



Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Department

About the Book of the Month: This collection of featured books is from Books Matter: The Best Kid Lit on Bias, Diversity and Social Justice. The books teach about bias and prejudice, promote respect for diversity, encourage social action and reinforce themes addressed in education programs of [A World of Difference® Institute](#), ADL's international anti-bias education and diversity training provider. For educators, adult family members and other caregivers of children, reading the books listed on this site with your children and incorporating them into instruction are excellent ways to talk about these important concepts at home and in the classroom.

Undocumented: A Worker's Fight

Duncan Tonatiuh (Author & Illustrator)

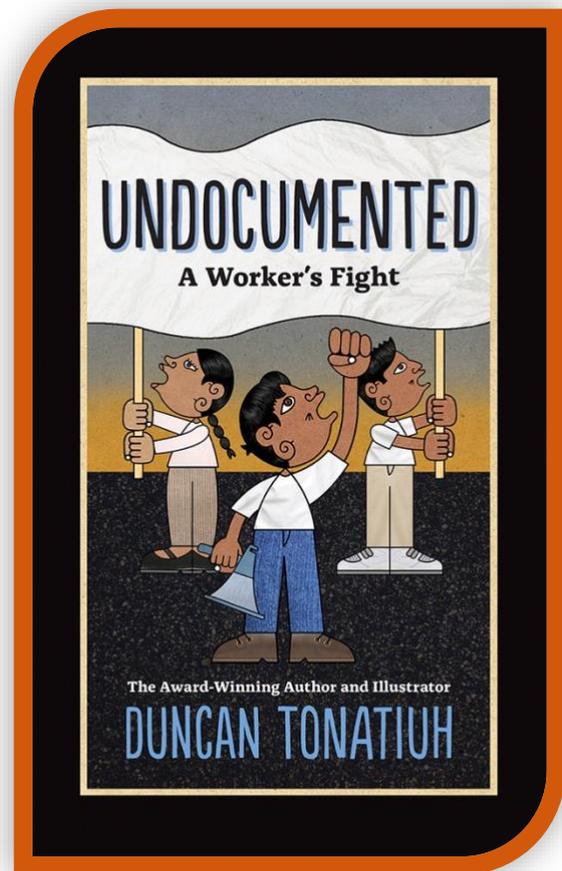
Juan grew up in Mexico working in the fields to help provide for his family. Struggling for money, he crosses over into the U.S. and becomes an undocumented worker, living in a poor neighborhood, working hard to survive. Though he is able to get a job as a busboy at a restaurant, he is severely under-compensated; he receives less than half of the minimum wage. Risking his boss reporting him to the authorities for not having proper resident papers, Juan risks everything and stands up for himself and the rest of the community. This graphic novel tells the story of immigrant workers who have come to the U.S. without "papers." Every day, they join the work force and contribute positively to society.

ISBN: 978-1419728549

Publisher: Harry N. Abrams

Year Published: 2018

Age Range: 12 and up



Book Themes

Immigration, Workers' rights, Undocumented immigrants, Discrimination

Key Words

Discuss and define these words with students prior to reading the book and remind them of the meanings as they come up in the book. See ADL's [Education Glossary Terms](#).

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|--------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|
| ■ advantage | ■ exist | ■ march | ■ papers |
| ■ border | ■ harass | ■ minimum wage | ■ pay |
| ■ conditions | ■ harvest | ■ Mixteco | ■ picket line |
| ■ coworkers | ■ installment | ■ movement | ■ undocumented |
| ■ deported | ■ lawsuit | ■ organizer | |
| ■ documents | ■ legal complaint | ■ overtime | |

In addition, there are several words and phrases in the book in Spanish. Below are the words and their definitions:

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|-----------------------------------|--|
| ■ billetes: money bills | ■ migras: immigration enforcing police (e.g., ICE) |
| ■ calavera: skull | ■ niño: boy |
| ■ compañeros: companions, friends | ■ palos: sticks |
| ■ idiota: idiot | ■ piquete: picket |
| ■ la lucha: the fight | ■ tío: uncle |
| ■ los polis: cops | ■ tres primos: three cousins |

Discussion Questions

As students read the book in small groups or as a whole class, ask discussion questions throughout their reading to check for comprehension and engage them on a deeper level. Some of these questions can also be used as writing prompts. When students have finished the book, choose from these questions to guide a group discussion:

- What is the book about?
- What does Juan, the narrator and main character, mean when he says he “crossed the border” before he turned eighteen?
- What happens to Juan when he crosses the border the first time? What do you think that was like for him?
- What are the different types of work Juan and his cousins do in the U.S.? Do you know anyone who works in jobs like that?
- Why do you think the restaurant doesn't pay Juan well for all the hours he worked?
- Why does Li tell Juan about how they were treated?
- How does Juan feel about what Li said to him? How do you know?
- Do you know what minimum wage is? (Explain that minimum wage is determined by state and local laws and employers have to pay workers at least minimum wage set by that state or city.)
- When Juan and Li go to a workers' center, what do they find out?

- Why do you think Juan gets his coworkers involved in trying to get minimum wage?
- Have you ever heard about or been in a situation where people joined together to fight for something important? Please explain.
- Why are the workers scared to file a legal complaint against their boss?
- Why doesn't the boss fire all the workers when he gets the letter about their legal complaint?
- Why does Juan's wife become angry with him?
- Why do you think Juan and other workers join a picket line outside a restaurant in Chinatown?
- What does Juan mean when he says, "what matters is that we face the same problems."
- Why does Juan's boss offer him a lot of money to drop the case?
- How did you feel when the book ended? What do you think will happen next?
- What are the advantages to making this book a graphic novel instead of a standard book?
- What are the overall theme and message of the book? How do they apply to what's happening currently?

Extension Activities

Below are activities that can be done with students in order to extend the learning from the book.

1. Learn about the Author

Have students learn more about the author, Duncan Tonatiuh. Explain to students that they will conduct research about Duncan Tonatiuh which will culminate in a project. First, as a class, discuss with students what they want to know about the author such as: where he grew up, his inspiration for writing the book, his cultural background and its relevance to the book, other books he has written, his background as an illustrator and more about his unique drawings, his interests and hobbies, family life, relevant quotes, etc. Possible sources for their research can include: (1) his website (<http://www.duncantonatiuh.com>), (2) his social media posts like Twitter, Facebook, (3) interviews he has conducted including ADL's [podcast](#) interview and (4) other online research. The final culmination of their research may include one of the following project ideas: an extended "author bio," a letter to the author (use his website's [contact page](#)), a timeline of his books and their relevance to his life and what's happening in society, a Power Point presentation or a simulated interview between the author and a journalist (one student would play the author and another would play the journalist).

2. Art Inspiration

Duncan Tonatiuh's website says, "His artwork is inspired by Pre-Columbian art, particularly that of the Mixtec codex. His aim is to create images and stories that honor the past, but that are relevant to people, especially children, nowadays." Talk with students about the author's artistic style in the book and make the larger point that we often find inspiration in other writers' and artists' styles. Engage students in a process where they identify a specific artist or artistic style that resonates with them or one that they like. Have students learn more about the particular style, its history, meaning, etc. and then have them try to create their own art that is inspired by this artistic style. They can do this by either drawing individual images or using the art to inspire something else like an essay, play, another type of visual art like collage, sculpture or mural. When these projects are completed, consider holding an art opening for students and their families where they can be shared.

3. Write Your Own Graphic Novel Pages about an Important Issue

The book, *Undocumented: A Worker's Fight* is a graphic novel about people who are undocumented and their struggles around work and making a living wage. This is a problem in our society that the author wants to address through a graphic novel. Engage students in a brainstorming session where they consider problems and issues in their school, community or society that they want to address through the telling of a story. Ask: *What is a problem in society you want to address or help solve? What would you like to convey about that issue through a graphic novel or comic?* Explain to students that they will create their own comic strips (or a short graphic novel), which can be based on an issue they identify. They will need to decide in advance: what the issue/problem is and how it will be addressed through a comic strip or graphic novel, the characters, the words they will use for the speech and thought bubbles and how many panels/boxes are needed and what each will represent. It might be helpful to have students write out their plot, characters and dialogue in advance. Provide class time and homework time for them to complete their comic and/or graphic novel and then have students share their finished products with the class.

4. Learn More about Immigrants and Immigration

(Note: Before discussing this topic, it is important to consider that you may have students in your class whose family members or they themselves are immigrants and/or undocumented immigrants. Be prepared and sensitive to those students and be mindful as to how you discuss this in your classroom. Students who may not have shared this previously may disclose it during the lesson and that information should only come from the student themselves.)

Engage students in a discussion about immigration. First, read the "Author's Note" in the back of the book that provides information about people who are immigrants, particularly undocumented immigrants. Ask students: *What does it mean to be an undocumented immigrant? What is the nature of work available to undocumented immigrants and how are they treated in the workplace? What experiences inspired Tonatiuh to write the book?* Define immigration as the process of coming into a non-native or foreign country to live. You can share with students that 40 million people who live in the U.S. were born in another country (from around the world) and that the U.S. has more immigrants than any other country in the world. Read additional stories about immigration aloud (as suggested below) and find out what students know and don't know about immigration. You can also provide information about undocumented immigrants, sharing that people who are "undocumented" are foreign-born people who come to the U.S. without the legal papers to do so and who often have fled their home countries because of extreme poverty, danger or wanting to be with their families in the U.S. Some enter the country legally as tourists, students or temporary workers and become undocumented when their papers expire. Many have lived in the U.S. for a long time, have families here and feel like citizens. Explain that about 11 million undocumented immigrants live in the United States, which has been a stable number for the past five years. You can also point out some of the information shared in the Author's Note about what percentage of workers in the U.S. are undocumented immigrants, the kinds of jobs available to them and the difficulties they face in their workplaces and in addressing unfair practices.

After this discussion, you may have students do a research project, either having them learn more about immigration (or about a specific country) over the course of U.S. history or an exploration of the theme of work and labor by undocumented immigrants and the challenges they face. Students' research can culminate in a Power Point presentation, timeline with photos/drawings, essay or something else.

ADL Resources

The following are curriculum and resources on immigration, socioeconomic status and identity.

Curriculum Resources

'Migrant Caravan' and the People Seeking Asylum, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/migrant-caravan-and-the-people-seeking-asylum

Huddled Mass or Second Class?: Challenging Anti-Immigrant Bias in the U.S., www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/huddled-mass-or-second-class-challenging-anti-immigrant

Using Art to Explore Injustice and Social Justice, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/using-art-to-explore-injustice-and-social-justice

What is the Dream Act and Who are the Dreamers?, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/what-is-the-dream-act-and-who-are-the-dreamers

What Should be Done about DACA?, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/what-should-be-done-about-daca

Websites

Education Resources on Immigration, Immigrants and Anti-Immigrant Bias

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/education-resources-on-immigration-immigrants-and-anti

A collection of education resources for educators, parents and families on immigration, immigrants and anti-immigrant bias.

Myths and Facts about Immigrants and Immigration

www.adl.org/education/resources/fact-sheets/myths-and-facts-about-immigrants-and-immigration

A list of common myths about immigrants and immigration and the facts.

National Hispanic Heritage Month: Ideas for Teachers

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/national-hispanic-heritage-month

A collection of ADL resources to help educators and students understand and celebrate the achievements, contributions, culture and history of Hispanic and Latino-Americans.

Podcast Interview with Duncan Tonatiuh, Children's Book Author & Illustrator

www.adl.org/education/resources/podcasts/interview-with-duncan-tonatiuh-childrens-book-author-illustrator

Duncan Tonatiuh, award winning children's book author and illustrator, talks about meeting Sylvia Mendez and how that inspired him to write *Separate Is Never Equal*, his love of art and writing and how his dual citizenship identity shapes what he writes.

Children's Books

Below are links to lists of recommended anti-bias and multicultural books for the indicated category.

Bias, Discrimination & Hate: Anti-Immigrant, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid\[178\]=178&tid\[207\]=207&tid\[210\]=210&tid\[181\]=181](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid[178]=178&tid[207]=207&tid[210]=210&tid[181]=181)

People, Identity & Culture: Immigrants, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid\[207\]=207&tid\[181\]=181&tid\[210\]=210](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid[207]=207&tid[181]=181&tid[210]=210)

People, Identity & Culture: Latino/Hispanic, Latino-American, Hispanic-American, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid\[210\]=210&tid\[181\]=181](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid[210]=210&tid[181]=181)

Bias, Discrimination & Hate: Socioeconomic Bias, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid\[181\]=181](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid[181]=181)