



Rain of Gold

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In *Rain of Gold*, Victor Villaseñor weaves the parallel stories of two families and two countries...bringing us the timeless romance between the volatile bootlegger who would become his father and the beautiful Lupe, his mother—men and women in whose lives the real and the fantastical exist side by side...and in whose hearts the spirit to survive is fueled by a family's unconditional love.

Rain of Gold Details

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Author : Victor Villaseñor

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From Reader Review Rain of Gold for online ebook

Leinaala Ley says

Already being an "I love Mexico" buff this wasn't a hard book to get into but it was really one of the best historical novels I've ever read. It's autobiographical in the sense that it's the family history of the author as passed down through his parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc. but it really reads like a book of fiction because of the very mystical strain that runs through his family. Anyone Mexican whose interested in their indigenous roots should read this book. It starts near the beginning of the Mexican Revolution when the two main lovers in the story (the author's parents) are both young children living in separate towns in Mexico. Both of their mothers are Indian who have been separated from their tribes by extermination wars but instill their children with indigenous/Christian values (each one leaning more towards one side of that synthesis) rooted in their homelands. The early part of the book is very magical. The story quickly gets brutal as the two families flee what I never realized was a particularly bloody civil war only to arrive to the United States at a time when the racism against Mexican was truly unchecked. However, the individual survival stories are amazing. I really felt at times that I was sitting talking with an old, wise grandma reading this book. A few times the story veers towards being slightly soap opera-esque but given that it's all true you can't blame these people for living intense lives. I loved this book and tried to read the whole thing last Friday night (I was being greedy) but finally gave up around 4:30 in the morning :) I'm really surprised I haven't heard more buzz about this book from my friends given the many, many historical issues it touches on that we all care about. And it's a love story!!! <3 Truly a unique book. If AZ ever gets itself right this should be required reading for anyone who grows up on the border.

amy says

A grand story, of epic proportions. What a roller coaster ride--a bit too detailed at times, but full of rich, powerful emotion.

Overall, I felt like I was on the journey with these two families every step of the way, and that I lived their entire lifetime with them. I was a bit disappointed that the author's generation was not covered in nearly as much detail, even though he would have had his own memories to draw from, instead of having to conduct interviews.

What happened to: Duel, Mark, the "Tom Mix" fellow (what was his deal, anyway?), his cousins (Juan Salvador's nephews), the daughter left behind by the redhead, Archie (and Carlota)? How did Victor become a writer? I wondered if he originally wrote it in Spanish because of particular turns in phrases, but he says he wrote it in English on paper. How did his father learn to read (and was it in Spanish and/or English)? So many stories left untold.

I guess one would just have to buy his next book...

Chantilly Patiño says

This book was a little of what I expected and a lot of what I didn't. I'd heard that it was a great tale of

Mexican history and traditions, and that it was hopeful and full of Chicana(o) pride. The book was all these things and so much more. Most of all though, it was filled with such truths that it's almost impossible for someone to be unable to connect with this book. Throughout the book, we learn of the horrors of war, the drama and dysfunction that meets many families along the way, and the incredible spiritual power behind two women who raised their families up out of the hate and taught them about love. Throughout the book, even at the darkest moments, there are spiritual lessons being learned and love is shown as a tool that grows both our hearts and minds...

{Read more at <http://www.biculturalmom.com>}

Paul Gaya Ochieng Simeon Juma says

Men are concerned with three things in this life, love, money and alcohol. We are always striving for love, searching for money, and addicted to alcohol.

To be rich is another game altogether. You need business. Juan Salvador knew exactly where to employ his talents. He made the best whyskey in town. Though illegal, most of his customers loved it. They didn't care whether the authorities wanted it or not.

To find love you need a good wife from a good family. Most of us don't want to be religious. Yet we always expect our spouses to be religious and have good manners. We expect that their parents have given them the best schooling on the planet.

As for Alcohol, sell it to the poor and addicted.

Victor Villasenor tells the story of the Mexican revolution and their flight into the United States. Two families cross paths in America. Juan Salvador and Lupita Guadalupe fall in love in America. The former a bootlegger on the run struggles to be rich causing him to fall out of favor with the law of the day. The latter a pious woman brought up under strict religious laws of her mother Dona Guadalupe.

Licha says

Oh, why did this have to end? I was completely lost (in a good way) in this story of the author's family. This book demonstrates the importance of family stories, family heritage, family legacy. We are a sum of all the things our families have gone through, all the struggles, all the happy times, all its accomplishments.

The love comes pouring out as the author tells the story of his mother and father. Two families that were uprooted from the homes they loved in Mexico during the Revolution in order to offer their children a future.

I am in love with Villasenor's family and so happy to have the author share his family's legacy with me. I only wish there had been more pictures in the book to get a good idea of what the family looked like. I look forward to reading more by this author. Fantastic book.

Elizabeth Aldape says

sigh What a great book. Thanks to my sis-in-law Stacey's recommendation, I didn't get to live a life of having never read this book. I soaked in the beautiful descriptions of Mexico and the rich culture of Lupe and Juan's families, and I fell in love with their stories as each page took me closer to their wedding. When they

said I do, I felt like I had suffered, rejoiced, and grown with them in their journeys. It was remarkable to look back to where the tale began and how far we all had grown and changed. The best part is that this was a true story! Remarkable. Don't miss out on reading this!

Christen says

This book was exceptional. The family research the author conducted to put this family story together is amazing. Reading this book gave me a whole new outlook into immigration and Mexican history. The war and revolution that occurred in Mexico was so bad that families had to flee in order to save their lives. They didn't want to leave their homes where they had lived, farmed, ranched, etc for generations anymore than we wanted them to come to the U.S. And then they get here and "rent" tents and migrate with the crops just to earn enough money to buy some food. What an enlightening story.

And the characters were wonderful! And knowing that they are real people made it all the better.

I also thought it highly appropriate that I read this book while I was in Mexico (although I did not plan that!).

I highly recommend this book; it is one of those books that, although it is pleasurable to read, it actually enhances your life by having read it.

Kelly says

La lluvia de Oro...puede leer en español también.

I read this book back during the undergrad years, and absolutely fell in love with it. I hesitate to call it fiction, because it is based on the stories of the author's grandparents' journey from Mexico to the U.S. I saw Victor Villasenor speak, and he said that as a child, he always assumed his grandparents were making the stories up, since they were so far-fetched, however after returning to Mexico and following their stories, he came to find out they were true.

Esmeralda says

In the beginning of the book it starts off with Espirito a poor man that tries to sell sweet water to help his people with food and clothing. When he tries to trade in the water the man rejects his offer. Espirito not only did he have the water but golden rocks that the business man was very interested in receiving. Espirito let him know that they would be no digging undergrounds for these golden eggs.

Then this is where Lupe comes out a young six year old girl that lives in La Lluvia de Oro. La Lluvia de Oro is a place in Mexico North Central where it is surrounded by mountains where they discover a vein of gold that could change the environment in just a little time. An American mining company purchases the mine and develops the valley into large industrial operation. Later though out the story it talks about how Lupe's sister Sophia and Lupe work in the southern fields where they are refused to get some of their pay. It leads to Sophia to go on strike for low wages.

It all leads up to a group of generations that struggle an example for all families that travel for a better life.

It's all laid out a bunch of family trees that connect each other. How a vein of gold can change the world in a

bad way and a good way.

I would definitely recommend this book to people that love hearing generation stories. The Rain of Gold isn't just a book that has three generation but a hole lot of adventures and conflicts through out the book. When I started reading this book I could not but it down for one second. I loved it and almost done with it .(less) "

Pam says

This book is quite wonderful. Although listed as a non-fiction book, it reads like a novel. It has feelings. The reader can not read it without becoming attached to the people and events of the story.

Victor Villasenor has traced three generations of his Latino family's history in this book and their migration from Mexico to the U.S. Through tragedies, losses, trials and successes it traces their ability to keep their faith, drive, love, and humor as a suture that binds the family. This book made me have a greater empathy as well as understanding of the background of many Mexicans who have immigrated to the United States.

Dona Margarita, in particular, is one of the oldest matriarchs in the story that has many words of wisdom to keep her family on the good path through its many transitions. For example, Salvador(her son) finds that he becomes full of hate for one of his brothers as well as many of his Latino friends when they fail to lend him dinero and reciprocate his act of loaning money that he has done for them many times over. She says..."You must gain faith in the basic good of mankind and reach out and take the hand of God....Not to fall to the devil's temptation of despair and darkness and these easy thoughts of hate and destruction, but to see beyond these and reach for the stars with the conviction of mind and soul that we, the human species, can only survive in our own house, when we have made peace within ourselves and then with all our fellow human beings on earth!"

Throughout his family history saga, Victor Villasenor provides a positive tone. No matter the situation, humor and good intentions prevail. I recommend this book.

Raquel says

Rain of Gold is the quintessential Mexican-American novel. Villasenor weaves the lives of his father and mother into a compelling narrative that makes it a feat to stop reading.

Set during the Mexican revolution, RoG depicts the hardships Mexican went through due to the turmoil and bloodshed caused by the revolution. Many Mexicans (especially the poor) migrated to the U.S. as a refuge, but found how horribly they were treated there by Americanos. It's shameful how poorly Mexicans were treated, especially considering that half a decade before this was set, California was part of Mexico. A major theme in this book is prejudice, which went both ways. I love how Villasenor wasn't one-sided about the blind hatred Americanos harbored towards Mexicans; he recognized Mexicans were also prejudiced against Americanos.

All characters in Villasenor's novel are interesting and dynamic in their one way. I wish I could have met many of them. Of course, the main characters Lupe and Juan Salvador are unforgettable.

Villasenor's writing style resonates within Mexicans, who will find familiarity with words and phrases he uses. Family is a fundamental part of a Mexican's life, and it is reflected in this book. Survival is motivated by love for one's family. The mothers in the stories are portrayed as the strongest beings known to their children. I was astonished by their bravery and dedication. However, look for one example of what a mother shouldn't be, according to Juan Salvador. This book sounds like one of those stories Mexican grandmothers tell their grandchildren. Wait, that's just what it is. Nevertheless, RoG's story is fascinating. The hardships Villasenor's family went through is almost unimaginable, and some events will leave the reader angry that

someone could do such a thing. There were so many moments where I had to stop reading, go back, and read the same paragraphs over and over again; I would be that shocked. In addition, humor is rampant in this book. Books hardly ever make me laugh out loud. But with RoG, I found myself laughing several times, even that one time when I was at the DMV.

This novel questions religious authority, and the pedestal on which Mexicans sometimes placed Americanos on. The exploration of the supposed inferiority-complex Mexicans have is also intriguing. All things considered, this book is not at all like the caca it often mentions.

RoG makes me proud of the hardships fellow Mexicans surpassed. It makes me proud of what beautiful prose our culture can inspire. Not only will this shed light on the injustices Mexicans lived through (some live it to this day), but it shows how much we have to be proud of.

By the way, excuse the lack of the tilde over the "n"s. I'm not sure how you do that.

Joe says

This book was entertaining, but the writing was poor. Specifically, the author used way too much foreshadowing. It was annoying. And the characters were pretty evil, especially the two Mexican mothers, who bugged me to no end.

Catharine says

This is a non-fiction book of many layers. It's about greed, prejudice, hate and anger, poverty and death. It's also about family, love, relationships, and dreams. Parallel stories are told of two children, both babies of their families, who grow up during the Mexican revolution. Children of war who are driven from their homes in Mexico, hoping for a better life in America. In America, however, they find that the Mexicans are treated no better than dogs. It was interesting to read about prejudice against Hispanics. We hear about prejudice against the blacks all the time, but don't think as much about what the Mexicans have gone through in immigrating to this country over the years.

In the book, both children are raised by mothers with tremendous faith and abundant love, who do anything and everything to protect their children and to survive. One of my favorite quotes in the book gives a glimpse of what parenthood means. "The old woman took a big breath, fully realizing that no one could pass on to anyone the experiences of life. Each had to find their own way. This was, indeed, the frustration and yet the challenge of every parent. She drew Lupe close, giving her all her love. After all, wasn't it love, and only love, that a parent could pass on."

As this book is the history of the author's parents, it's not a spoiler to say that the two children grow up, eventually meet and fall in love. It's a beautiful love story. Although the book ends, the author mercifully tells us a little more about their life together in the "author's notes."

One of my friends recommended this book to me and told me that she thought it should be a required read for everyone. It certainly is one that shouldn't be passed over, there are so many nuggets of inspiration in the story and in the writing.

Susan says

This is a detailed history of Villaseñor's family, beginning in Mexico with the grandparents of each of his parents, following their stories as they left their homes there and traveled to the United States, and concluding with the marriage of Villaseñor's parents Lupe and Juan Salvador. It is a story filled with great tragedies and great joys. And in its telling, it shows us much about the *mexicanos* of the Northern Mexican hills and of Southern California, both their culture and the tribulations they had to endure to survive. For example, the descriptions of the ways the *mexicanos* were treated by some Northern American *gringos*, whether in Mexico or in the U.S., were not surprising but nonetheless distressing.

The prose is simple and straightforward, and wherever possible, Villaseñor lets the characters do the talking for him. He is careful to warn the reader in his foreword of the ubiquitous presence of miracles and discussions of the devil and God as movers in the narrative: they were perceived as real forces in the lives he is describing, so there was no other way to tell their stories. And his telling makes it easy to suspend disbelief and simply accept the characters' own explanations of things.

One theme that stretches through the book (and which the author also dealt with in a short fiction work) is the *macho* concept that is such a driving force in the lives of *mexicanos*. Parallel with that is the fascinating way the maternal characters are portrayed, as women full of strength whose faith and determination held their families together despite all odds.

This is a long book, and worth every page.

Yvette Primero says

This book speaks to me. The culture, the choices, the reality of our life is all in there. There are very limited books that can bring this all together without seeming fake and everything in this book was so real I could feel it.

In a time when people tend to omit the "undesirable" parts of family history this story tells it all. I only wish there were more pictures (I am not even joking) I would have liked to see any pictures of his great grandma and more of his parents before they got married. Also seeing a map of where they lived in Mexico. This would make a great book for Mexican American Culture studies.

Trisha says

Victor Villaseñor is dyslexic and has written a great autobiography called *Burro Genius* that describes his miserable experience in school (and how many rejection letters he received before ever getting a book published). My midwife recommended *Rain of Gold* to pass the time while I was awaiting the birth of my baby. I loved this book. Villaseñor traces the story of his family on both his mother's and his father's side, leading up to how they met and married. The beautiful storytelling completely draws you in. I was sad when I hit the last page...

Nick says

This is family history of the most immediate kind, redeemed from its excess of filial piety and lack of craft by a passion and sense of drama that usually but not always stops just short of melodrama. It helps that the author's family lived in times that were entirely too interesting. One side came from a remote mining village terrorized by the kind of bands of thugs left over when Villa's army disintegrated. The other undertook a harrowing trek across the mountains and deserts. The early part--and I write this as one who has read much of the literature and traveled over some of the unforgiving landscape--has an unusual freshness and immediacy, no doubt because of its roots in family lore and the uncritical passion that the writer brings to the material. Someone who cast a critical eye on these stories would probably have slowed the narrative down, robbed it of the intensity that makes it so readable. The tension slackens some once these families reach the relative safety of the United States but one of the children turns into a bootlegger, which enlivens the later going. In its own way, this novel is a remarkable achievement, as the intensity of its telling overcomes its lack of seasoning.

Rachel says

This is a wonderful story, made that much more impressive simply by the fact that it is the true story of the author's family. It is impossible to not feel what the characters are feeling and, as a reader, you become emotionally invested in the story very quickly. I found myself crying when the characters cried, feeling scared when they felt scared, and basically emulating all emotions reflected in the book. It's a bit long and looks like a text book at first glance (with black and white photos of the author's family in the middle of the book), but don't let that discourage you because it flies by. Definitely one of those books that you are sad to be finished reading because you miss the characters.

Karina1 says

Rain of Gold by Victor Villasenor turned out to be great book, and is by far on my top five! The book is about mainly two characters: Lupe and Juan (Salvador). It tells the story of both families in different places in Mexico in the time during the Mexican Revolution. Both families find it hard to adjust in the life that they are surrounded by with many deaths, and find themselves traveling north to America as a refugee. That's when the story of Juan and Lupe come together and take some twist and turns.

There are so many ways I can say of how the book was written, but it comes down to marvelous, fantastic, beautiful, etc. While I was reading this book, it kept grabbing me with the usage of the words; it was so..welcoming! I am Mexican, and the way that the characters thought, talked, laugh, pray, joked, basically everything that they did felt so familiar in my heart.

I highly recommend this book to everyone, especially those who would like to take a glimpse in the Mexican culture. There is always a little something for everyone: history, mystery, comedy, revenge, sadness, death, etc.! :)

Book Concierge says

5***** and a ♥

I read this on a friend's recommendation and was immediately caught up in the story of Villasenor's parents and grandparents. It's nonfiction, but full of old Mexican allegorical stories. There were times when, as I read, I would think "He's telling MY family's story!" After I read it (in English), I bought it for my mother (in Spanish).

UPDATE March 2008

My Hispanic book club chose this book for discussion, and I skimmed through it to refresh my memory
