



Victor Villaseñor

Bestselling author of Rain of Gold and Thirteen Senses

**NERY GONZALEZ, ELMER RODRIGUEZ, FERNANDO LUNA AND DENIZ QUINTANA
SPAN 365
DR. GONZALEZ**

VICTOR VILLASENOR

- May 11, 1940 in Carlsbad, California
- Mexican-American
- nine novels, 65 short stories, and received 265 rejections Villaseñor until he got published first novel, Macho!, which the Los Angeles Times compared to the best of Steinbeck.
- National best seller Rain of Gold
- ***Burro Genius (memoir), national best seller and Pulitzer Prize finalist
- Flunked 3 grade three times
- Death of brother Joseph
- Advocates for education system
- Diagnosed with dyslexia
- Writing as healing



Burro Genius: A Memoir 2004

Genre Young Adults/ Non Fiction

Themes: Education, Discrimination, Religion, Racism, Culture, Language, Indigenous roots, Culture, Child Abuse, Family, Friendship, Resilience, Identity, Spirituality, Rural, Death, Healing, Stereotypes, Perception, Colorism, Nature, Alienation, Disabilities, Manhood, Love

Etymology

Burro: a small horse, a donkey, biblically called as "ass" of the old and most widely used animal for work and burden throughout much of the world. An animal used to breed with horses to get a mule a larger, stronger beast or burden than burro.

Genius: guardian deity, or spirit of a person's spirit, natural ability. According to ancient Roman beliefs, a guardian spirit assigned to a person at birth, tutelary deity, hence the guardian spirit of a person, place, etc. A person having great mental capacity of an inventive ability especially great and original ability in art, science, etc.

Social, Historical, and Cultural Context

1940's

- WWII
- 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, Mexican Americans enlisted in the military in significant numbers
- 1942, the U.S. and Mexico jointly created the *bracero* program
- 1946 Mendez v. Westminster School District, California officially ended all segregation in its schools
- Discrimination, Segregation, English only policy
 - Dirty, Retards, Criminals

Summary

Victor Villaseñor is the main character, he tells his story of when he was growing up and the difficulties he had to overcome. Villaseñor, later was diagnosed with Dyslexia, all throughout his school years he had difficulty with learning English. Villaseñor tells us how his teachers terrorized him, assaulted him and any other student that spoke Spanish. The teachers were not the only ones that humiliated and beaten Villaseñor, his classmates would always make fun of him and call him names. There was a point when Villaseñor started to believe those words were true. It took Villaseñor 13 years to become a publish author, he received 260 rejection letters no one believed that he had talent, but he continued to do it and did not give up.

Book Analysis

Burro Genius gives an overview of Victor Villasenor as a young Mexican kid who was treated different and discriminated. Victor Villasenor went through many difficulties during his childhood. Villasenor was treated badly by his english professors who would pick on him because he did not know the English language and because he was Mexican. Villasenor later started writing multiple books where he was denied for more than two hundred sixty five times.

After being denied many time, Villasenor received a call to go to a book

Quote 1

“It was still very hard for me to sometimes know where my Catholic-Christian upbringing stopped and my grandmother’s Indian teachings began. For me it was all like one big river running together with all these different waters. By the time our local San Luis Rey River got to the sea, who could tell which water had come out of which canyon”

Quote 2

“And I thanked mi papa who’d always said to me that we, los Indios, the Indians, were like the weeds. That roses you had to water and give fertilizer or they’d die. But weeds, indigenous plants, you gave them nada-nothing; hell, you even poisoned them and put concrete over them, and those weeds would still break the concrete, reaching for the sunlight of God. ‘That’s the power of our people,’ my father would tell me, ‘we’re the weeds, LAS YERBAS DE TODO EL MUNDO!’”

Quote 3

“I liked him. He seemed a lot more animal to me than human, which was good, of course, because my grandmother, Doña Guadalupe, had always explained to me that all humans were born with an animal-spirit to help guide them through life, and so the humans who realized this would always seem more animal than human, and this was wonderful. It kept us closer to God.”

Commonalities with Other Works Studied in Class

- Mother Tongue
- Little Kept Promises
- Across a Hundred Mountains
- Cariboo Cafe
- Dahlia Season



- Language
- Faith
- Identity, Manhood, Education
- Life across border, Education
- Disorders