

A HARD PATH TO HOPE

Manuela and Cándido Guzman have decided to migrate illegally to the US. They and other Mexicans have been gathered together by smugglers and are about to cross the border.*



PART 1

- 1 At this place the Rio Grande was so shallow that the Mexicans could walk almost completely across, needing to swim only the last few yards to the American side, and there the American guides had stationed two Mexican men, who helped the women. (...)
- 5 The eighteen wetbacks* were led to a miserable truck, which had bounced over these roads many times, but before they were allowed to climb in, a man named Hanson growled: "Fifteen bucks, and I put you on a back road to Fort Stockton." He stood in the shaded glare of the headlights, verifying the payments, and when all were accounted for, he piled the Mexicans and
- 10 started north, but as he drove, a cohort* rode atop the cab of the truck, keeping a shotgun aimed at the passengers. "Don't no one try to jump off," he warned. "We don't want to show La Migra* how we move about." (...)

PART 2

- 15 At four in the morning, when they were far from the river, the driver, seeing a chance to earn a lot of money with no responsibility, made the engine cough and then conk out*. "Damnit", he cried, "we've got to fix this", and he ordered the Mexicans to leave the truck and stand well back while he worked in it. To their delight, the engine began to sputter, caught, and then purred nicely. (But) to their horror, the two Anglos revved* the motor and took off
- 20 across the desert, leaving the wetbacks stranded, with no guide, no food and, worst of all, no water. It was a trip into hell. At ten in the morning of the second day when the sun was blazing high, the first Mexican died, a man in his forties whose swollen tongue filled his mouth. An hour later, six others were dead, but the two
- 25 Guzmans still survived. "Manuela," Cándido whispered, "we must look for plants, anything." They found, nothing, none of the big cacti which often saved lives in such circumstances, and by noon, three more were dead. Overhead the sky was an arch of blue. (...)
- 30 Two o'clock passed, with more than half the wetbacks, ironic name, dead, and in the late afternoon, in that dreadful heat, Manuela gasped one last plea of water, stared madly at her brother and died.

smugglers = passeurs
wetbacks (fam.) = Mexican illegal immigrants
cohort = acolyte
La Migra = the US border patrol
conk out (fam.) = tomber en panne
revved (ici) = accélérèrent

James A. Michener, *Texas*, 1985

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT/ **PART 1**

Where does the story take place?

Who are the people present in the scene? Find information about them and classify them into two groups.

	GROUP 1	GROUP 2
How many?		
Nationality?		
Names		

Read the first 5 lines again AND rephrase what you have understood.

Read from line 5 to line 10 ("started north") and list all the words describing the travelling conditions. Classify them in this grid:

What did they travel in?	Conditions

Find words related to money:

Who got the money? What for?

What do the underlined words have in common?

"...a man named Hanson growled: (...) as he drove, a cohort rode atop the cab of the truck, keeping a shotgun aimed at passengers. "Don't know one try to jump off," he warned."



What can we guess about the passengers' feelings then? Why?

Tick the title that best corresponds to this first part of the text

- a dangerous journey a way to heaven a ride to the Promised land a pleasant trip

RECAP PART 1: ORAL WORK: Tell the story with the help of the following words

sneak across (entrer furtivement)/ undocumented (sans-papiers) / uncomfortable conditions / do not have a say (ne pas avoir droit au chapitre) / qualms (scrupules) / greedy (avide) / cash in on (tirer profit de, profiter de) / unscrupulous / ill-treated or mistreated (maltraités)

HOMEWORK: Complete this IMPORTANT summary with the following words:

fate / undocumented / inhumane / manipulated by / depend / migrate / sneak across / imposed on / help / qualms / taking advantage / mistreated / smugglers / cashing in on / cattle / have a say

The Mexicans want to _____ to the USA illegally. Indeed, they are candidates for immigration but are _____ aliens trying to _____ the border, so they need the _____ of guides. They _____ entirely on them. Their _____ is in their hands. The American guides are greedy _____ who have made a deal with them and who are only _____ of the situation. They are _____ the situation to make a profit. They do not seem to have any _____ of conscience. What's more, the Mexicans are treated like _____ and _____ those unscrupulous men. They are _____ and they are travelling in _____ conditions and do not _____. They must accept the rules _____ them.

PART 2

Explain what happened to the truck:

Pick out the two verbs showing the truck had a problem:

What were the Mexicans ordered to do then?

Tick the correct answer: the incident was a road accident a trap a game

Explain:

Read from l.16 to l.21 and sum up the incident in your own words. How did the passengers feel?

Read from l.20 to the end

Pick out 3 sentences related to the climate

-
-
-

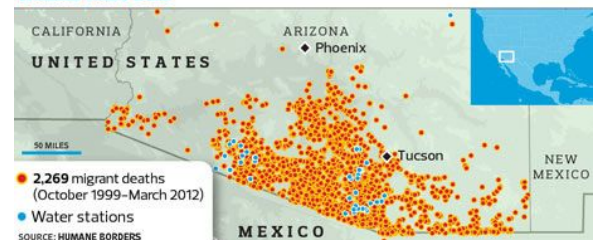
What did the Mexicans need most? Quote keywords only.

What were the consequences?

Focus on the Guzmans. Who are they (full names)? How are they related to each other? What happened to them?

Explain...

WHERE THEY DIED



Fill in the time chart and write what happened

4 a.m

10 a.m

noon

2 p.m

late afternoon

1st day and 2nd day

RECAP PART 2. ORAL WORK

1. Explain the quotation: "It was a trip to hell" (L.22)

Help: to be lured into (attirer par la ruse, leurrer) / deceive (tromper) / easy prey (proie facile) / nightmare / appalling (abominable)

2. Who does the narrator side with? Find clues in the text to justify your answer. What are the narrator's intentions?

Help: tragic plight (situation critique) / frightful (épouvantable) / betrayal (trahison) / inexperience / gullibility /gʌlɪ'bɪlɪti/ (crédulité)

HOMEWORK

Complete this IMPORTANT summary:

The Mexicans were /lɔrd 'ɪntu/ _____ the possibility of getting to the other side /'seɪfli/_____, but were /dɪ'sɪvd /_____.

They were /'ɪzi preɪz/ _____ who could not do anything and would not denounce their "killers" as they were /ən'dakjəməntɪd 'eɪlɪənz /_____. Their slow / dɪ'sent / _____ into hell is that of the end of a dream. The trip to freedom has /tɜrnd 'ɪntu/ _____ a nightmare. But the most / ə'pɔln̩ /_____ thing of all is that it is for some of them the end of a life... Their lives are /ət steɪk / _____ and the tragedy is that their lives are not / wɜrθ / _____ more than \$270! /wʌts mɔr/_____, their death will probably go /ən'noʊtɪst/_____.

Michener /saɪdz wɪð/ _____ the Mexicans and /'fəʊkəsɪz/ _____ on their tragic / plɑt /_____.

This is a /'fraɪtʃəl / _____ narrative which /'reɪzəz / _____ the question of / bɪ'treɪəl/ _____ at different levels. The /'praməsəz / _____ of a better future in the USA are broken by those who use immigration for their own /'benəfɪt / _____ . They lure Mexicans to the USA to take advantage of their /,mɪk'spɪəriənz/ _____ and /gʌlə'bɪlɪti /_____.



The author goes a little further in this story and makes us /'wʌndər/ _____ if America is still a /'rɛfjuːdʒ/ _____ for the poor and the /ə'preɪst/ _____ (for the "tired" and "huddled masses", cf. Emma Lazarus's poem on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty). Is the /ə'merəkən drɪm/ _____ still within reach of those outside the US?