

CHAPTER 10**Critical Thinking Activity****Mexico****Mexican Immigrants**

Some estimate that about 300,000 illegal aliens enter the United States each year. Many migrate north to cross the long border between the United States and Mexico. The Border Patrol has thus far been unable to stop illegal immigration from Mexico. Border Patrol activities include not only efforts to stop entry at the border but also searches to capture illegal immigrants in the United States and return them to their home countries. These poems present ideas about citizenship and immigration. While reading each poem below, notice the tone, or attitude, the writer takes toward the subject he or she is writing about.

Legal Alien

by Pat Mora

Bi-lingual, Bi-cultural,
 able to slip from "How's life?"
 to "Me'stan volviendo loca,"
 able to sit in a paneled office
 drafting memos in smooth English,
 able to order in fluent Spanish
 at a Mexican restaurant,
 American but hyphenated,
 viewed by Anglos as perhaps exotic,
 perhaps inferior, definitely different,
 viewed by Mexicans as alien,
 (their eyes say, "You may speak
 Spanish but you're not like me")
 an American to Mexicans
 a Mexican to Americans
 a handy token
 sliding back and forth
 between the fringes of both worlds
 by smiling
 by masking the discomfort
 of being pre-judged
 Bi-laterally.

Mexicans Begin Jogging

by Gary Soto

At the factory I worked
 In the fleck of rubber, under the press
 Of an oven yellow with flame,
 Until the border patrol opened
 Their vans and my boss waved for us to run.

Chapter 10, Critical Thinking Activity, continued

“Over the fence, Soto,” he shouted,
And I shouted that I was American.
“No time for lies,” he said, and pressed
A dollar in my palm, hurrying me
Through the back door.

Since I was on his time, I ran
And became the wag to a short tail of Mexicans—
Ran past the amazed crowds that lined
The street and blurred like photographs, in rain.
I ran from that industrial road to the soft
Houses where people paled at the turn of an autumn sky.
What could I do but yell vivas
To baseball, milkshakes, and those sociologists
Who would clock me
As I jog into the next century
On the power of a great, silly grin.

From “New and Selected Poems” by Gary Soto. © 1995 by Gary Soto.

1. How do you think the speakers in each poem feel about being bilingual and bi-cultural?

2. Which words best communicate each poem’s tone to you?

3. Why do you think the speaker in “Mexicans Begin Jogging” runs from the border patrol?

4. What does the speaker suggest to you about the future direction of the United States in the line “As I jog into the next century”?

5. How would you compare the experiences that “Legal Alien” and “Mexicans Begin Jogging” describe?

