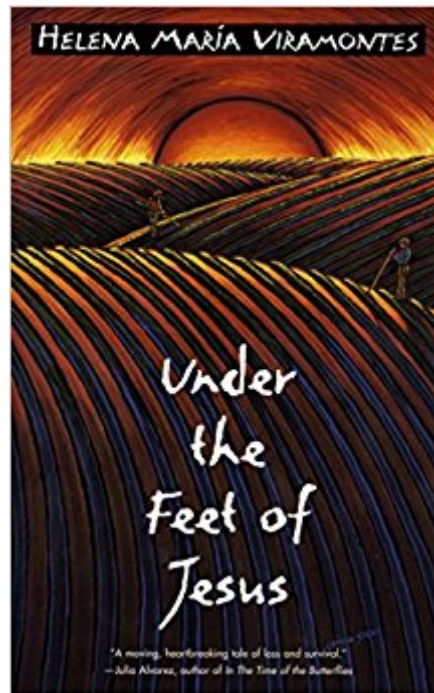




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# Under The Feet Of Jesus



## Synopsis

Winner of the John Dos Passos Prize for Literature • "Stunning." —Newsweek With the same audacity with which John Steinbeck wrote about migrant worker conditions in *The Grapes of Wrath* and T.C. Boyle in *The Tortilla Curtain*, Viramontes presents a moving and powerful vision of the lives of the men, women, and children who endure a second-class existence and labor under dangerous conditions in California's fields. At the center of this powerful tale is Estrella, a girl about to cross the perilous border to womanhood. What she knows of life comes from her mother, who has survived abandonment by her husband in a land that treats her as if she were invisible, even though she and her children pick the crops of the farms that feed its people. But within Estrella, seeds of growth and change are stirring. And in the arms of Alejo, they burst into a full, fierce flower as she tastes the joy and pain of first love. Pushed to the margins of society, she learns to fight back and is able to help the young farmworker she loves when his ambitions and very life are threatened in a harvest of death. Infused with the beauty of the California landscape and shifting splendors of the passing seasons juxtaposed with the bleakness of poverty, this vividly imagined novel is worthy of the people it celebrates and whose story it tells so magnificently. The simple lyrical beauty of Viramontes' prose, her haunting use of image and metaphor, and the urgency of her themes all announce *Under the Feet of Jesus* as a landmark work of American fiction.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This first novel adds another important chapter to the existing body of literature about the Mexican-American experience. Viramontes (*The Moths and Other Stories*), who teaches at Cornell, does not offer deep characterization or psychological complexity here. Instead, working firmly in the social-realist vein of Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* and Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, she paints a harrowing ensemble portrait of migrant laborers in California's fruit fields. The family of 13-year-old Estrella, and the others with whom they travel and work, burn under 109-degree heat until the backs of their necks sting; women nurse their babies in the backs of pickups. Viramontes depicts this world with a sensuous physicality, as when Petra, Estrella's mother, digs a fingernail into the melting tar of a blacktop highway. And the close quarters in which her characters are forced to live promotes a collective intimacy that Viramontes evokes with a sure hand, conveying the solace to be found in solidarity while never losing sight of the fact that these people enjoy absolutely no privacy. Slow and wandering at the outset, the novel picks up after a small plane releases a white shower of deadly pesticide, which washes over the face of Alejo, a teenager who is perched in a peach tree, busy stealing the soft, ripe fruit. Alejo is drenched with poison, much to the horror of Estrella, who has fallen in love with him. Alejo becomes sick with what the migrants call "da?o of the fields"?so sick that the de facto leader of the workers wants to leave him behind. But Estrella makes it her mission to help save him, and she is driven to great sacrifice in order to do so. Into this unforgiving world, Viramontes pours archetypal themes of the passage of time, young love, the bonds and tensions between generations and, above all, the straining of the spirit to transcend miserable material conditions. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Migrant Mexicans shackled to a life of itinerant farm labor form the backdrop for a summer in the life of young Estrella and her family. Seemingly a prescription for sorrow, in Viramontes' hands the canvas instead teems with color and builds toward hope for a liberating future--at least for Estrella. Her mother, Petra, and stepfather, Perfecto, remain confined to their tattered possessions and dusty poverty, and much of Viramontes' imagery--imaginative and allusive descriptions of land, orchards, and worn-out clothes--fix in readers' minds that they will not escape. Estrella, too, partakes of this despair of the migrant's world, but being young she is not resign to her seeming fate. Her feelings culminate when she smashes up a nurse's office, goaded by the nurse's insensitivity to the family's privation and shortage of cash. That shock quickly abates, but the anger elides into an ethereal mood as Perfecto weighs abandoning the family while Estrella wanders through a barn to scatter then reattract a flock of symbolic birds. A chromatically impressionistic novella that should hit home

in Latin literature collections. Gilbert Taylor --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I read this novel for my Graduate Seminar in American Literature course, and I couldn't put it down! The writing is beautifully original, and Viramontes evokes deep emotion for her characters and left me wanting more of their stories. The authenticity of this story makes it important for more than just the enjoyment of a good book--it took me inside a world I would otherwise have never been privy to. My heart is bigger, my gratitude is deeper, and my compassion is stronger for having spent time in this book.

Good quality book for university English course. Arrive on time and as described

The book is fairly short, requiring a few hours spread over a couple days. Like Linklater's *Boyhood*, the work is essentially plotless but abounds with repetitive symbolism. The novel is nothing special, offering a familiar view on subaltern life packaged in occasionally beautiful but excessively wordy text. I wouldn't read it for fun, but we've all read worse for class.

I simply wanted to say that I had to read this for my Spanish-Latin@ Literature and culture class at my university, and that I enjoyed it. The book is fairly short with lots of opportunities for discussion.

Good book. Though many of you will probably buy it for class it is good read!

I read a ton of Chicana feminist literature and this is one of my all-time favorites! Viramontes is such a beautiful writer and her characters are so authentic and believable. Can't recommend this enough.

A beautiful portrayal of a young girl that has to cope with being a child and dealing with forces beyond her control beginning with the color of her skin. A times politically charged but more often the story of a girl trying to figure out where it is that she belongs.

I got this book to read in my English class, but I just love it. It was a fairly quick read, but the characters are well built and very interesting!

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