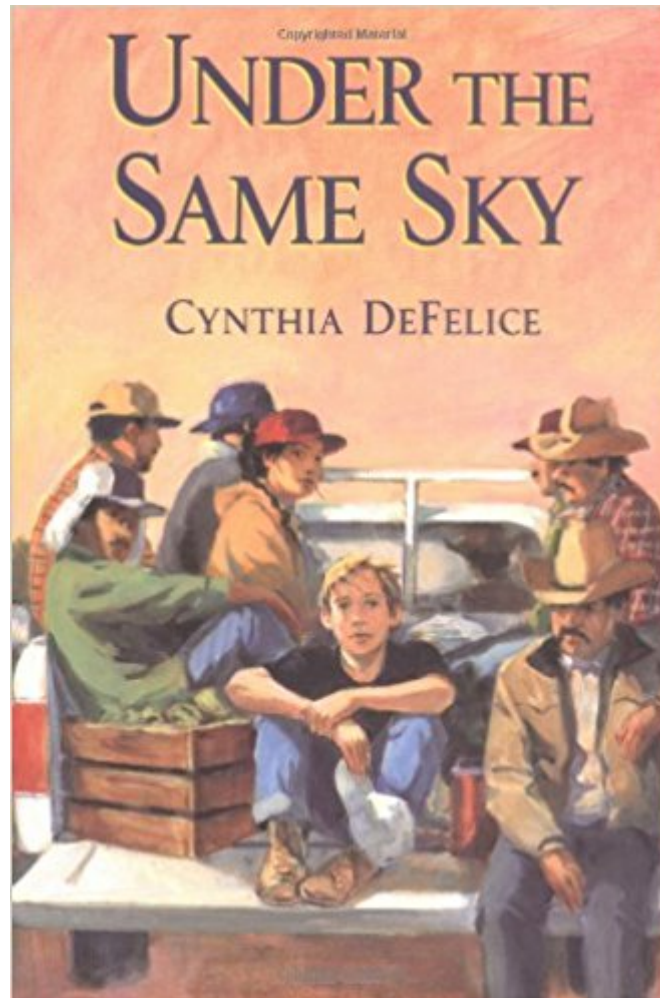




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Under The Same Sky



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Synopsis

A teenager discovers racism and romance on his father's farm For his fourteenth birthday, Joe Pedersen wants a motorbike that costs nearly a thousand dollars. But his mom says the usual birthday gift is fifty dollars, and his dad wants Joe to earn the rest of the money himself and "find out what a real day's work feels like." Angry that his father doesn't think he's up to the job, Joe joins the Mexican laborers who come to his father's farm each summer. Manuel, the crew boss, is only sixteen, yet highly regarded by the other workers and the Pedersen family. Joe's resentment grows when his father treats Manuel as an equal. Compared with Manuel, Joe knows nothing about planting and hoeing cabbage and picking strawberries. But he toughs out the long, grueling days in the hot sun, determined not only to make money but to gain the respect of his stern, hardworking father. Joe soon learns about the problems and fears the Mexicans live with every day, and, before long, thanks to Manuel, his beautiful cousin Luisa, and the rest of the crew, Joe comes to see the world in a whole different way. In her sensitive new novel, Cynthia DeFelice explores our dependency on migrant workers and simultaneous reluctance to let these people into our country and into our lives.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Grade 7-10-Joe Pedersen, 14, begrudgingly joins the migrant workers on his father's upstate New York farm to earn the \$1000 he needs to buy a Thunderbird motorbike. Determined to show his father he can keep pace with Manuel, the 16-year-old crew boss, Joe painfully acclimates to the

grueling routine of planting, hoeing, and weeding cabbages and picking strawberries. When immigration officials suddenly arrive at the farm, Joe discovers the fragile status of three workers who carry false papers in a desperate attempt to support their families back in Mexico. Previously insensitive to the plight of the migrants, Joe begins to grasp the hardships, uncertainty, loyalty, and courage of these laborers who are often ridiculed and threatened by his peers and other whites in the community. Joe's parents explain, however, the dilemma they face as employers and American citizens who must cooperate with contradictory INS regulations. A climactic raid during his parents' absence catapults Joe into decisions and actions that test his courage, character, and values. The teen's compelling coming-of-age experiences are tempered with sibling bickering, peer pressure, parental concerns, and cross-cultural bantering. His self-centered perspective gradually changes as his respect for his father's workers and his affection for Manuel's cousin, Luisa, grow. With sensitivity and self-deprecating humor and reflection, Joe narrates a well-paced story that illuminates the need for understanding, tolerance, and discussion of the role and rights of migrant workers in the United States. Gerry Larson, Durham School of the Arts, NC Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Gr. 5-9. At 14, Joe Pedersen is a spoiled rich kid who has never given a thought to the Mexican migrant laborers on his family's farm in upstate New York. But when he wants a fancy motorbike, his dad makes Joe earn the money by picking strawberries and hoeing cabbages with people he has never really seen before. Message drives the plot, and the lesson is heavily spelled out. But Joe's immediate first-person narrative humanizes the workers, including the "illegal aliens," and brings the reader close to their bitter struggle: the backbreaking, boring, sometimes dangerous work; and, for some, the constant dread of the police. Joe meets Luisa, who, at his age, has had to leave school, cross the border illegally, and labor to support her family far away. In the tense climax, he helps her escape the police--and he earns his father's respect for breaking the law. There's much to talk about here, especially if kids read this with Francisco Jimenez's *The Circuit* (1997), which tells the story from the migrant workers' viewpoint. Hazel Rochman Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

Great book for my challenge base lesson plan! Perfect book for 6/7th graders.

Good book. Teaches a lesson about hard work and commitment.

Awesome story so suspenseful I loved it my favorite part was when Joe got pulled over and Joe and Louisa kissed

This book has to be the best book I've ever read and I would recommend it to people who like the past

Nice book about culture and family

The book was very well written and thought out, but I just couldn't get into it like I normally do with books. It may sound harsh, but I just didn't like the story. It was also a relatively predictable book. All in all, I wouldn't recommend it for anyone to read.

This story is located in the Finger Lakes region where I live next to a 1,500 acre Organic Fresh Marker Vegetable Farm. It is very true to life. Our neighbors are Mexicans farm workers. Mostly young men who are hard working, honest, and willing to help a senior citizen like me. No trouble makers here. They come to work and that's what they do often 7 days a week with no complaining. They are NOT a drain on our government. They pay income tax and SS. Without them there would be very little food produced in the US. This is an interesting story and depicts a culture and a way of life as it really is. The part of the story about government harassment is also unfortunately true.

Under the Same Sky Recently, I read a great book called "Under the Same Sky" by Cynthia DeFelice. It is a realistic fiction piece set on a present day New York farm. The book revolves around a fourteen year old boy named Joe. He is your average teenage farm boy except that he hates farming. He is working with a Mexican crew. Some of the crew members are Manuel the crew leader, Luisa his cousin whom Joe likes, Mula who is very lazy and David who has one arm. They all work for Joe's father. Joe's family is his mom, dad and two sisters- LuAnn who is older and Meg who is younger. The story is that Joe really wants a motor bike for his birthday. So he asks his dad who is not willing to pay the \$800 that the bike costs. So to teach Joe the value of a dollar, he tells him he can work with the Mexican crew on the farm this summer. Joe grudgingly accepts the offer, knowing there is no other way for a fourteen year old to earn money. At first he is very slow and bad at working in the fields. He feels that he can't keep up with everyone else. Also Joe is having a hard time concentrating on his work because he has a crush on Luisa. As the summer goes on though, Joe gets better and better at working. All of a sudden the summer is stopped with a bang. When the

I.N.S comes, it is discovered that Luisa, Rafael and Frank are illegal immigrants who have to leave America. They must decide whether to stay or leave. My favorite of the story was when Joe's mom was explaining to him about the immigration system. The author said something that everyone who is against migrant workers should hear. She talked about the fact that people think that Mexicans are stealing jobs but really there are not a lot of people in this country willing to do back breaking labor for what is considered low pay. In the story Joe's mom had placed ads in the local newspaper looking for workers, but not one person answered. That really made me think about migrant workers and illegal immigration. I would recommend this book to anybody who is interested in stories about the plight of Mexican farm workers or if you like realistic fiction. You can learn a lot about farming and differences in people's lives and beliefs. It is a great book with an even greater message. I loved it and you probably will too.

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