

## First & Second Homes

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Many Latino poets have explored what it means to live in the U.S. while retaining, even over many generations, deep connections to an ancestral homeland. How do poets express a sense of displacement and exile? What role do cultural memory and nostalgia play? How do the histories of war, national sovereignty, shifting borders, and the quest for economic security affect how poets understand themselves, their families, and their communities?

**Read an essay on  
this theme by  
Víctor M. Macías-González**



This brochure was compiled from  
*A project reader to Latino Poetry, The  
Library of America Anthology,*  
Rigoberto González, editor, ©2024.  
The full resource is at  
<https://www.latinopoetry.org>

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## Discussion Guide First & Second Homes

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The Center for the Book, in collaboration with New Hampshire Humanities and UNH, and thanks to a grant from the Library of America invites you to join us in a celebration of Latino Poetry here in the Granite state in 2024/2025. Our celebration will center around *Latino Poetry: The Library of America Anthology*, edited by Rigoberto González, 2024.

A national public humanities initiative directed by Library of America with generous support from the National Endowment for the Humanities and Emerson Collective, comprising a groundbreaking anthology, events around the country, and an online media archive.

Una gran iniciativa pública en el campo de las humanidades, dirigida por Library of America con el generoso apoyo del Fondo Nacional para las Humanidades y Emerson Collective, que comprende programas públicos por todo el país; un archivo multimedia; y una nueva antología sin precedentes.

<http://nhsl.dncr.nh.gov/latino-poetry>

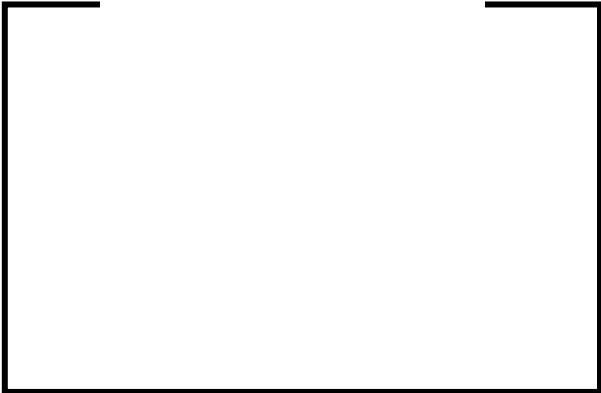
## Start with these poems

“The Floating Island” by Pablo Medina  
(*Anthology*, p. 293)

“Tinta” / “Ink” by Mayra Santos-Febres  
(*Anthology*, p. 438)

“Exiles” by Juan Felipe Herrera  
(*Anthology*, p. 279)

Notes on the theme generally



These three poems are also at  
<https://www.latinopoetry.org/humanities-themes>

## Questions to Consider

1. What did you expect based on the title of the poem? Were your expectations met?
2. Did the structure or tone of any of the poems affect your reading experience?
3. Did the poem remind you of any other poems (or novels, or movies)?
4. What is the relationship between our sense of home and our identity? How does the interplay between where we're from (and everything this can mean) and who we are animate these poems? How might the tension between these two notions (homeland and self) inform a person's feeling of Americanness?
5. “Exiles” opens with a fragment of a diary entry by the artist Edvard Munch that seems to allude to his painting *The Scream*. Its associations with feelings of angst or deep, persistent anxiety seem to imbue the rest of the poem. What might be at the source of this anxiety and alienation? Overall, how does the degree of closeness between each poem's speaker and an ancestral home color the emotional landscape of each poem?
6. Where do you think the speaker of each poem is situated geographically? What is the “here” and “there” of each poem? Does the speaker seem to be telling their own story or that of someone else? How does this embodied distance reflect or contradict metaphorical closeness with a homeland?

7. Consider the landscapes and settings depicted in each poem. How do the descriptions of landscape, and our experience of it, inform our understandings of the speakers' sense of belonging (or not) to a home they're currently in or one they've left behind? How might these descriptions illuminate a feeling of “querencia” or “morriña”?
8. How does the experience of “crossing” both physical and spiritual thresholds figure in these poems? Consider how this experience relates to notions of border and diaspora.

## Poems for further reading

“Danzón inconcluso para Noche e Isla / Unfinished Danzón for Night and Island” by Excilia Saldana (p. 162)

“Los poetas solos de Manhattan / The Lonely Poets of Manhattan” by Eugenio Florit (p. 128)

“Lejos / Far Away” by Marjorie Agosín (p. 212)

“El Salvador” by Javier Zamora (p. 546)

“‘Sick’ in America” by Alan Pelaez Lopez (p. 514)

“At the Rio Grande Near the End of the Century” by Ray Gonzalez (p. 272)

“Parallel Universe” by Cynthia Guardado (p. 492)

**Page numbers are from *Latino Poetry, The Library of America Anthology***