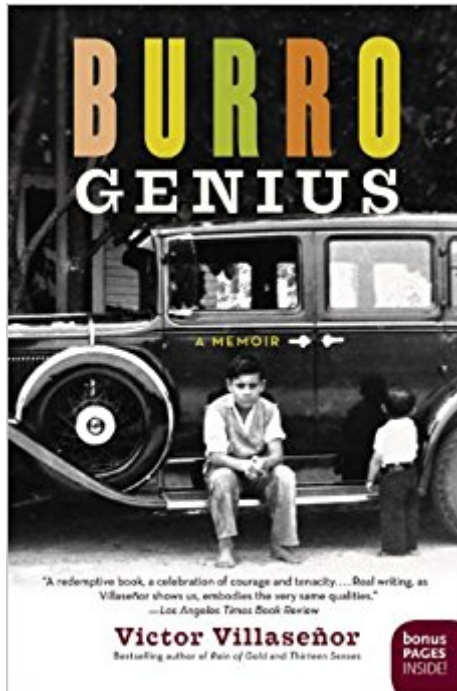




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Burro Genius: A Memoir



Synopsis

Standing at the podium, Victor Villaseñor looked at the group of educators amassed before him, and his mind flooded with childhood memories of humiliation and abuse at the hands of his teachers. He became enraged. With a pounding heart, he began to speak of these incidents. When he was through, to his great disbelief he received a standing ovation. Many in the audience could not contain their own tears. So begins the passionate, touching memoir of Victor Villaseñor. Highly gifted and imaginative as a child, Villaseñor coped with an untreated learning disability (he was finally diagnosed, at the age of forty-four, with extreme dyslexia) and the frustration of growing up Latino in an English-only American school in the 1940s. Despite teachers who beat him because he could not speak English, Villaseñor clung to his dream of one day becoming a writer. He is now considered one of the premier writers of our time.

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Customer Reviews

Growing up in the 1940s on his family's gracious Southern California ranch, young Villaseñor envisions a cowboy's life, just like he's seen in western movies and learned from his loving but occasionally abrasive Mexican-born papá. Reality, however, finds him in the unwelcome company of an American school system where he doesn't fit in and is ostracized thanks to his undiagnosed dyslexia and limited English. Throughout this spirited memoir, novelist and nonfiction writer Villaseñor (who has chronicled his family history in *Rain of Gold*; *Wild Steps of Heaven*; *Thirteen Senses*; etc.) faces an entourage of abusive teachers and embittered classmates who chip away at his confidence, leading him to the brink of adopting a personal philosophy of

violence-for-respect. He seeks support in the strength of his close-knit family, especially his brother Joseph. But when Joseph dies of a rare, unexplained disease, Villaseñor tries to embody what made his brother such a hero. Despite all the humiliation, frustration and hardship Villaseñor encounters throughout his youth, he maintains an astonishingly positive and compassionate attitude. His retelling of sometimes humorous, sometimes chilling childhood experience is at once painful and gratifying. He imaginatively and poetically remembers his tumultuous childhood with the simplicity of a child and the introspection of a sage. Photos not seen by PW. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Victor Villaseñor vive en California en el rancho donde fue criado. Es autor de numerosos obras editoriales y aclamadas obras, entre ellas *Lluvia de oro*, *Jurado: La Gente vs. Juan Corona*, y *¡Macho!*. Victor Villaseñor's bestselling, critically acclaimed works, as well as his inspiring lectures, have brought him the honor of many awards. Most recently he was selected as the founding chair of the John Steinbeck Foundation. He lives in Oceanside, California.

I had a hard time getting into *Burro Genius* at the beginning. But once I got past reading about the man as an adult and got into reading about Victor as a child I could not put it down. Victor is probably one of the most influential and relatable authors for Mexican-Americans everywhere. His father reminded me of my father, with all of his words of wisdom and his way of telling life lessons. These characters are in my heart like real people. I find myself thinking about Chavaboy, Lupe and even the "help". It has also broadened my understanding on how important it is to have good rolemodels and teachers in life. I have taken some of the advice and lessons and have applied them to my own life.

I must read for all parents of children with learning disabilities. Villasenor is a great story teller, and this would be a great book to read with or to a child--with or without a learning disability. Understanding the thought processes of a child, knowing the damage teachers can do, and seeing how one person can make a lasting impact are central to the story. However, what a parent or grandparent will hold onto is that despite all he went through, Villasenor overcame his disability and wrote such grand literature as *Rain of Gold*.

If you took a bunch of ingredients and put them in a mixer just long enough to break them up, when

you poured them out the jumble that results would be as hard to recognize as the plot for Burro Genius. That's not to say the results aren't tasty. Victor Villasenor has written an unusual book. Finding a narrative structure with an interesting enough plot to tie together one's life story is always challenging. Victor solves this by jumping back and forth through time, in and out of magic realism, and injecting his secret sauce into his recipe for life. There are times the book hurls bricks at the school systems--private and public-- of the 1950s. As a young child Victor experiences racism first hand with all its illogical stupidity. One of the counterbalances to the destructiveness of this anti-hispanic hatred is the rich oral teachings of Victor's indigenous grandmother. She left him with another world view that helped him survive. Another counterbalance was being rich, literally. This provides a big dose of cognitive dissidence to white racists. It's an interesting and challenging book. Young Victor's problem with pee has turned off many a reader. Not sure why this particular fact was so pervasive in the story. Try to get past it.

Amazing account of growing up in 1940's Southern California. Villasenor has crafted a beautiful narrative that is still relevant today. I cannot recommend this book enough, and it should be a must read for anyone who is a teacher or planning on entering the profession. Students who find themselves feeling like an "other" or outsider at school would probably also be inspired by the way that Villasenor succeeded in spite of his teachers and his undiagnosed dyslexia.

Burro Genius was the first of Senor Villasenor's books recommended to me. Sounds trite but I literally could not put it down. Victor describes his educational experiences with clarity, compassion and the gift of his humility. Without his family's support he may never have achieved the level of writing that has earned him such public acclaim, and notoriety. Schools across the nation make his works required reading...thereby enriching the lives of students and teachers.

This is a story about a boy with dyslexia and his struggle to deal with bullying teachers and children throughout his school years. This book should really be read to all school age children so that they might have empathy for kids with challenges. It is very inspirational.

This book was great and was very relatable as a hispanic male

I am so glad this book exist because more now will become aware of dyslexia. I especially recall, *maÃfÂ ana es otro milagro de dios*, followed by the mother never never never gave up on life. The

mother like many others, generations back, silently and through familia have lived their entire lives.
(Hereditary)

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