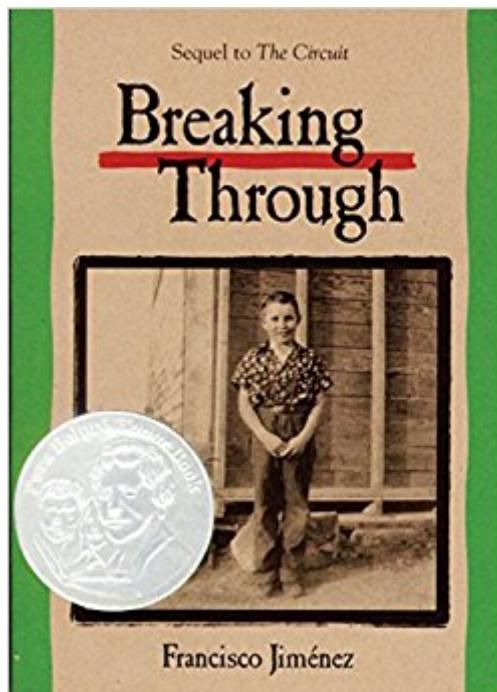


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# Breaking Through



## **Synopsis**

At the age of fourteen, Francisco Jiménez, together with his older brother Roberto and his mother, are caught by la migra. Forced to leave their home in California, the entire family travels all night for twenty hours by bus, arriving at the U.S. and Mexican border in Nogales, Arizona. In the months and years that follow during the late 1950s-early 1960s, Francisco, his mother and father, and his seven brothers and sister not only struggle to keep their family together, but also face crushing poverty, long hours of labor, and blatant prejudice. How they sustain their hope, their good-heartedness, and tenacity is revealed in this moving, Pura Belpré Honor-winning sequel to *The Circuit*. Without bitterness or sentimentality, Francisco Jiménez finishes telling the story of his youth.

## **Book Information**

Paperback: 208 pages

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## **Customer Reviews**

Francisco Jimínez continues the moving tale of his early youth begun with a dozen autobiographical short stories in *The Circuit*. *Breaking Through* chronicles the author's teenage years. At the age of 14, Francisco and his family are caught by la migra (immigration officers) and forced to leave their California home, but soon find their way back. The author explores the prejudice and challenges they face while also relaying universal adolescent experiences of school, dances and romances.

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Gr 5-8-Maturity means breaking through the cocoon into freedom for Panchito, whose adolescence is described in this sequel to *The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child* (Houghton, 2001). The simplicity of life and the unending work for the whole family continues here, but is mitigated by Panchito's increased awareness and gradual loss of innocence as he learns to make his life a success. His father's bitterness, pain, and need for unquestioning obedience is matched by his mother's ability to coax agreement out of her son. The clash of cultures between teen insolence in the U.S. and Mexican respect for elders' authority is vividly portrayed, as is the injustice and casual bigotry often endured by young and old. Fortunately, the protagonist, now often known as Frankie, finds friends and employers willing to recognize his strength of character and ability. While sure to be inspiring and reassuring to readers mesmerized by the first book, this follow-up lacks the intensity and voice so memorable in that one, and is consequently less affecting. Still, Jiménez ably helps readers see the world of 1950s and 1960s California through adolescent eyes. Rock 'n' roll, Kennedy versus Nixon, the old-boy network of service clubs, the humiliation of deportation, and the painful struggle to have the right clothes are among the pieces of that world that readers see with a startling clarity from a new perspective. The photos at the end are great additions. Carol A. Edwards, Sonoma County Library, Santa Rosa, CA Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I actually went to Santa Clara University when I had to read this book and Professor Jimenez was teaching, (just not my class at the time) This is an amazing book. You'd think it'd be so simple, since its for intermediate Spanish classes (I used this in conjunction with reading the Spanish version for my Spanish class) and it helped a LOT. Simply a great, heart-wrenching novel that you'll fall in love with. I still related to it and I'm not a first-generation immigrant child or anything. I thought the family aspects and personal development in the story were great and I learned a lot of Spanish reading this too. There isn't a whole lot of difficult or ridiculous vocabulary in it either. Hope this helps, Daniel

Bought all 3 books - important historical events that are pertinent today with immigrant children - not aliens! Empowered my students and gives one a real experience of someone who came across illegally and is now a PhD at a university!

Even though I had never heard of Francisco Jimenez or his story, I really enjoyed reading this book! It was full of detail and depth, explaining every inch of Francisco Jiménez's life

from the time his family escaped Mexico to the time he left his home for college. Francisco explained how his family was caught by the border patrol, how he and his brother Roberto were deported, and then how he snuck back in to the states (with papers). Francisco did a great job of explaining his family members and the way they interacted. I thought it was so interesting that his father couldn't speak English, so Francisco made it his job to translate. His descriptions also made me think about how hard it was that his father couldn't work very often because of chronic back pain. Francisco took a lot of responsibility to work for the family. I wonder how often that might happen today. Francisco wrote about his experience working as a janitor after school with Roberto to earn money for their room and board and food for their family. Francisco was actually happy to have a job as a janitor. It was better than the thinning lettuce and picking carrots he always had to do at the army barracks where he lived. He had a lot on his plate trying to support his family, make extra money, have friends (not easy with language and cultural barriers), go to school, get good grades, and get into college--with a scholarship. He also talked about people treating him differently because of his race. The book was full of interesting details and was very easy to follow and understand. I am only in the sixth grade but I still felt this story was a fast and good read. I would recommend this book to anybody who likes to read especially true and inspiring stories. I will not take my life as an American citizen for granted, which is why I think he probably wrote his story to begin with. It was a great book.

I was required to read this book for one of my graduate school classes! I loved the journey about this person's life! I could also relate since I live near where the story takes place! The story was about a young man who had many life challenges living here in the United States, having come from Mexico as a young child. This book had a great impact on my life both personally and professionally. The story dealt with a great deal of immigration issues. He loved school and had many mentors who helped him to follow his dreams about making a better life for him and his family. There were times he wanted to give up, but people helped him not to give up his dream of becoming an educator. In reading this book there were two others in the series that I ended up reading! This book helped me put my personal life in perspective! I hope to take this story and pay it forward to the students I may have the opportunity of teaching one day. Just like I enjoyed the book I hope anyone who reads it will too!

Just read this with my 7th graders and it touched them very much! They wrote letters to the author -

very genuine and heartfelt. A beautiful tribute to the human element in the issues of immigration, Mexican American farm workers in California and the power of prayer and persistence. Everyone - especially California kids- should read this autobiography

I bought \*Breaking Through\* without realizing that it was a sequel to \*The Circuit\*. Nonetheless, you aren't lost if you start with \*Breaking Through\* I loved this memoir because it was one of the best portrayal of a migrant family. This memoir chronicled the life of Francisco Jimenez from the time that him and his family entered America from Mexico to his entrance into college. The Jimenez family saved up some money and entered into Mexico illegally. They were soon caught, after a time, and deported back. However, they were able to get papers and return. Despite living in the land of freedom and opportunities, the family has to work hard in order to survive. They worked in strawberry fields, lettuce patches and cleaned buildings. Francisco is loving school yet struggled to stay on top as he also has to work. His older brother did well in school but worked nearly as much as their often-ill father did. The mother stayed home and took care of the children. However, she often substituted in their work when needed. \*Breaking Through\* is a story of a family working together. It's also a story of one finding one's own identity in America. It's also a story of one trying to achieve the American dream. You'll laugh. You'll cry. If you don't understand the Mexican culture, you'll find yourself puzzled at some things. Coming from a Hispanic family, I found myself nodding and taking strolls in memory lane. Overall, it's easy reading for a great book.

I love this book and didn't want it to end. It provides an extraordinary window into the life of Mexican migrant workers that is greatly needed. Each chapter fills in another piece of a puzzle that is mostly hidden to people outside of the farmworker reality. Francisco Jimenez provides a much-needed voice that is articulate but down to earth.

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