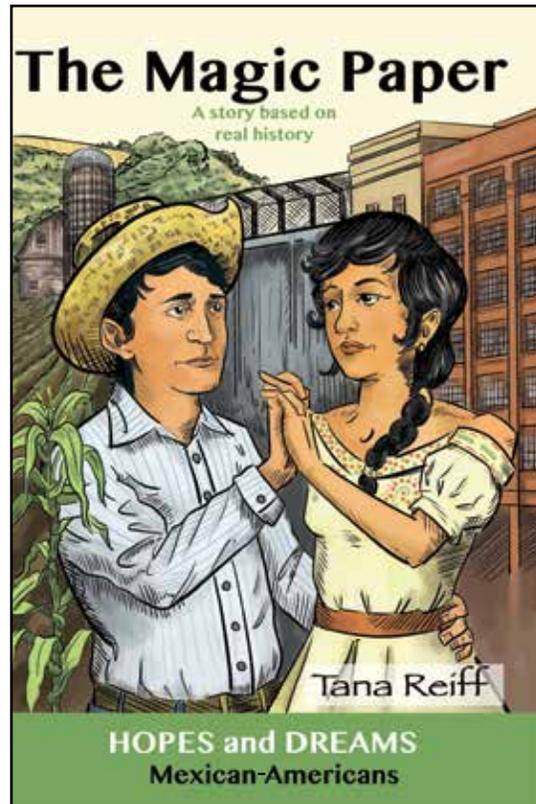


# Teacher support materials to use with



Brief Plot Summary

Discussion Questions

Historical Drawings and Photos for Discussion

Detailed Plot Summary

Historical Background

What Did You Read? – Form

Book Report – Form

Word Play Activity

Fill in the Blanks Review Activity

## **Brief Plot Summary**

**The Magic Paper** tells the story of Teresa Garcia and Benito Cruz, two Mexican-Americans. In 1980 Teresa buys a fake visa and comes alone to Los Angeles to care for her sick aunt. Then she stays, working in a dress factory to send money home to Mexico. Benito crawls through a pipe into California, where he works as a migrant farmworker. They meet and fall in love. Benito moves to Los Angeles and works in a factory. They want to marry, but they can't because they are illegal. They work hard and save money to go to Mexico and bring Teresa's sister back. Finally they have enough money, but when they go to Mexico City there is a great earthquake. Teresa's whole family is killed. They come back to the U.S. illegally. They continue to work hard, and wait until a new law lets them apply to get the magic paper, to become legal, and to get married. At last, they feel safe.

# Think about it

## The Magic Paper Discussion Questions

### Chapter 1

#### The Visa

1. Why did Teresa give money to someone she didn't know?
2. Why do you think Teresa bought a fake visa?
3. Would you do what Teresa did?
4. Do you believe everything people tell you? Why or why not?
5. Do you think Teresa will ever come back to Mexico?

### Chapter 2

#### Los Angeles

1. What do you think of Teresa's plan to stay in the U.S.?
2. Why are some people willing to work 12 hours a day?
3. Teresa takes care of her aunt. Then her aunt takes care of her. How do you and your loved ones take care of each other?

### Chapter 3

#### Benito

1. Do you think Benito is lucky?
2. How is his trip across the border different from Teresa's?
3. What are your thoughts about the police officer and the coyote who took Benito's money?
4. What stories have you heard about people crossing the border?
5. Now we have met both Teresa and Benito. Do you expect them to meet each other? How could that change their lives?

### Chapter 4

#### Meeting Teresa

1. Why do you think Benito trusted the man in the bar?
2. When you meet new people, how do you "size them up?" Why do think Teresa agreed to come to the bar?
3. What do you think Benito will do next?

### Chapter 5

#### Looking for Her

1. If you were Benito, would you try to find Teresa? Why or why not?
2. This story takes place before the Internet and cell phones. In today's world, how would you try to find someone?
3. How do you know that something you want is worth working for?
4. Do you think Benito will find Teresa? Will it be easy?

### Chapter 6

#### Making Plans

1. Would you take a job you didn't like to be near someone you love? Why or why not?
2. Why could it be dangerous or impossible for Benito and Teresa to get married in the U.S.?
3. Benito and Teresa are faced with a hard choice: stay or go back. What would you do?

**Chapter 7**  
**Another Crossing**

1. Have you ever had to wait something you wanted?
2. Benito talks Teresa into returning to Mexico. How do you talk someone into doing something?
3. What does it mean to “kill two birds with one stone”? Do you know a saying like that?
4. Teresa and Benito trust each other. How do you know when you can trust someone?
5. Teresa and Benito decide to go back to Mexico. Teresa says, “We will find a way.” Will they?

**Chapter 8**  
**Mexico City**

1. Have you ever felt like the lucky one? The unlucky one? What is luck?
2. Have you ever been in an earthquake? If yes, what happened?
3. How did you know when it was time to leave a place or make a big change in your life?
4. Will Teresa and Benito make it back across the border?

**Chapter 9**  
**Back to L.A.**

1. Were you surprised that the Border Patrol stopped the truck?  
Why or why not?
2. Why do people wear uniforms for certain jobs?
3. What do you think will happen to Benito and Teresa?

**Chapter 10**  
**Second Try**

1. Why do some people do things that didn't work the first time?  
When is it better to try doing something a different way?  
Does every question have an answer?
2. What does it mean to do what you must?

**Chapter 11**  
**A New Law**

1. Why is the new law such good news for Teresa and Benito?
2. Would you rather work in a factory or a field?
3. Where would you work if you could work anywhere at all?
4. Do you think Benito will come back to Los Angeles?

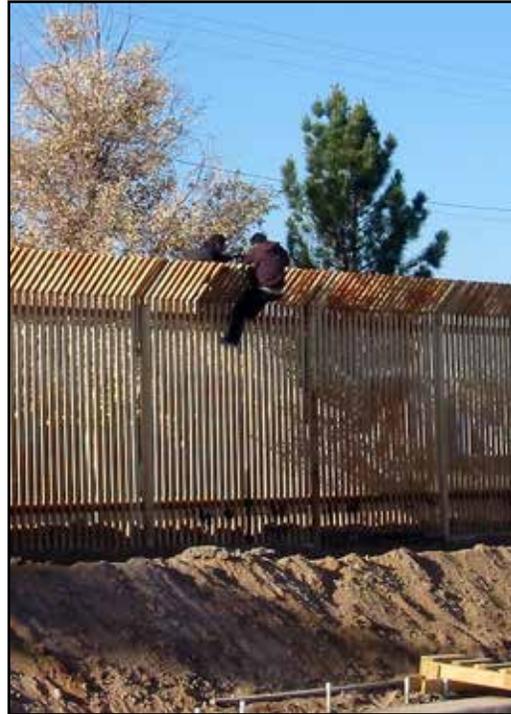
**Chapter 12**  
**Waiting for Magic**

1. What makes you feel safe?
2. Why can one paper be so important?
3. What is your idea of magic? Have you ever had a magic moment?
4. Benito and Teresa can now stay in the U.S. What will their life be like?

# The Magic Paper

## Historical Drawings and Photos for Discussion

Climbing over the Mexico/U.S. border fence



A warning sign at the Mexico/U.S. border

Note: Most of these photos are from the Library of Congress and in the public domain. Others appear many times without attribution online and thus are in the public domain. You may print them for classroom use.



U.S./Mexico border at Sesabe, Arizona © Nicole Duperre/Dreamstime.com ID 66223635



Piece work in a dress factory © 1000 Words/Dreamstime.com ID 26553965



Migrant workers at the grape harvest



Mexican farm workers harvesting

# The Magic Paper

## Detailed Plot Summary

While Teresa Garcia waits in line in Mexico City for a tourist visa, a man approaches her offering to sell her a visa because, he says, she will never be able to get one otherwise. An hour later he returns with a visa. The next day Teresa takes a bus to Los Angeles to visit her Aunt Silvia and Uncle Ruben, who have permanent resident status (the “green card”) in the United States.

Comparing Los Angeles to Mexico City, Teresa sees how poor Mexico City is. She wants to make some money while she is here, so Uncle Ruben finds her work in a dress factory. Teresa does piecework 12 hours a day so she can send money home. When she develops a nasal condition from the factory air, she must stop working. She receives no sick pay. She admits to Aunt Silvia that she has overstayed her visa; maybe this would be a good time to return to Mexico City. Aunt Silvia insists that she stay until she is well.

When Teresa recovers she realizes she won't have a job back home. Uncle Ruben assures her that lots of people live here without green cards. Teresa finds a new job but says she will always be afraid of getting caught.

Back in a small, poor town in Mexico is a young man named Benito Cruz, who has crossed the border back and forth several times by various methods. No one in his hometown will give him a job, so he decides to try crossing again. As a truck is taking him toward the border, a policeman stops it and demands money to let it go on. At Tijuana, Benito pays a coyote to help him cross the border. The man leads him to a big pipe that runs under the ground. To get into California, Benito has to crawl through the wet, stinking, rat-infested pipe.

Benito gets work as a migrant farm worker. Some weekends he goes to Los Angeles with the other single men. One night a stranger offers, for \$800, to find him an American wife so he can get his green card. The next Friday, the stranger brings Teresa to the bar and leaves with Benito's money. Benito and Teresa find each other attractive, but when he realizes she is an illegal, he is furious. He stamps out of the bar to go find the stranger who has bilked him.

Benito never finds the man, but he can't stop thinking about Teresa. He searches Los Angeles dress factories to find her. At last he locates her at her aunt and uncle's East Los Angeles apartment. Because the couple want to be near each other, Benito stays in Los Angeles and takes a job in a shirt factory.

Benito and Teresa want to marry but can't because they are illegals. Benito suggests they return to Mexico to marry and bring back Teresa's sister Raquel. Teresa is afraid to cross the border, so the couple continues living as invisibly as

possible. Meanwhile, Teresa sends money orders home each week and keeps a record of the amounts.

When Teresa thinks she has sent enough money to bring Raquel to the United States, she waits for her sister to get a visa. Benito says that is naive and tells Teresa that her own visa was a fake. He says the only way to get Raquel here is to go and get her. So Teresa agrees to Benito's plan of going to Mexico and getting married while there, despite Aunt Silvia informing her of impending amnesty legislation that would allow illegal aliens to get green cards.

On their way to Mexico, Benito and Teresa learn there has been a terrible earthquake in Mexico City. They arrive to find the city a shambles and learn that Teresa's whole family has been killed. Sadly, and without marrying, they hitch a truck ride to cross the border back into the United States. Inside the dark truck are many people, some of them sick, and a bad odor hangs in the air. Just after crossing the border, the truck is stopped by a lone U.S. Border Patrol officer, who orders the people to wait until he returns with a bus to transport them back into Mexico. As soon as the bus is out of sight, the Teresa and Benito walk a mile back toward California and cross the border on foot. Teresa observes that the desert terrain is the same on both sides of the border.

Back in Los Angeles, Benito, unhappy with city life, returns to farm work. That fall, the amnesty law passes and Teresa goes to apply for her green card. She takes along her only proof that she has been in the United States since before 1982: her record of the money orders she sent to Mexico. Then she waits for two things: her green card and Benito. Both arrive on the same day. The couple can marry as soon as Benito gets his own "magic paper," and for the first time in seven years, Teresa feels safe.

# The Magic Paper

## Historical Background

Mexicans have been in the land that became the United States since 1541. In that year the explorer, Francisco Coronado, led an army of Spanish soldiers and Mexican Indian troops on an expedition in search of the legendary golden Seven Cities of Cibola. They went as far north as the area that would one day be called Kansas. Mexicans' Indian ancestors have lived all over the Southwest since then. Los Angeles was founded in 1781 by 44 Mexicans. Ever since, people have moved back and forth between the two lands. Indeed, the present border was not established until after the Mexican-American War of 1846. More than 600,000 people emigrated north during the Mexican Revolution of 1910-20, and Mexican labor has been vigorously imported in times of need, such as in American wartimes. Starting during World War II, a U.S. government program legally imported braceros (workers) until American labor unions pressured for an end to the program in 1964.

As immigration policies became more restricted, uncountable millions of Mexicans have crossed the border illegally. Mexicans cross the border by any imaginable method: across the Rio Grande, under barbed-wire fences, on foot out of sight of the relatively few Border Patrols, through sewage pipes, by bus or truck. Many of them cross back and forth regularly. The busiest crossing points are between Tijuana, Mexico, and Chula Vista, California, and between Juarez, Mexico, and El Paso, Texas. In addition, some 300,000 Mexicans legally hold permits to cross the border daily to work in the United States. Besides the many adventure stories of crossing the border, the situation has created a lucrative market for fake documentation and coyotes, the people who help Mexicans cross and find work for a fee.

This is an immigration problem of tremendous magnitude: how to manage a border between a very poor and a very affluent country. While the United States grapples with an understaffed Border Patrol, the American people debate the continuing moral dilemma of dealing with the poor-and rapidly growing-Mexican population just to the south. Meanwhile, American agribusiness has become reliant on low-paid migrant laborers, many of whom are illegal Mexican and Central American aliens.

A recent attempt at a remedy was the Immigration Reform Control Act of 1986 which, for a limited period of time, granted permanent resident status to illegal aliens who could prove they lived in the United States continuously since

January 1, 1982, and to farm workers who had worked in the United States for at least 90 days during the year preceding May 1, 1986. (The law also made it illegal for employers to hire undocumented workers.) A lower-than-expected number of illegals responded to the amnesty program, partly because, having lived as invisibly as possible, they had no paper proof of their existence. Since 1986, as Mexicans in search of a better life continue to enter the United States illegally, the immigration question remains to be resolved.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

# What Did You Read?

Write the answers to these questions about *The Magic Paper*.

1. Where in Mexico was Teresa's home? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What kind of place did Benito come from? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What did the visa do for Teresa? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What did Teresa do after her visa ran out? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. How did Benito meet Teresa? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Why was Benito angry with the stranger he paid \$800 to? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. How did Benito find Teresa in Los Angeles? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. For what two reasons did Benito and Teresa return to Mexico? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. What did Benito and Teresa learn had happened in Mexico City? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Why didn't Raquel cross the border with Teresa and Benito? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. What did Teresa use to show she had lived in the United States since before 1982? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. What was the "magic paper"? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Book Review

Book Title \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_

The people in this book came from \_\_\_\_\_

I read this book because \_\_\_\_\_

Is this book interesting? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

The best part of the story is \_\_\_\_\_

The worst part of the story is \_\_\_\_\_

My favorite person in the story is \_\_\_\_\_

because \_\_\_\_\_

The main thing I learned from this book is that \_\_\_\_\_

Too many hard words? yes no Examples: \_\_\_\_\_

Too many long sentences? yes no Examples: \_\_\_\_\_

The length of the books is: too long / too short / about right

Tell a friend to read this book? yes / no Why? \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

# Word Play: It's Not the Same

*In each exercise below, you are given three sentences. Two of them have the same meaning; one has a different meaning. Find the one with the different meaning and circle the letter beside it. The first one is done for you.*

1. a. Teresa bought a visa.  
b. A visa was bought by Teresa.  
c.  A visa bought Teresa.
2. a. Teresa got paid only for the work she finished.  
b. Teresa paid only for the work she finished.  
c. The factory paid Teresa only for the work she finished.
3. a. Benito will catch someone one of these days.  
b. One of these days Benito will get caught.  
c. Someone will catch Benito one of these days.
4. a. The coyote led Benito to a big pipe.  
b. Benito led the coyote to a big pipe.  
c. Benito was led to a big pipe by the coyote.
5. a. Teresa was taken to meet Benito by the stranger.  
b. Teresa was taken to meet Teresa by the stranger.  
c. The stranger took Teresa to meet Benito.
6. a. Benito found East Los Angeles with Teresa.  
b. Benito found Teresa in East Los Angeles.  
c. Teresa was found by Benito in East Los Angeles.
7. a. Do not leave a paper trail, Teresa and Benito.  
b. Teresa and Benito did not leave a paper trail.  
c. A paper trail was not left by Teresa and Benito.
8. a. They crossed the border in a truck  
b. A truck crossed the border.  
c. The border was crossed by a truck
9. a. Aunt Silvia and Uncle Ruben did not tell Teresa.  
b. Teresa did not tell Aunt Silvia and Uncle Ruben.  
c. Aunt Silvia and Uncle Ruben were not told.
10. a. The Mexican was made legal by a green card.  
b. The green card made the Mexican legal.  
c. The Mexican made the green card legal.

# Fill in the Blanks

## Review Activity

**The Magic Paper** tells the story of Teresa Garcia and Benito Cruz, two Mexican-Americans. In 1980 Teresa bought a \_\_\_\_\_ visa and came alone to Los Angeles to care for her \_\_\_\_\_ aunt. Then she stayed, working in a dress \_\_\_\_\_ to send money \_\_\_\_\_ to Mexico. Benito crawled through a \_\_\_\_\_ into California, where he \_\_\_\_\_ as a migrant farmworker. They met and \_\_\_\_\_ in love. Benito moved to Los Angeles and worked in a \_\_\_\_\_. They wanted to \_\_\_\_\_, but they couldn't because they were \_\_\_\_\_. They worked \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ money to go to Mexico and bring Teresa's \_\_\_\_\_ back. Finally they had enough \_\_\_\_\_, but when they went to Mexico City there was a great \_\_\_\_\_. Teresa's whole family was \_\_\_\_\_. They came back to the U.S. \_\_\_\_\_. They continued to work \_\_\_\_\_, and waited until a new \_\_\_\_\_ let them \_\_\_\_\_ to get the magic paper, to become \_\_\_\_\_, and to get \_\_\_\_\_. At last, they felt safe.

## **Full text of the fill in the blanks review activity**

**The Magic Paper** tells the story of Teresa Garcia and Benito Cruz, two Mexican-Americans. In 1980 Teresa bought a fake visa and came alone to Los Angeles to care for her sick aunt. Then she stayed, working in a dress factory to send money home to Mexico. Benito crawled through a pipe into California, where he worked as a migrant farmworker. They met and fell in love. Benito moved to Los Angeles and worked in a factory. They wanted to marry, but they couldn't because they were illegal. They worked hard and saved money to go to Mexico and bring Teresa's sister back. Finally they had enough money, but when they went to Mexico City there was a great earthquake. Teresa's whole family was killed. They came back to the U.S. illegally. They continued to work hard, and waited until a new law let them apply to get the magic paper, to become legal, and to get married. At last, they felt safe.

## *Answer Key*

“What Did You Read?” questions are objective in nature; however, in some cases the answers may not be derived from the book verbatim. The answers given below are intended as guidelines to be used in conjunction with the teacher’s judgement that the question has been satisfactorily answered. The answers to the “Word Play” exercise should be given exactly as given in this answer key, except where specifically noted.

### *What Did You Read?*

1. Mexico City
2. a small town in the country
3. It got her into the United States.
4. stayed in the United States or kept on working in the United States
5. when Benitio paid a man money to find him an American wife
6. because Teresa was not an American citizen
7. He looked for her at dress factories.
8. to get married and bring Raquel (Teresa’s sister) into the United States
9. There had been an earthquake.
10. because she died in the earthquake
11. the record of her money orders
12. a green card (permanent resident status)

### *Word Play: It’s Not the Same*

2. b. 3. a. 4. b. 5. b. 6. a. 7. a. 8. b. 9. a. 10. c.