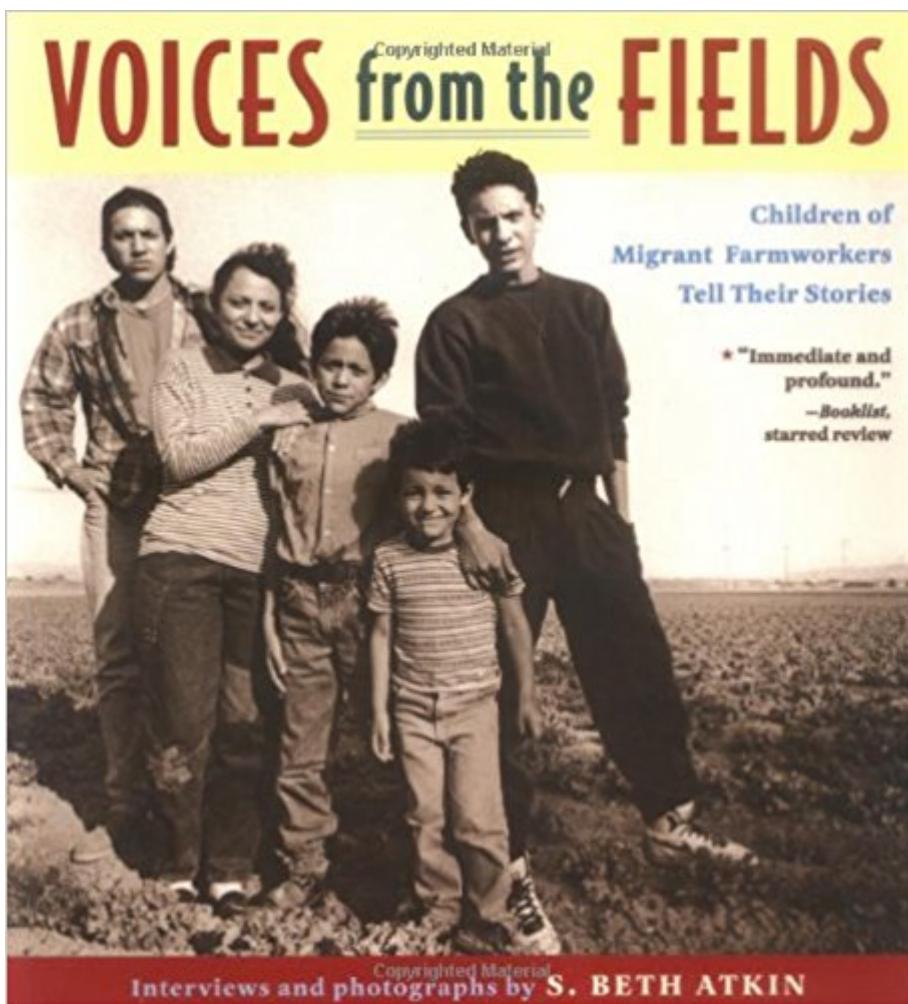


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# Voices From The Fields : Children Of Migrant Farmworkers Tell Their Stories



## **Synopsis**

Now in paperback, this critically acclaimed book features photographs, poems, and interviews with nine children who reveal the hardships and hopes of today's Mexican-American migrant farm workers and their families.

## **Book Information**

Paperback: 96 pages

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## **Customer Reviews**

PW called this compendium of interviews, poems and photographs spotlighting nine migrant Mexican-American children in California's Salinas Valley "a well-rounded, moving look at a small, struggling group." Ages 10-up. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

S. Beth Atkin, a graduate of Barnard College, is a photographer and writer whose editorial and commercial work appears in national publications. To do research for this book she moved from New York City to the Salinas Valley in California, where she attended educational programs and visited the homes and schools of migrant children. She frequently lectures about farmworker issues and about her work, which focuses on children and youth.

Ms. Atkin did a wonderful job gathering the stories and poems of these children, and putting them together in such a way that not only moved you, but also explained the desperation that went on in their lives. Some of the children wanted nothing more than to grow up and be just like their parents and pick strawberries and lettuce. You understood how much they admired their parents. Other

children embraced educational opportunities to move out of the lives their parents had. It was a beautifully put together book.

Great text with poetry and real narratives and family photos of the migrants. Each poem is written in Spanish and in English. Great for a classroom setting! My 8th graders loved this book!

Very good stories.

I am a teacher in Chicago Public Schools, 85% Latino population. Lovely book. Am using in conjunction with The Circuit this year. 6-8th graders. Great book. I LOVE PRIME!

This is a picture book with very short stories of migrant workers. I liked it but didn't feel I learned anything that I would get from a more comprehensive book.

Voices From The Fields is about nine different children all of which are Mexican/Spanish. Each tells a different story about their life. All of these children have one thing in common, they work in the fields or they have a close relative that works in a field. Their stories range from being involved with gangs to the difficulty of moving up in society. As different as these nine children may be, they all care very much for their families and believe nothing is more important. Throughout the book there are photographs of the children and their families. Photographs aid the text in describing conditions and emotions of the people being discussed. Through this mix of text and photographs emotions can be amplified. Children most importantly can aid from photographs being provided since they may not understand certain things they read; yet photographs may open the doors for them. The can better see different feelings such as joy or anger as well as people of different cultures in their own environment. It can also become apparent to children who read the book just how important family is to each of the nine children. They are all care for each other very deeply and this is obvious through the photographs. Julia Hirsch says "A far more complex and elusive relationship between text and image occurs in those books which use snapshots, or other similarly dramatic image: pictures which contain some emotional charge, such as a gesture caught in midstride, an object viewed from an unusual angle, an enigmatic facial expression, a blurred background, or deep shadows and diffuse lighting."(Hirsch, 142) Manuel Araiza talks about his home in the book and such details such as the home being comprised of one room with a kitchen. Next to the text where he is discussing these conditions is a picture of the house. Immediately we feel more sympathetic

towards Manuel since we are able to see with our own eyes what he is describing to us. The photographs in this book allow children readers to "experience" a minority culture that most children otherwise would never be exposed to. Hirsch later goes on to say, "Photography in recent years has also given "visibility" to yet other aspects of the human condition which have formerly been kept from most children."(Hirsch 150) One example of these "human conditions" is presented in the book for children to learn about. This condition is the life of migrant farm workers and their families. The photographs in this book depicting ethnic minorities, which also happen to be largely immigrants, provide for an excellent learning experience for children. Books focusing on different cultures and ways of life especially ones with such rich and detailed photography are good for children. These books help to educate on material that is beyond the classroom. Emotions, feelings, and different situations are better understood. It is often said that a picture is worth a thousand words, so by supplementing photographs with the text of the book children take with them a great deal more than would have been without photographs.

I write that as a title because if you look into these children's eyes there is hope and sadness. It bothers me to see how these children and their families are forced to live. I live in the N CA wine country and I see the same thing going on here. Exploitation of the workers, inadequate housing, awful pay. I would LOVE to see a follow up book about these families now that it is 10 years later to see how they have fared. The young gang member who left his gang, the teenage mother who dreams of going to college, the little boy who wants to buy his parents a car. Did any of them make it?

I have recommended this book to teachers, counselors, therapists, social workers, politicians and law enforcement officials. It takes you inside migrant families lives and lets you share with them their success, sacrifice, and nostalgia. Beth Atkins captures more than images in her photographs. She captures pride, hard work, and nostalgic happy lives away from home (Mexico). Originario de Moroleon, GTO Mexico

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