



THE LAST OUT

DELVE DEEPER READING LIST



This list of fiction and nonfiction books, compiled by Jillian Ferrara Sturtevant of San Diego Public Library, provides a range of perspectives on issues raised by the POV documentary [THE LAST OUT](#) and allows for deeper engagement.

Three Cuban baseball players leave their families and risk exile to train in Central America and chase their dreams of playing in the United States. At the shadowy nexus of the migrant trail and pro sports, *The Last Out* chronicles their difficult journey, from multi-step immigration obstacles and learning English to the broken promises and dubious motives of agents.

Contributors

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ADULT NON-FICTION

Brioso, César. *Last Seasons in Havana: The Castro Revolution and the end of professional baseball in Cuba*. University of Nebraska Press, 2019.

Last Seasons in Havana explores the intersection between Cuba and America's pastime from the late 1950s to the early 1960s, when Fidel Castro overthrew Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista. César Brioso takes the reader through the triumph of the revolution in 1959 and its impact on professional baseball in the seasons immediately following Castro's rise to power.

Ferrer, Ada. *Cuba: An American History*. Scribner, 2021.

Spanning more than five centuries, *Cuba: An American History* provides us with a front-row seat as we witness the evolution of the modern nation, with its dramatic record of conquest and colonization, of slavery and freedom, of independence and revolutions made and unmade. Along the way, Ferrer explores the sometimes surprising, often troubled intimacy between the two countries, documenting not only

Gómez, Laura E. *Inventing Latinos: A New Story of American Racism*. The New Press, 2020.

Who are Latinos and where do they fit in America's racial order? In this "timely and important examination of Latinx identity" (Ms.), Laura E. Gómez, a leading critical race scholar, argues that it is only recently that Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Dominicans, Central Americans, and others are seeing themselves (and being seen by others) under the banner of a cohesive *racial* identity. And the catalyst for this emergent identity, she argues, has been the ferocity of anti-Latino racism.

Guerriero, Leila, editor. *Cuba on the Verge: 12 Writers on Continuity and Change in Havana and Across the Country*. Ecco, 2017.

As the US and Cuba move toward the normalization of diplomatic relations after an epic fifty-six-year standoff, we find ourselves face-to-face with one of the few places in the world that has been off limits to most Americans. We know that Cuba is changing, but from what and into what? And what does this change mean for the Cuban people as well as for the rest of the world?

Helg, Aline. *Our Rightful Share: The Afro-Cuban Struggle for Equality, 1886-1912*. University of North Carolina Press, 1995.

In *Our Rightful Share*, Aline Helg examines the issue of race in Cuban society, politics, and ideology during the island's transition from a Spanish colony to an independent state. She challenges Cuba's well-established myth of racial equality and shows that racism is deeply rooted in Cuban creole society. Helg argues that despite Cuba's abolition of slavery in 1886 and its winning of independence in 1902, Afro-Cubans remained marginalized in all aspects of society.

Tiant, Luis. *Son of Havana: A Baseball Journey from Cuba to the Big Leagues and Back*. Diversion Books, 2019.

In *Son of Havana*, Tiant puts his huge heart on his sleeve and describes his road from fields strewn with rocks and rubbish in Havana to the pristine lawns of major league ballparks. Teammates, opponents, family, and media also weigh-in—including a foreword by fellow Red Sox legend Carl Yastrzemski and the first in-depth interview ever with Hall of Fame catcher Carlton Fisk on the magic behind these Boston batterymates.

ADULT FICTION

Acevedo, Chantel. *The Distant Marvels*. Europa Editions, 2015.

The story of a lifetime told in the eye of a hurricane. Maria Sirena tells stories. She does it for money—she was a favorite in the cigar factory where she worked as a *lettora*—and for love, spinning gossamer tales out of her own past for the benefit of friends and family. But now, like a modern-day Scheherazade, she will be asked to tell a story so that eight women can keep both hope and themselves alive.

Bevin, Teresa. *Dreams and Other Ailments / Sueños y Otros Achaques*. Gival Press, 2001.

This engaging bilingual (English/Spanish) collection of 10 stories is an excellent medium for escaping while also learning about the Cuban experience in the United States, with its roots in Cuba. Contains an array of personal experiences centered around Latino characters. There is life and tragedy but always humor and hope.

Luiselli, Valeria. *Lost Children Archive*. Vintage Books, 2020.

This novel tells the story of a family's summer road trip across America - a journey that, with profound humanity, probes the nature of justice and equality in America today. A mother and father set out with their kids from New York to Arizona. In their used Volvo - and with their ten-year-old son trying out his new Polaroid camera - the family is heading for the Apacheria: the region the Apaches once called home, and where the ghosts of Geronimo and Cochise might still linger. The father, a sound documentarist, hopes to gather an "inventory of echoes" from this historic, mythic place. The mother, a radio journalist, becomes consumed by the news she hears on the car radio, about the thousands of children trying to reach America but getting stranded at the southern border, held in detention centers, or being sent back to their homelands, to an unknown fate. But as the family drives farther west - through Virginia to Tennessee, across Oklahoma and Texas - we sense they are on the brink of a crisis of their own. A fissure is growing between the parents, one the children can feel beneath their feet. They are led, inexorably, to a grand, unforgettable adventure - both in the harsh desert landscape and within the chambers of their own imaginations. Told through the voices of the mother and her son, as well as through a stunning tapestry of collected texts and images - including prior stories of migration and displacement - this is a story of how we document our experiences, and how we remember the things that matter to us the most.

Obejas, Achy. *The Tower of the Antilles: Short Stories*. Akashic Books, 2017.

The Cubans in Achy Obejas's story collection are haunted by islands: the island they fled, the island they've created, the island they were taken to or forced from, the island they long for, the island they return to, and the island that can never be home again.

Rodríguez Milanés, Cecilia. *Marielitos, Balseiros and Other Exiles*. Ig Publishing, 2009.

A panoramic portrait of the Cuban American community, *Marielitos, Balseiros and Other Exiles* shares the joys, tragedies, and amazing resiliency of the Cuban immigrants who arrived in this country via the Mariel boat lift of 1980 (marielitos) and the “rafters” (balseiros) who came in the years afterward. The stories in this debut collection reveal the full social, economic and emotional scope of the immigrant experience, from the repression that many of the “boat people” experienced in Castro’s Cuba, the discrimination they encounter upon their arrival in America, and their struggles to build a new life in the United States.

White, Randy Wayne. *Cuba Straits*. G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 2015.

Doc Ford’s old friend General Juan Rivera has gone into the business of high-profile collectibles, but when he manages to obtain a collection of letters written by Fidel Castro between 1960 and 1962 to a secret girlfriend, it’s not a matter of money anymore. Rivera has stumbled way out of his depth. Those letters contain a secret that someone cannot allow to be made public. A lot happened between Cuba and the United States in those years. Many men died. A few more will hardly be noticed.

YOUNG ADULT NON-FICTION

Alsaid, Adi, editor. *Come On In: 15 Stories About Immigration and Finding Home*. Inkyard Press, 2020.

This exceptional and powerful anthology explores the joys, heartbreaks, and triumphs of immigration, with stories by critically acclaimed and bestselling YA authors who are shaped by the journeys they and their families have taken from home—and to find home.

Cockroft, James D. *Latinos in Béisbol*. F. Watts, 1996.

Details the history and contributions of Latin American players in major league baseball, describing the obstacles, including racism, that they have had to face.

Engle, Margarita. *The Poet Slave of Cuba: A Biography of Juan Francisco Manzano*. Henry Holt & Co., 2006.

Born into the household of a wealthy slave owner in Cuba in 1797, Juan Francisco Manzano spent his early years by the side of a woman who made him call her Mama, even though he had a mama of his own. Denied an education, young Juan still showed an exceptional talent for poetry. His verses reflect the beauty of his world, but they also expose its hideous cruelty. Powerful, haunting poems and breathtaking illustrations create a portrait of a life in which even the pain of slavery could not extinguish the capacity for hope.

Hyde, Natalie. *The Cold War and the Cuban Missile Crisis*. Crabtree Publishing Company, 2016.

Through a lens of primary sources, this fascinating book looks at the pivotal crisis of the Cold War during which the Soviet Union set up nuclear missiles in Cuba. The key leaders, including Fidel Castro, Nikita Khrushchev, and John F. Kennedy are introduced, and the complexities of the crisis are covered including proxy wars and communication systems. Relations today between countries are examined to consider whether a new Cold War may be looming.

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

Engle, Margarita. *Your Heart, My Sky: Love in a Time of Hunger*. Atheneum, 2021.

Acclaimed author Margarita Engle tells a “deeply felt and engrossing” (*Horn Book Magazine*) story of love in a time of hunger inspired by her own family’s struggles during a dark period in Cuba’s history.

Hesse, Karen. *The Music of Dolphins*. Scholastic Inc., 2005.

After a plane crash off the coast of Cuba, a four-year-old survives, nurtured by dolphins. At adolescence, the girl is “rescued” by the Coast Guard and turned over to a scientist who has a government grant to study the part language acquisition plays in socialization. Mila, the otherworldly “dolphin girl,” is enthusiastic to please, learning to speak words and write her thoughts on a computer, but gradually she understands that she is a prisoner “in the net of humans.”

Moreno, Nina. *Don’t Date Rosa Santos*. Hyperion, 2019.

Rosa Santos is cursed by the sea—at least, that’s what they say. Dating her is bad news, especially if you’re a boy with a boat. But Rosa feels more caught than cursed. Caught between cultures and choices. Between her abuela, a beloved healer and pillar of their community, and her mother, and artist who crashes in and out of her life like a hurricane. Between Port Coral, the quirky South Florida town they call home, and Cuba, the island her abuela refuses to talk about.

Osa, Nancy. *Cuba 15*. Delacorte Press, 2003.

Violet Paz has just turned fifteen, a pivotal birthday in the eyes of her Cuban grandmother. Fifteen is the age when a girl enters womanhood, traditionally celebrating the occasion with a quinceañera. But while Violet is half Cuban, she’s also half Polish, and more importantly, she feels 100% American. Except for her zany family’s passion for playing dominoes, smoking cigars, and dancing to Latin music, Violet knows little about Cuban culture, nada about quinces, and only tidbits about the history of Cuba.

White, Ellen Emerson. *A Season of Daring Greatly*. Greenwillow Books, 2017.

Eighteen-year-old Jill Cafferty just made history. Her high school’s star pitcher, she is now the first woman drafted by a major league baseball team. Only days after her high school graduation, she’ll join the Pittsburgh Pirates’ Class A Short Season team...but not everyone is happy to have her there.

BOOKS FOR YOUNGER LEARNERS AND CHILDREN

Deedy, Carmen Agra. *Martina, the Beautiful Cockroach: A Cuban Folktale*. Peachtree, 2007.

The beautiful Martina Josefina Catalina Cucaracha doesn't know coffee beans about love and marriage, so when suitors come calling, what is she to do? Luckily, she has her Cuban family to help! While some of the Cucarachas offer Martina gifts to make her more attractive, only Abuela, her grandmother, gives her some useful advice: spill coffee on his shoes to see how he handles anger. At first, Martina is skeptical of her Abuela's suggestion, but when suitor after suitor fails the Coffee Test, she wonders if a little green cockroach can ever find true love.

Jennings, Terry Catasús. *The Little House of Hope*. Holiday House, 2022.

As Esperanza and her family settle into their new house, they all do their part to make it a home. When other immigrant families need a place to stay, it seems only natural for the family in la casita to help. Together they turn the house into a place where other new immigrants can help one another. Esperanza is always the first to welcome them to la casita. It's a safe place in a new land.

Leatherdale, Mary Beth. *Stormy Seas: Stories of Young Boat Refugees*. Annick Press, 2017.

This book presents five true stories about young people who lived through the harrowing experience of setting sail in search of asylum: Ruth and her family board the St. Louis to escape Nazism; Phu sets out alone from war-torn Vietnam; José tries to reach the U.S. from Cuba; Najeeba flees Afghanistan and the Taliban; Mohamed, an orphan, runs from his village on the Ivory Coast. Aimed at middle grade students, *Stormy Seas* combines a contemporary collage-based design, sidebars, fact boxes, timeline and further reading to produce a book that is ideal for both reading and research.

Winter, Jonah. *Béisbol!: Latino Baseball Pioneers and Legends*. Lee & Low Books, 2001.

Baseball, known as America's favorite pastime, is a favorite sport in Latin America as well. In this fascinating and colorfully written collection of profiles, author/illustrator Jonah Winter—following the success of *Fair Ball!*, his earlier book on the Negro Leagues—gives us a guide to Latino heroes, including little known pioneers of the sport.

POETRY AND MEMOIR

Blanco, Richard. *Directions to the Beach of the Dead*. University of Arizona Press, 2005.

In his second book of narrative, lyric poetry, Richard Blanco explores the familiar, unsettling journey for home and connections, those anxious musings about other lives: “Should I live here? Could I live here?” Whether the exotic (“I’m struck with Maltese fever ...I dream of buying a little Maltese farm...”) or merely different (“Today, home is a cottage with morning in the yawn of an open window...”), he examines the restlessness that threatens from merely staying put, the fear of too many places and too little time.

***Carry On: Poetry by Young Immigrants*. Owlkids Books, 2021.**

Carry On began in a high school in Outremont, Quebec, where author and poet Simon Boulerice conducted creative-writing workshops for young newcomers to Canada. As the students began writing, their poems gave voice to their reflections on leaving family, friends, and countries of origin to make new homes and connections in their new home, Canada.

García Márquez, Gabriel. *I’m Not Here to Give a Speech*. Translated by Edith Grossman. Vintage International, Vintage Books, 2014.

Throughout his life, Gabriel García Márquez spoke publicly with the same passion and energy that marked his writing. Now the wisdom and compassion of these performances are available in English for the first time. *I’m Not Here to Give a Speech* records key events throughout the author’s life, from a farewell to his classmates delivered when he was only seventeen to this Nobel Prize acceptance speech. Written across a lifetime, these speeches chart the growth of a genius: each is a snapshot offering insights into the beliefs and ideas of a world-renowned storyteller.

Weiss, Mark, editor. *The Whole Island: Six Decades of Cuban Poetry*. University of California Press, 2009.

Cuba’s cultural influence throughout the Western Hemisphere, and especially in the United States, has been disproportionately large for so small a country. This landmark volume is the first comprehensive overview of poetry written over the past sixty years.