

Breaking Through

Francisco Jiménez

Teacher's Guide

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Synopsis

Forced Out

The narrator, Francisco (also called "Panchito" and "Frankie") is fourteen years old when the story opens. He explains that he and his family lived in constant fear for a long time because they were illegal aliens, having sneaked into America in the late 1940s from El Rancho Blanco in Guadalajara, Mexico, to California. Francisco's father had instructed him to lie and say he had been born in Colton, California. If the family is caught, they will be sent back to Mexico. The family follows the crops and lives in a series of squalid labor camps, always in fear that they will be caught and deported.

The family manages to escape the Border Patrol for ten years, but then they are caught and deported. They have been betrayed by one of their own people. The officer allows them to leave voluntarily. They cross the border in Nogales, Arizona, after a grueling 20-hour bus trip. After waiting in a cheap motel for several days, Francisco and his older brother Roberto have their visa approved. They will return to California and the rest of the family will live with Mama's sister in Guadalajara until they are allowed to return to America. Francisco is very sad to leave his family but thrilled to be able to return to school. Roberto attends school when he can and works as a janitor to support them and send money back to the rest of his family.

Home Alone

Francisco, a junior high student, lives in a shack

with his brother. The shack does not have plumbing. Always grateful for what he has, Francisco is happy that he no longer has to empty the bedpan for the entire family. His teachers, Mr. Ken Milo and Miss Ehlis, are happy to have him back and do not ask him any questions. That night, Roberto is distraught: he lost his job as a janitor because he was gone so long during the deportation process. The boys are upset that they will have to return to the fields and work as pickers. For the next two weeks, they pick the crops after school. They get paid 15¢ a sack.

Roberto gets a part-time job at Velva's Freeze, a hamburger and ice-cream store, so he is able to eat a bit better. Velva invites Francisco and Roberto out to a steak restaurant, the first time they have ever eaten in a restaurant. They nervously watch and copy her movements so they do not commit any social faux pas.

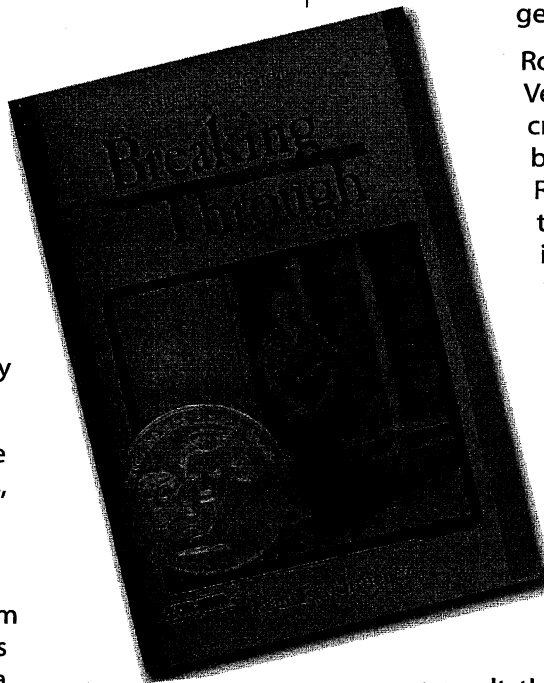
The boys are thrilled when Roberto gets his janitorial job back. Francisco savors the chance to help his brother clean Main Street School and not have to work in the fields any more. They work brutally hard. One night they discover that someone has stolen their savings. As

a result, they cannot send any money to their parents and siblings in Mexico. This is a great hardship for all.

Stepping Out

Francisco buries his head in his books not only to keep on learning but also to escape the loneliness he feels at his family's absence. He does well in school and competes with Marjorie Ito for the first seat in math. Francisco lip-synchs "Treat Me Like a Fool" for the class during a rainy recess, earning their praise.

To become acculturated and have fun, Francisco and Roberto attend dances at the Veterans



Breaking Through Francisco Jiménez

Memorial. They learn the dances and Francisco dances with Peggy Dossen, a classmate. She invites Francisco to call her, but he does not have a telephone and has never used one. He uses the phone at his neighbors' house to make a date with Peggy. Francisco visits Peggy but her parents are prejudiced against Mexicans. The next day in school, Peggy shuns him. He is very hurt.

Together Again

Francisco's family returns to California, to everyone's great joy. Papá reveals that his injured back was healed by a faith healer. The family is deeply religious.

Back to the Fields

Francisco must return to the fields to help his father. Papá becomes a strawberry sharecropper when he rents three acres from Mr. Ito, but the farm fails and Papá falls into a depression.

Saint Christopher Medal

Francisco is sad that the strawberry field failed, but he is happy because now he can go back to school. Francisco is excited about his approaching graduation from El Camino Junior High School. He is delighted when his father gives him his own Saint Christopher medal as a graduation gift. His brother comes to the graduation, but not his parents.

Summer Skirmishes

Francisco works in the fields over the summer and salvages items from the dumpster. He tries to sell fish, but when he is undercut by some neighbors, he returns to his studies with even more determination. Francisco recognizes that his future lies in education, not get-rich quick schemes or manual labor.

Becoming a Saint

Francisco is thrilled to be returning to school. His father discourages Francisco's goal of becoming a teacher, a job that the elder man feels is reserved for the rich only. A guidance counselor tries to steer Francisco to the vocational track, but when he sees Francisco's excellent grades and determination, he sets up an academic schedule. Francisco is surprised that he is encouraged to debate and argue with his teachers, because at home he is taught that his father is to be obeyed without question.

If the Shoe Fits

Francisco is crushed when his sneakers are stolen

because his gym grade will suffer. His younger brothers Torito and Trampita find sneakers in the dump. Even though the sneakers are foul-smelling and much too large, Francisco is thrilled to have them.

A Promotion

Papá's depression worsens and the family is very short on money. Mike Nevel gives Francisco paid work as a cleaner, to Francisco's delight. Some employees kindly leave cookies for him.

A Typing Machine

Francisco needs more practice with his typing and finds an old typewriter in a lawyer's office. Although they were going to throw the machine out and offer it to him for free, Francisco refuses to accept charity and buys it from Mike Twitchel for \$5.

Making Connections

Francisco learns to read for enjoyment when his English teacher gives him John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. Francisco writes an essay about his younger brother nearly freezing to death in a migrant labor camp. The essay touches his teacher Miss Bell deeply.

Broken Heart

Roberto falls in love with an Anglo woman named Susan but her parents refuse to let her date a Mexican.

Behind the Wheel

Francisco earns his driver's license and enjoys the freedom it brings.

Turning a Page

As a result of his high grades, Francisco makes the California Scholarship Federation. His counselor Mr. Kincade sets up some college visits. Francisco begins to believe that he can succeed in college.

Los Santitos

Francisco becomes an officer in the Spanish Club. The advisor, Mr. Osterveen, takes an interest in the smart and hard-working teen. The club holds a food drive. Ironically, one of the recipients of a food basket is his own family.

Choosing Sides

Francisco and his family discuss the upcoming presidential election. Because he is light-skinned,

Francisco could pass as American, but he is proud of being Mexican.

Junior Scandals

Francisco performs a Mexican song in the talent show. He is a huge success.

Running for Office

At the urging of his friend Paul Takagi, Francisco runs for class president and is elected. Papá's finger is cut off and money is again very tight. Francisco is feeling overwhelmed by his family's problems.

A New Life

Roberto brings his girlfriend Darlene to meet the family and to get their blessing. The couple marries soon after. Although the family is pleased that Roberto is happy, they struggle even more without his economic contributions. Francisco loses weight through overwork and feels himself sinking into a depression, like his father.

A Test of Faith

Francisco is sick with mononucleosis. It takes him a month to recover sufficiently to resume his grueling schedule.

A Fumble

Francisco is invited to attend a Rotary luncheon but freezes when he discovers that he has to speak to the men.

A Breakthrough

One of the counselors at school, Mr. Robert Penney, helps Francisco apply for admission to different colleges. When he learns that Francisco cannot afford even the least expensive college, Mr. Penney helps him apply for scholarships. Furious that his wife backs Francisco's college plans, Papá threatens to strike her. Francisco intercedes and his father strikes him. Francisco's Spanish teacher Mr. Osterveen and his counselor Mr. Penney visit the house and convince Papá to let Francisco attend college.

Graduation Day

Francisco is accepted to the University of Santa Clara. He applies for scholarships and loans. To his joy, his parents attend his high school graduation.

Still Moving

Francisco's family takes him to college. His mother has saved a little bit every week from her grocery money to buy him some new clothing for college.

Timeline

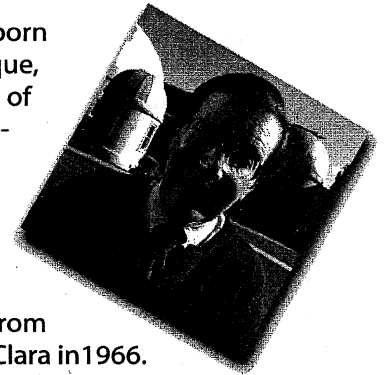
- 1943** Francisco Jiménez born
U.S. government makes an agreement with the Mexican government to supply temporary workers (braceros) for American agricultural work.
- 1944** Operation Bootstrap stimulates a major wave of migration of workers to the United States.
- 1946** Jesús T. Piñero, first Puerto Rican governor, appointed by President Harry Truman.
- July 3, 1950** The U.S. Congress upgrades Puerto Rico's political status from protectorate to commonwealth.
- 1950s** Immigration from Mexico doubles from 5.9 percent to 11.9 percent.
The Bracero Program brings 350,000 Mexican workers a year to the U.S. until its end in 1964.
- 1954** Hernandez v. Texas acknowledges that Hispanic Americans are not being treated as "whites."
- 1954-1958** Operation Wetback, a government effort to locate and deport undocumented workers, results in the deportation of 3.8 million persons of Mexican descent.
- 1955** KCOR-TV in San Antonio becomes the first Spanish-language TV in the U.S.
- 1959** The Cuban Revolution overthrows Batista; Fidel Castro seizes power.
- 1960s** 13.3 percent of the total number of immigrants to the U.S. are from Mexico.
- 1961** Aspira (Aspire) is founded to promote the education of Hispanic youth.
- April 1962** Bay of Pigs invasion fails.
César Chávez founds the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee in California.
- 1964** Civil Rights Act
- 1965** United Farm Workers organizes a successful grape strike and first national boycott.
- 1965** The end of the bracero program forces many Mexicans to return to Mexico. They settle near the U.S. border.
- 1966** United Farm Workers joins the AFL-CIO and becomes the United Farmworkers of America.
- 1968-1973** More than 250,000 Cubans are airlifted to the U.S. before Castro halts flights.

- 1970** 82 percent of the Hispanic population of the nation lives in California, Texas, and New York, and to a lesser degree Florida, Illinois, and New Jersey.
- 1973** UN approves the right of the Puerto Rican people to decide their own future.
- 1978** UN recognizes Puerto Rico as a U.S. colony.
- 1974** Equal Educational Opportunity Act makes bilingual education available to Hispanic students.
- 1979** Political upheaval and civil wars in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala contribute to large migrations of refugees to the U.S.
- 1980** The Mariel Boatlift continues from April through September. More than 125,000 "Marielitos" migrate to the U.S.
- 1986** Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) allows illegal aliens to become legal immigrants by giving legal status to applicants who had been in the U.S. illegally since January 1, 1982.
- 1990** First woman and first Hispanic surgeon general of the U.S.: Antonia C. Novello.
- 1993** President Clinton names Henry Cisneros to the cabinet position of Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the first Hispanic to hold that post.
- Nov. 8, 1994** Californians pass Proposition 187, banning undocumented immigrants from receiving public education and public benefits such as welfare and subsidized health care, except in emergencies.
- 1996** California passes Proposition 209, which bars preferential treatment based on race or gender. This eliminates affirmative action in state hiring, public contracts, and education.
- 1998** California voters pass Proposition 227, banning bilingual education and English as a Second Language programs.
- June 2000** Elián González returns to Cuba with his father.
- 2002** In Salt Lake City, Utah, speedskater Derek Parra becomes the first Mexican American to medal in the Olympic Winter Games.
- 2003** Hispanics surpass blacks as the nation's largest minority group.

Author Sketch

Francisco Jiménez was born in San Pedro, Tlaquepaque, Mexico, in 1943, the son of a farm worker and a cannery worker. His family came to America four years later. In 1965, Jiménez became a naturalized citizen.

Jiménez earned his BA from the University of Santa Clara in 1966. He earned his MA (1969) and Ph.D. (1972) from Columbia University. Jiménez taught Spanish at Columbia University for two years before moving to the University of Santa Clara, Santa Clara, CA, where he still teaches and serves in various administrative positions.



In an interview, Francisco Jiménez said: "My primary goal in writing both scholarly and creative works is to fill the need for cultural and human understanding, between the United States and Mexico in particular. I write in both English and Spanish. The language I use is determined by what period in my life I write about. Since Spanish was the dominant language during my childhood, I generally write about those experiences in Spanish. My scholarly research has been published in both English and Spanish. Because I am bilingual and bicultural, I can move in and out of both American and Mexican cultures with ease; therefore, I have been able to write stories in both languages. I consider that a privilege."

Critics Corner

Francisco Jiménez has received many awards, including a Ford Foundation grant in 1969 and the Professor Cedric Busette Memorial Award for outstanding contributions to Ethnic Studies. *Breaking Through* was selected by Junior Library Guild Book Club in 2001 and was named a Pura Belpre Award Honor Book in 2002. *Breaking Through* enjoyed a largely positive critical reception.

Publishers Weekly said: "Francisco Jiménez continues the moving tale of his early youth begun with a dozen autobiographical short stories in *The Circuit*. ... The author explores the prejudice and challenges they face while also relaying universal adolescent experiences of school, dances and romances."

Writing in *School Library Journal*, Carol A. Edwards said: "The simplicity of life and the unending work for the whole family ... is mitigated by Panchito's [Francisco's] increased awareness and gradual loss of innocence as he learns to make his life a success. His father's bitterness, pain, and need for unquestioning obedience is matched by his mother's ability to coax agreement out of her son. The clash of cultures between teen insolence in the U.S. and Mexican respect for elders' authority is vividly portrayed, as is the injustice and casual bigotry often endured by young and old." However, Ms. Edwards cited these drawbacks: "While sure to be inspiring and reassuring to readers mesmerized by the first book, this follow-up lacks the intensity and voice so memorable in that one, and is consequently less affecting."

Booklist called *Breaking Through* a "moving sequel." Although "the prose here is not as taut as in the first book. ... Jiménez writes with simplicity about a harsh world seldom seen in children's books. ... He stays true to the viewpoint of a teenager growing up [and] he celebrates his Mexican roots even as he learns to be an American. The images are powerful, especially the one of the boy cleaning offices before dawn, with notes of English words to memorize in his shirt pocket."

Other Books By The Author

Episodios nacionales de Victoriano Salado Alvarez ("National Episodes of Victoriano Salado Alvarez"), translated by Nicolas Pizarro Suarez, 1974.

Chicano Literature: Sources And Themes, 1974.

Viva la Lengua! A Contemporary Reader, 1975, 1987. (With Gary D. Keller)

Spanish Here and Now, 1978.

Identification and Analysis of Chicano Literature, 1978.

Hispanics in the United States: An Anthology of Creative Literature, 1982.

Mosaico de la Vida: Prosa Chicana, Cubana, y Puertorriquena (Mosaic of Life: Chicano, Cuban, and Puerto Rican Prose), 1981, 1987.

Poverty and Social Justice: Critical Perspectives, 1987.

The Circuit: Stories From the Life of a Migrant Child, 2000.

La Mariposa ("The Butterfly"), 1998.

Christmas Gift, 2000.

Bibliography

California Today, October 19, 1980.

Cassidy, Jack, and other editors, *Follow the Wind*, 1987.

El Observador, November 20, 1997.

Hispano, December 26, 1977; February 19, 1979; October 8, 1986.

Horn Book Magazine, September-October, 1998, p. 532; January, 1999, p. 49; January, 2000, p. 61.

La Oferta Review, June 17, 1998.

Meier, Matt S., *Mexican-American Biographies*, Greenwood Publishing Group, 1988.

Meier, Matt S., *Notable Latino Americans: A Biographical Dictionary*, Greenwood Publishing Group, 1997.

Migration World Magazine, November 4, 1995.

San Francisco Chronicle, December 25, 1997.

San Jose Mercury News, April 18, 1993.

Santa Maria Times, October 23, 1997.

Semanario Azteca, November 3, 1986.

West Magazine, April 5, 1998.

World Literature Today, winter, 1981; spring, 1983.

Miami Herald, October 12, 2001.

Sacramento Bee, March 20, 1999.

General Objectives

1. To analyze Hispanic culture
2. To understand the novel's title
3. To recognize the importance of setting
4. To assess each character's personality
5. To recognize the novel's theme and lessons that it teaches
6. To understand the difficulty of acculturation
7. To explore the ways kindness can be shown
8. To find examples of bravery and courage
9. To sympathize with the main character's plight
10. To describe American culture in the 1950s

Specific Objectives

1. To analyze what life was like for Mexican immigrants to California in the 1950s
2. To understand traditional Hispanic culture with its emphasis on obedience, religion, and family life
3. To appreciate Francisco's work ethic
4. To analyze Francisco's thirst for knowledge and learning
5. To recognize the pull of family and tradition
6. To describe the racism and prejudice the family experiences
7. To appreciate how Francisco's teachers help him succeed
8. To find examples of Francisco's courage and determination
9. To understand Papá's depression and the reasons for it
10. To visualize the story's action

Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of Francisco Jiménez's style, present the following terms and applications to the novel:

point of view the position from which a story is told. In *Breaking Through*, Jiménez uses the first-person point of view. As a result, we see all events through Francisco's eyes, which gives the events a personal and immediate slant. This has the advantage of giving the novel great immediacy and power. It also helps readers identify with Francisco's emotions and appreciate his exceptional intelligence, determination, and courage.

conflict in literature a struggle or fight. Conflict makes a story interesting because readers want to find out the outcome. There are two kinds of conflict. In an external conflict, characters struggle against a force outside themselves. In an internal conflict, characters battle a force within themselves. Stories often contain both external and internal conflicts, actions, and advance the plot. Francisco has an external conflict with his father over wanting to mature, leave the family, and attend college. He has an external conflict with Peggy Dossen and other prejudiced people, too. He has deep internal conflicts as he struggles with becoming an American while still maintaining his Mexican culture.

tone The tone of a work of literature is the writer's attitude toward his or her subject matter. For example, the tone can be angry, bitter, sad, or frightening. In *Breaking Through*, Jiménez adopts a neutral tone to tell his story without self-pity or sentimentality.

The Importance of Setting

Breaking Through is set in California in the 1950s. As Francisco becomes acclimated to America, he absorbs the culture around him, especially the music, the teenagers' attitudes toward their families, and the "old boys' network."

To make friends, Francisco begins to pay close attention to what his classmates are doing and talking about. During recess, the girls talk about boys, music, and dancing. The boys talk about sports, cars, and girls. When the boys and girls get together, they discuss different songs, singers, and weekend dances. Francisco finds the discussion about popular music especially baffling because so many of the titles are idiomatic. However, he finds music and dancing far more interesting than sports and cars and uses this as his entrée into American culture. He and his brother Roberto listen to rock 'n' roll on the radio. He practices singing all the songs until he learns the words; he also learns all the dances and attends the community dances.

Francisco is raised in a religious and strictly patriarchal family. In the 1950s, American culture emphasized conformity and obedience, but some discussion was allowed. Francisco finds this alien, especially when students are encouraged to debate with their teachers. He listens carefully and considers how his school environment differs from his home environment. These experiences help give him the courage to rebel against his father and attend college.

Francisco also encounters the "Old Boys' Network" in the form of the Rotary Club and scholarship aid. As class president, Francisco is invited to attend a Rotary luncheon. He does not understand that he is being evaluated for scholarship aid. He also does not understand that the amount of money he is eventually awarded is carefully worked out beforehand. This is an essential part of American culture.



Cross-Curricular Sources

Books

Alma Flor Ada, *My Name is María Isabel*
Julia Alvarez, *Before We Were Free*
S. Beth Atkin, *Voices from the Fields: Children of Migrant Farmworkers Tell Their Stories*
Andrew Clements, *Things Not Seen*
Juan Felipe Herrera, *Calling the Doves*
Victor Martinez, *Parrot in the Oven: Mi Vida*
Amanda Irma Perez, *My Diary from Here to There*
Pam Munoz Ryan, *Esperanza Rising*
Gary Soto, *Buried Onions*
Gary Soto, *Jesse*
Gary Soto, *Local News*
Victor Villasenor, *Burro Genius*
Virginia Euwer Wolff, *Make Lemonade*

DVDs, Videos

The Alamo
The Cisco Kid
Hispanic Culture: The Sights and Sounds of South America
Hispanic Culture: The Sights and Sounds of Modern Mexico
Hispanic Culture: The Sights and Sounds of Puerto Rico
Hispanic Culture: The Sights and Sounds of Central America
Hispanic Hollywood
The Mexican Americans

Internet

Francisco Jiménez
www2.scholastic.com/teachers/

Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in Francisco Jiménez's *Breaking Through* should include these aspects:

Themes

- ambition
- conformity
- courage
- education
- migrant labor
- family love
- immigration
- living in a patriarchal family
- popular music
- manual work
- rebellion

Motifs

- helping your family survive
- being brave in unfamiliar situations
- dealing with prejudice because of your heritage
- living on your own
- enjoying music and dancing
- running for school office and being a student leader
- learning about American culture of the 1950s
- making a new life in a foreign country
- obtaining an education
- setting and meeting goals

Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have particular meaning in the novel. Explain the meaning of each. Chapter and page numbers indicate the context from which the item is taken.

1. I savored the thought of helping Roberto clean Main Street School. (Home Alone, p. 27)
(Francisco is delighted to help his brother Roberto work as a janitor because it means that the boys do not have to work in the fields. As a result, they can attend school for a full day and work in the afternoon and at night. This shows Francisco's keen work ethic and drive to get educated. He has a thirst for learning and he recognizes how education can help him get ahead and help his family as well.)
2. From that day on, Papá's spirit began to die, too. (Back to the Fields, p. 53)
(This quote refers to the underside of the American Dream: the potential for failure. Papá tries to get ahead by becoming a sharecropper and raising three acres of strawberries. He leases the land and works brutally hard, but his efforts fail. As a result, he sinks into a deep depression. This underscores the amount of knowledge and luck required to get ahead, in addition to hard work.)
3. From that day on, I spent more time struggling through *Dr. Doolittle*. (Summer Skirmishes, p. 68)
(Francisco tried to make money by selling fish he found in a local pond, but other local boys undercut him. Francisco had always understood the importance of education as a means to success, but this experience convinces him that there are no short-cuts to getting ahead. He becomes even more determined to succeed through studying.)
4. "He said, 'Don't be stupid. Only rich people become teachers.'" (Becoming a Saint, p. 72)
(Francisco's father does not share his son's belief in the power of education, because he does not believe that it is open to the poor. He derides Francisco's determination to become a teacher but does not offer any alternative.)
5. "We have excellent vocational programs in car mechanics, electronics, and wood shop." (Becoming a Saint, p. 75)
(In the 1950s, nearly all students were "tracked" in classes according to their scores on standardized intelligence tests, achievement in the classroom, gender, religion, and race. When he sees that Francisco is Mexican, his guidance counselor Mr. Kincade steers him toward vocational education and away from the academic track. However, when he sees how determined Francisco is to take the more demanding classes, Mr. Kincade places Francisco in the college track. Mr. Kincade helps Francisco a great deal, eventually even obtaining significant scholarship aid for him.)

6. "Her father even promised to buy her a car if she stopped seeing me. Can you believe it?" (Broken Heart, p. 107)
(Roberto encounters deep prejudice against Mexicans when his girlfriend's parents object to their dating. Francisco remembers how Peggy's parents objected to him as well. Nonetheless, both boys learn from this lesson and move on.)
7. "This afternoon the Salvation Army brought us a huge box full of groceries. God is truly watching over us." (Los Santitos, p. 121)
(Francisco's mother is delighted when the Salvation Army brings the family a box of groceries. She does not know that the groceries were gathered by her son Francisco and his fellow members of the Spanish club at the high school. It is ironic that Francisco and his family are the recipients of the food that he gathered.)
8. "You could easily pass for Americans." (Choosing Sides, p. 126)
(Francisco does not understand why some people do not like Mexicans. Papá explains that some people are ignorant. However, he is proud to be a Catholic and an American. Roberto tells Francisco that the janitor at the Main Street School who is Mexican told him that Roberto and Francisco could pass for Americans because they are so light-skinned. Francisco declares that he would never hide that he is a Mexican. This shows his great pride in his heritage.)
9. "Think about what!" I cried out. "It's my only chance!" (A Breakthrough, p. 168)
(At the novel's climax, Francisco defies his father to be able to attend college. Francisco realizes that an education is his only chance of escaping the cycle of poverty that has beset his family.)

Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

Questions 1-5 (Literal Level)

1. When and where does the story take place?
(The novel opens and closes in California in the 1950s.)
2. Why is the family sent back to Mexico at the beginning of the novel?
(They are illegal aliens, having crossed into California from Mexico without the proper documentation. After ten years, the Border Patrol catches them and sends them back.)
3. How does the family earn a living?
(They work a variety of backbreaking, menial jobs. Everyone works on and off in the fields as migrant laborers. Roberto and Francisco work as janitors as well. The younger kids comb the dump for useful objects.)
4. Why does Francisco's father fall into a depression?
(He injures his back and finds it difficult to work. At the same time, the strawberry fields he tried to cultivate fail. He finds it increasingly difficult to support his family and must rely on help from his sons.)
5. How does Francisco obtain the money he needs to go to college?
(He gets \$1,000 in scholarship money from local merchants--the "Old Boy's Network"--and the other \$1,000 as a federal education loan.)

Questions 6-8 (Interpretative Level)

6. Why does Francisco want an education so badly?
(He has a genuine thirst for learning but he also realizes that an education is his best shot at social mobility and an end to poverty.)
7. How does Francisco get ahead?
(He assimilates himself into American culture, learning English and all about music and dancing. He also works hard and he obeys his parents and lives by his religious beliefs. Last but

Breaking Through Francisco Jiménez

not least, he gets help from many of his teachers and some community members.)

8. What does the title mean? Explain its symbolism.
(The author "breaks through" the barriers of poverty and ignorance through hard work, the help of others, courage, and determination. As the author writes in "A Note from the Author," he wrote this sequel not only to pay tribute his family and teachers but also to voice the experiences of many who overcame obstacles in their efforts to "break through...and become butterflies.")

Questions 9 and 10 (Critical Level)

9. Do you think readers could use this book as a road map to success? Why or why not?
(Students who see this book as a guide to success can argue that Francisco shows readers what it takes to get ahead. Those who disagree can argue that everyone's experiences are different and so varied techniques for success are required.)
10. Why do you think Francisco's father is so opposed to his son getting an education?
(His father might fear that Francisco will be disappointed by the forces of prejudice arrayed against him. Francisco's father might also fear that his family is falling apart and that once he is educated, Francisco will leave his past behind. Finally, he might be jealous that Francisco has a chance for success that he himself does not have.)

Questions 11-12 (Creative Level)

11. Write a journal that describes Francisco's life 10 years in the future.
12. Write Francisco's college essay, in which he describes his life and explains why he wants to attend college.

Across the Curriculum

Speech/Debate

1. Memorize the preamble of the Declaration of Independence, as Francisco must do. Then recite it for the class.
2. When he meets Peggy Dossen, Francisco has never used a telephone. Working with a partner, demonstrate proper telephone etiquette. You may also wish to role-play proper cell phone etiquette in public as well.
3. Stage a class talent show, like the one that Francisco and his classmates hold.
4. Make the speech that Francisco would have made to the men at Rotary International, had he not been seized with stage fright.
5. Francisco graciously gives credit in the book to all the teachers who helped him so much along the way. Make a speech thanking a teacher who has had a profound positive influence on your life.
6. Debate whether or not amnesty should be declared for all illegal aliens in America.

Art/Music

1. Francisco and his friends dance to "Jailhouse Rock," "Rock Around the Clock," and "Venus in Blue Jeans." Learn one of these songs and lip-synch it for your classmates as "Frankie" does during recess.
2. Create a three-dimensional diorama of one of the migrant labor camps where the family lives.
3. Create a collage of newspaper headlines for the time period covered in the novel.

Language Arts

1. Make a handbook for new American immigrants. Include words, phrases, and pictures to teach the basics of English quickly.
2. Francisco's teacher has him read John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. Read the book and explain how it reflects Francisco's experience. You may also wish to watch the movie.

3. Papá and the rest of the migrant workers relax by telling stories about Mexico. Write a story about your heritage. Read the story to a small group of classmates.
4. Francisco reads *Dr. Doolittle*. Read this book and summarize its plot, characters, setting, and theme.
5. Francisco also reads Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. Choose one of the poems in the book to read to a small group of friends. Interpret its meaning as well.

History/Social Studies

1. Find out how an immigrant goes about establishing citizenship in America.
2. Make a map showing the path the family took from Fresno, California, to Nogales, Arizona when they were deported.
3. Francisco and his family need a "green card." What is this document and what rights does it confer? Share your findings with your classmates.
4. The Jiménez family works as migrant laborers, picking fruits and vegetables. In 1962, César Chávez established the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee in California. Research the status of migrant laborers today.
5. Learn about the Cristero Revolt of 1926. Post your report on the bulletin board.
6. Locate Mexico on a map and explain its history in the 20th century.
7. Report on Hernán Cortés or another famous Hispanic explorer.

Science

1. Francisco's father has a bad back. Make a poster showing some common back injuries and how they can be treated.
2. Papá's attempt at being a strawberry share-cropper fails. Find out what soil and weather conditions strawberries need to grow. Reread the chapter entitled "Back to the Fields" and explain what Papá could have done differently to ensure the success of his efforts.

3. Papá suffers from depression. Report on the latest treatments for depression.
4. Working with some classmates as Francisco did, report on the solar system. Reread the chapter entitled "Saint Christopher Medal" for ideas.
5. Francisco gets mononucleosis. Explain how this disease is transmitted and treated.

Math

1. On a chart, show the number of illegal immigrants to America from 1940 to the present. Analyze why illegal immigration peaked and declined in certain years.
2. Find out how much it costs to attend a public college in your state and a private college in your state. Show the different amounts on a bar graph.
3. Make a savings plan to pay for your education at a state college when you are ready to enroll. How much money would your family have to save every month? What rate of return can you expect to earn on your money?
4. Research college scholarships and loans. Share your results with the class.

Alternate Assessment

1. Make a character list and describe each character.
2. Working with a small group, role-play the scene in which Francisco sets off for college.
3. In your own words, state the novel's theme or message.
4. Write a critical review of the novel for the school newspaper.

Breaking Through Francisco Jiménez

Vocabulary

Complete the chart by writing synonyms and antonyms on the lines provided. Write as many as you can.

Vocabulary Word	Synonym	Antonym
1. wrath	_____ / _____	_____
2. gangly	_____ / _____	_____
3. haggard	_____ / _____	_____
4. feign	_____ / _____	_____
5. disheveled	_____ / _____	_____
6. pessimist	_____ / _____	_____
7. rival	_____ / _____	_____
8. barren	_____ / _____	_____
9. blight	_____ / _____	_____
10. jagged	_____ / _____	_____
11. scarce	_____ / _____	_____
12. wiry	_____ / _____	_____
13. raspy	_____ / _____	_____
14. deported	_____ / _____	_____
15. uneasy	_____ / _____	_____

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Motivation (20 points)

Complete each phrase below with a reason or justification.

1. The Jiménez family came to America because
2. The Jiménez family is deported from America because
3. Francisco works in the fields because
4. Francisco buries his head in his books not only to keep on learning but also to
5. Peggy is not allowed to date Francisco because
6. Mr. and Mrs. Jiménez do not attend Francisco's junior high school graduation because
7. Francisco is crushed when his sneakers are stolen because
8. Francisco makes the California Scholarship Federation because
9. Francisco is invited to speak at a Rotary luncheon because
10. Francisco's Spanish teacher visits Mr. and Mrs. Jiménez to

Part II: Matching (20 points)

Complete each of the following descriptions with a name from the list that follows.

- | | | |
|----------------|---------------|------------------|
| A. Mr. Kincade | D. Paul Takag | G. Mike Nevel |
| B. Roberto | E. Darlene | H. Mr. Ito |
| C. Francisco | F. Panchito | I. Audrey Bell |
| | | J. Mr. Osterveen |

- ___ 1. Francisco's best friend in high school; he convinces Francisco to run for class president
- ___ 2. Francisco's English teacher
- ___ 3. The widow washer who gives the boys a job
- ___ 4. Roberto's wife
- ___ 5. Francisco's guidance counselor; he helps Francisco get into college
- ___ 6. Francisco's Spanish teacher; he is married to a woman from Mexico
- ___ 7. The man from whom Papá rents the strawberry fields
- ___ 8. Francisco's beloved older brother
- ___ 9. Francisco's nickname
- ___ 10. The narrator, an intelligent and hard-working Mexican-American

Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

Part III: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements T if they are true or F if they are false.

- ___ 1. The narrator is five years old when the story opens.
- ___ 2. The Jiménez family is small but close: a mother, father, and two sons.
- ___ 3. Velva invites Francisco and Roberto out to a steak restaurant, the first time they have ever eaten in a restaurant.
- ___ 4. Francisco does well in school, especially in math.
- ___ 5. Papá claims that his injured back was healed by a faith healer.
- ___ 6. Roberto and Francisco both suffer from depression.
- ___ 7. Francisco is delighted when his father gives him his own Saint Christopher medal as a graduation gift.
- ___ 8. Francisco comes up with a plan to sell fish to make money, but the plan does not work because some neighborhood boys sell the fish more cheaply.
- ___ 9. Papá discourages Francisco's goal of becoming a lawyer, a job that the elder man feels is reserved for the rich only.
- ___ 10. Francisco learns to read for enjoyment when his English teacher gives him William Shakespeare's *King Lear*.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences on the essay response page.

- 1. Explain why Francisco succeeds. What traits make him most successful? Why?
- 2. Analyze why some people are prejudiced against others. List some ways to overcome prejudice.
- 3. Describe why the family is deported and how they get back into America.
- 4. Compare and contrast your family to Francisco's family. Explain how they are the same and different.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Fill in the Blank (20 points)

Choose the correct term or phrase to complete each of the following statements.

1. The narrator, Francisco, is (**fourteen, four**) years old when the story opens.
2. The family manages to escape the Border Patrol for (**two, ten**) years, but then they are caught and deported.
3. The family is betrayed to Border Police by a (**teacher, fellow Mexican**).
4. Roberto gets a part-time job at (**Velva's Freeze, Dew-Drop-In**), a hamburger and ice-cream store, so he is able to eat a bit better.
5. To learn about American culture and have fun, Francisco and Roberto start attending (**dances, ice-skating**) at the Veterans Memorial.
6. Papá claims that his injured (**leg, back**) was healed by a faith healer.
7. Papá becomes a (**lettuce, strawberry**) sharecropper when he rents three acres, but the farm fails and Papá falls into a depression.
8. Francisco is delighted when his father gives him his own (**leather jacket, Saint Christopher medal**) as a graduation gift.
9. Papá discourages Francisco's goal of becoming a (**doctor, teacher**), a job that the elder man feels is reserved for the rich only.
10. Francisco is invited to have lunch with the member of the (**Rotary, Women's**) Club.

Part II: Matching (20 points)

Match the following descriptions with names of speakers from the list below. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| ___ 1. Francisco's guidance counselor | A. Darlene |
| ___ 2. The narrator, a personable and scholarly teenager | B. Frankie |
| ___ 3. Francisco's Spanish teacher | C. Mr. Kincade |
| ___ 4. Francisco's best friend in high school | D. California |
| ___ 5. Where Francisco grows up | E. Roberto |
| ___ 6. Roberto's wife | F. Peggy Ito |
| ___ 7. The only student better in math than Francisco | G. Francisco |
| ___ 8. Francisco's birthplace | H. Paul Takagi |
| ___ 9. Francisco's nickname in school | I. Mexico |
| ___ 10. Francisco's older brother | J. Mr. Osterveen |

Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

Part III: Identification (20 points)

Briefly describe each and explain why it is important in the story.

1. a green card
2. education
3. strawberries
4. Rotary
5. Elvis Presley

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences on the essay response page.

1. Compare and contrast Roberto and Francisco. Explain how they are the same and different.
2. Analyze what the title means and tell why it fits the novel's theme.
3. Describe the novel's setting and explain its importance to the story.
4. Explain how Francisco would be an admirable role model.

Answer Key

Vocabulary

Possible answer

Vocabulary Word

1. wrath
2. gangly
3. haggard
4. feign
5. disheveled
6. pessimist
7. rival
8. barren
9. blight
10. jagged
11. scarce
12. wiry
13. raspy
14. deported
15. uneasy

Synonym

1. anger
2. lanky
3. gaunt
4. counterfeit
5. messy
6. humorless cynic
7. competitor
8. sterile, fruitless, empty
9. decay
10. rough
11. scant, rare, limited
12. curled
13. rough
14. sent away
15. wary

Antonym

1. tranquillity, gentleness
2. stocky
3. robust, powerful
4. substantiate
5. neat
6. optimist
7. advocate
8. fecund, fertile
9. healthy
10. smooth
11. ample
12. straight
13. glib
14. welcomed
15. relaxed

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Motivation (20 points)

1. they wanted to have a better life
2. they are illegal aliens apprehended by the Border Patrol
3. his family needs the money to survive
4. escape the loneliness he feels at his family's absence.
5. he is a Mexican and they are prejudiced
6. they do not have the appropriate clothing and they are embarrassed by their poverty
7. his gym grade will suffer if he is not properly dressed for gym
8. he earned very good grades
9. he is class president
10. convince them to allow Francisco to attend college

Part II: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. D | 6. J |
| 2. I | 7. H |
| 3. G | 8. B |
| 4. E | 9. F |
| 5. A | 10. C |

Part III. True/False (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. F |
| 2. F | 7. T |
| 3. T | 8. T |
| 4. T | 9. F |
| 5. T | 10. F |

Part IV: Essay (40 Points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Fill in the Blank (20 points)

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. fourteen | 6. back |
| 2. ten | 7. strawberry |
| 3. fellow Mexican | 8. Saint Christopher medal |
| 4. Velva's Freeze | 9. teacher |
| 5. dances | 10. Rotary |

Part II: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. C | 6. A |
| 2. G | 7. F |
| 3. J | 8. I |
| 4. H | 9. B |
| 5. D | 10. E |

Part III: Identification (20 points)

1. A green card gives someone who is not a U.S. citizen official immigrant status. Thus, it is highly valued. A green card can be obtained only in very specific ways.
2. Francisco thirsts for education for its own sake and because he sees it as a means to upward mobility. He works very hard in school.
3. Francisco's father leases three acres from Mr. Ito in a vain attempt to grow strawberries and thus get ahead. When the crop fails, he plunges even deeper into poverty and depression.
4. Rotary is an international service organization. In the 1950s, only men could belong to Rotary, but now the group is open to women as well. Members of Rotary often provide scholarships for promising students, as is the case in this book.
5. Elvis Presley was a famous rock n' roll musician in the 1950s and 1960s. Francisco likes his music very much and learns much of it by heart.

Part IV: Essay (40 Points)

Answers will vary.

Teacher's Notes

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