

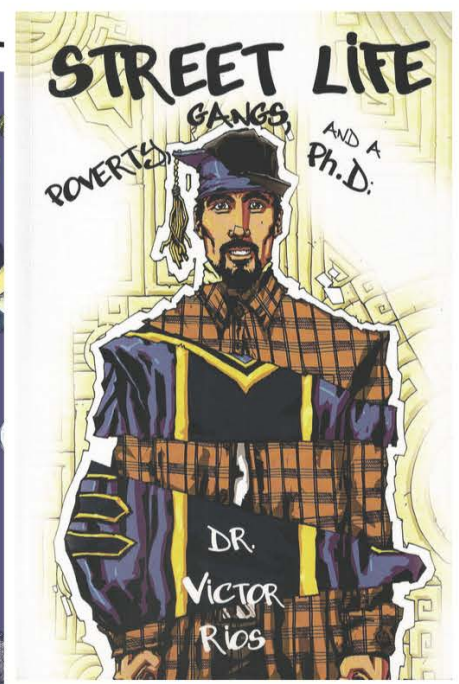
Reading ^{with} Relevance

Building INDEPENDENT READERS and THINKERS

A TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR

Street Life: Poverty, Gangs, and a Ph.D.

A memoir by Dr. Victor Rios



Recommended for:
Grade Levels
8th-10th

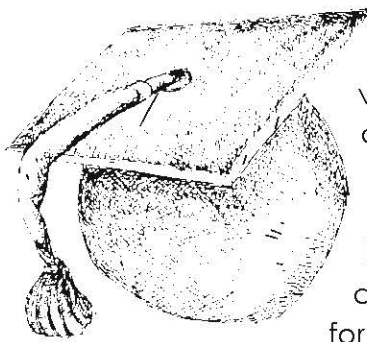
A tool to inspire change

This literacy curriculum is constructed around a content-rich memoir that builds students' literacy skills and supports their character development and self-confidence. Students are motivated to read because they relate to the strong, diverse, and resilient characters featured in our selected novels and because each session gives them the opportunity to connect what they've read to their own lives.

Developed, field-tested, and refined in our own tutoring and mentoring programs, this common core standards-based curriculum has inspired persistently low-performing students to engage with literature, make meaning in their lives, and improve their English language arts skills. Now, *Reading with Relevance* is available to help you dig deep into the social, emotional, and academic needs of your students, whether in your classroom, after-school program, or youth development agency!

Why *Street Life*

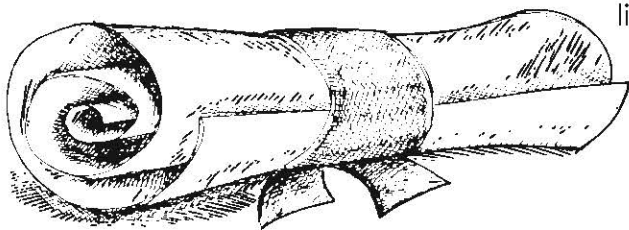
Street Life: Poverty, Gangs, and a Ph.D. traces the true-life coming-of-age story of Dr. Victor



Rios, a college professor who grew up amid poverty and violence in Oakland, CA; he demonstrates his perseverance and resilience by surmounting the incredible obstacles he faces to earn his college degrees. We chose this memoir for its insightful attention to some

powerful social and emotional themes: poverty, social inequality, violence, perseverance, and resilience. Students will find themselves relating to and being inspired by Victor's story; this curriculum will help students build connections between Victor's moving

life story and their own.



Poverty, Gangs, and a Ph.D.

This teacher's guide includes:

- A facilitator's guide with tips and resources for implementing the curriculum.
- A map of common core standards addressed through this program.
- Eight individual lesson plans, including vocabulary, discussion questions, journal prompts, extension activities, and all handouts.
- Two assessments to monitor student progress throughout the program.
- Regular checkpoints to help teachers assess their students' progress on ELA standards.
- A culminating essay-writing unit, along with instructions for final student portfolios.
- An appendix with additional teaching resources and activities to continue exploring this novel.

Session 3

pages 39-54

Vocabulary

appease (pg 39): v., to satisfy

paradox (pg 41): n., a problem where all answers are wrong

notorious (pg 45): adj., widely and unfavorably known

esteemed (pg 46): adj., respected and cared for

gratification (pg 48): n., pleasure

adversities (pg 54): n., hardships, challenges

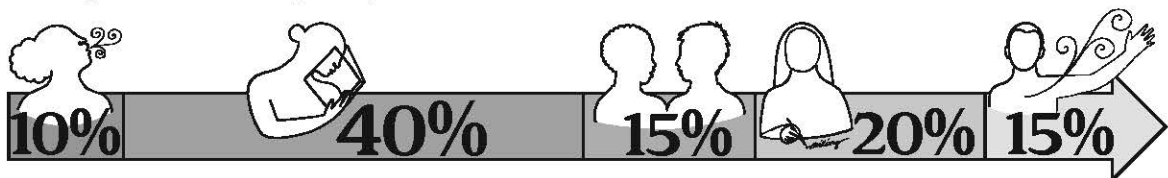
Today's Theme

Today's theme is **being a man**. A lot of the dangerous and violent activities that Victor experiences and participates in happen because he or someone else is trying to prove his "manliness" or macho-ness. Have students think about the way that manliness is perceived in Victor's life: violence, toughness, lack of feeling, risk-taking. How is this definition of "being a man" destructive for men and their communities? What are other ways students can define "being a man" that is more complete and healthy?

Note: Potentially sensitive topics for students in this section of reading include: puberty, violence, and gangs. Refer to the Social and Emotional Topics section of the introduction for more guidance.

Session 2 Recap

Poor, hungry, and homeless, Raquel decides to take Victor and his brother, J.T., across the border to the United States where she thinks life will be better. After a failed attempt, they make it across the border (a crossing that is harrowing and temporarily separates them) and head to Oakland, CA. But in Oakland, they live in condemned, rat-infested apartments with no heat and little to eat. Victor's mother eventually remarries, then divorces, and Victor has two younger siblings. Victor has disliked school ever since a teacher punished him for not reading the board (when he actually needed glasses), and he is so desperate to escape poverty that he quits school to get a job.





During Reading

“Mi’jo” (pg 40): short form *mi hijo*, my son—usually a term of affection

roly-poly bug (pg 39): *armadillidiidae* bug; looks like a tiny armadillo (hence its Latin name) and can roll into a tiny ball when threatened (hence its common name)

“You a Northerner or a Southerner?” (pg 42): a reference to two major rival gangs in California, also known as the Norteños and Sureños

“I don’t bang” (pg 42): a reference to a gangbanger, someone who is in a gang



Discussion Questions

- Why does Victor feel like a man?
- How are the gang members influencing Victor?
- What is the paradox that Victor faces?
- Why does Victor say he continues life in the gang even though he knows it will end badly for him? Have you ever felt like you had no other options?
- What options do you think Victor might have?
- What does the owner of the store Victor once shot up ask him to do? Do you agree this is a good repayment? What do you think Victor should do?
- What is it that Victor feels he has lost because of gang life? Do you agree?

Journal Prompt

BEING A MAN

- Victor says “you got to be a man and handle your business.”

What does it mean to Victor to be a man?

- » How are these traits of “being a man” destructive to Victor and to those around him?
- » Do you agree these are the only ways to “be a man”?
- » Can a man be gentle and kind? Why or why not?
- » What do you consider important traits for “being a man”?

FEELING IMPORTANT

- Victor wonders why he has to join a gang to feel important.

What are things in your life that help you feel important?

- » What activities or relationships are you in that help you feel valued?
- » Where are places that you can feel important in school, your family, your community?
- » If gangs give people a sense of importance and belonging, what are some other ways to give people these feelings?

Checkpoint

- Students should start each journal entry by clearly introducing the topic of their writing, and previewing what is to follow.
 - » Construct a focused thesis sentence.
 - » For example, “Today, I am going to write about _____.”

Extension Activity

Victor says he needs to “man up” and take care of his business. The men in the book all feel they have to act tough, violent, and destructive. What things are your students told (by others or by the media) that a man or a boy should do or should act like to “be a man”? Have them fill in the Act Like A Man box with all these stereotypes. Remind them that these stereotypes are constructed (created), not natural consequences of someone’s sex; nevertheless, they can be very powerful ideas that we feel we have to conform to. Once they have filled in the box, have them consider: Can it be limiting for a boy or man to behave in this restrictive manner? Why? Which emotions are you not allowed to express? What are the consequences for acting outside the box?

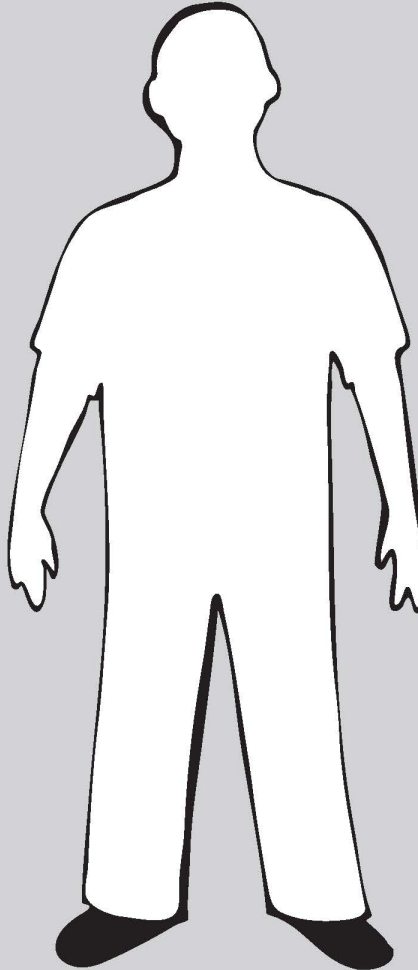
Materials:

- » Act Like a Man Handout

Name: _____

Act Like a Man

boys shouldn't cry



How is it limiting for a man to have to behave in this manner? Why?

What are the consequences for acting outside this box?

What are some of the consequences of always having to be the type of "macho" that defines this man?

Victor says he needs to "man up" and take care of his business, and the men in the book all feel they have to act tough, violent, and destructive. A "gender stereotype" is a generalized claim or assumption made about someone because of his or her sex (male/female), for example: "boys shouldn't cry" or "girls aren't tough." What things are you told (by others or by the media) that a man or a boy should do or should act like to "be a man"? Fill in the "Act Like A Man" box with all these stereotypes. Remember: these stereotypes are constructed (created), not natural consequences of someone's sex; nevertheless, they can be very powerful ideas that we feel we have to conform to.

Act Like a Man

Appendix

Additional Activities

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Get to Know MFI

Moving Forward Institute is a nonprofit publisher of social justice educational materials. The organization was created by the founders and staff of Moving Forward Education, a multi-generational tutoring and mentoring organization aimed at fostering academic and emotional success for underserved students in California. Since our founding in 2003, MFE has provided tutoring and mentoring services to thousands of students and has trained hundreds of young adults to enter careers in the educational field. This reading curriculum was developed by our leadership team and its advisory group, including credentialed teachers and college professors. This program has been successfully facilitated throughout California by achieving powerful and measurable results for students and schools. To learn more about our organization, or our research and data, please contact us today.

Our Purpose

At Moving Forward Institute, we know that students can be successful learners when their social and emotional needs are met.

We empower educators to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of their students by using culturally-relevant and gender-responsive reading curricula.

Training and Professional Development Services

While lesson plans are designed to be easily facilitated by classroom teachers and after-school staff alike, our in-person training and professional development services will ensure fully effective implementation of the literacy curricula.

Additionally, we offer technical support, classroom observation, and program evaluation services to help your program be successful. Contact us for more information about these services!

Contact Us

Contact us today to learn more about how the Moving Forward Institute can support your students and staff!

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If your students liked *Street Life: Poverty, Gangs, and a Ph.D.* . . .

*...they might love some of our other book selections! We suggest that you check out *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* or *We Beat the Street*. Please visit our website today to browse our full selection of socially and emotionally rich novel-based curricula!*