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# A Promise To Keep



## Synopsis

Sergio finds himself between two countries. When he was six years old, his family emigrated from Central America to Los Angeles and he has lived there since. At sixteen, Sergio feels he has grown up without a homeland. Sergio has spent many years under the strong and powerful influence of his grandfather, who lived with Sergio and his family until he died. Before he died, the grandfather told Sergio his wish: After living in a foreign country for many years, he wants to be buried in El Salvador, his native land. Sergio's fight to honor his mentor's wish lands him in a dangerous adventure full of unexpected disasters. This voyage allows Sergio to make a series of cultural discoveries and prospects that require that he take control. *A Promise to Keep* explores the critical issues of identity, patriotism, and culture, significant matters to young Hispanic immigrants who come of age and are educated in the United States. In this novel, Mario Bencastro draws upon his own experience from working with immigrant teens to profoundly examine the pressing topics and problems that bicultural young adults face.

## Book Information

Paperback: 134 pages

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Age Range: 12 - 17 years

Grade Level: 7 - 12

## Customer Reviews

Grade 7 Up "When he is 16, Sergio sets off on a journey from Los Angeles to keep a promise he had made to his grandfather to take his body back to El Salvador for burial after his death. After he convinces his parents and guidance counselor to let him go, he leaves behind his struggles in school and his job cleaning buildings to get on a plane transporting his grandfather's coffin.

Although the plane crashes over a body of water en route, everyone survives, and the retrieved floating casket gets to its destination. While staying with his aunt for the week, Sergio meets Flor de Ángel. After surviving an earthquake, they realize that they are in love, and Sergio decides to stay and help her as she is smuggled into the United States. Awkward dialogue, implausible situations, and an abundance of telling rather than showing make this book fall short. Ben Mikaelson's *Red Midnight* (HarperCollins, 2002) and Fran Leeper Buss's *Journey of the Sparrows* (Puffin, 2002) are better books that feature Central American characters illegally crossing the United States border for a better life, or simply to survive.â “Diane P. Tuccillo, City of Mesa Library, AZ Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Mario Bencastro is the author of award-winning novels that explore the impact of civil war in the lives of Central American immigrants in the United States. His first novel, *A Shot in the Cathedral* (Arte P blico Press, 1996), was a finalist for the international Novedades y Diana award, and his collection of short stories, *The Tree of Life: Stories of Civil War* (Arte P blico Press, 1997) focuses on the civil war that took place in El Salvador in the eighties. *Odyssey to the North* (Arte P blico Press, 1998) focuses on Central American immigration into the United States. Bencastro's novels have been published in Canada, El Salvador, United States, Haiti, India and Mexico. Bencastro lives in Florida.

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