continues the story of Enrique’s relationship with his girlfriend in Honduras, Maria Isabel. Maria Isabel gives birth to a daughter, but Enrique realizes that he cannot yet bring Maria Isabel or the baby to the U.S.

1. On what day is Enrique finally united with his mother?

2. In what state does Enrique ultimately reunite with his mother?

3. On November 2, 2000, another significant event happens to Enrique. What is it?

“Seven” — In Chapter Seven, each character’s story continues to unfold. Enrique, having been separated from his mother for eleven years, struggles to accept her advice and discipline. Lourdes continues to struggle financially and in her relationship with her son. Maria Isabel, separated from the father of her baby, struggles to rear the child and to assure the baby that her father in America will someday return or send for them. The chapter ends as Maria Isabel, four years after Enrique left Honduras, leaves herself to try to find a better life for her child.

1. Once reunited, how do Enrique and his mother get along?

2. How does Enrique’s relationship with Maria Isabel progress?

3. What conflicts arise between Maria Isabel and Enrique’s family?

4. How does the book end as it began?

5. Contrast Enrique’s life in the United States with the life he left behind.