



One Community, One Book
The Tortilla Curtain by T.C. Boyle
SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *The Tortilla Curtain* is a story about migration from Mexico to the United States in search of economic well-being, in this instance by “undocumented” Mexican laborers or “Mexican illegals” in search of the “American Dream.” At its core, however, it is a story about disparities in wealth and other unequal resource distributions within and between countries and people and the violations of fundamental human rights that commonly exist as a consequence—the exploitation and abuse of foreign labor, ethnic and racial discrimination, the marginalization and oppression of women, and so forth. Can you spot these and other human rights themes in the book? Where? Does one or more of them dominate the telling of this story? If so, which? Why?
 - a. The online publisher’s guide to this book¹ observes that “[t]he novel is forged on the cultural, social, and financial differences between the Mossbachers and the Rincóns. It alternates between the two couples’ points of view, allowing the reader to enter the lives of both families.” The publisher’s guide then asks: “How does this technique propel the story? Do you feel that you got to know each of the couples equally well? Was the author fair in his portrayal of each of the couples? Is he too harsh in his portrayal of the Mossbachers, as one reviewer suggested?” How do you answer these questions, especially the last one?
2. What factors caused Cándido Rincón and his pregnant wife América to leave Mexico in search of a better life in the United States? Are they remediable? How? How not? What is the “American Dream” and do Delaney, Krya, and Jordan Mossbacher live it? Is it desirable? Worthy of protection? Why? Why not?
 - a. At a point of despair (p. 180), Cándido, is “[d]runk for a purpose, for a reason. Drunk because he was fed up with the whole yankee gringo dog-eat-dog world where a poor man had to fight like a conquering hero just to keep from starving to death” Is Cándido’s perception an accurate view of life in the United States? If so, what do we mean by the “American Dream”? Is it real or just a dream?
3. After Cándido and América entered the United States, they suffered numerous instances of contempt and deprivation, ranging from ethnic and racial

¹ See <http://66.102.7.104/search?q=cache:pTi8Qvc7TIQJ:www.bookmovement.com/app/readingguide/view.php%3Fratings%26readingGuideID%3D607+tortilla+curtain+people+staring+cars+america&hl=en&gl=us&ct=clnk&cd=2>.

discrimination to lack of food, medical care, and other basic needs to actual physical assault, including rape. Did Cándido and América have a right to expect better treatment and greater generosity than they did? If so, how? If not, why not? Did the Mossbachers and others well-to-do like them have a legal and/or moral obligation to treat them hospitably, kindly, and with generosity? If so, how? If not, why not?

- a. On one occasion, when América walks to a potential day job, she felt people in cars staring at her with disgust, wishing she would go back to where she came from (p. 19):

She had to walk back up the canyon in the bleak light of the declining day while the cars swished by her in a lethal hissing chain, and in every pair of eyes that screamed, *Get out, get out of here and go back where you belong!*—and how long before one of them tore up the dirt in front of her and the police were standing there demanding her papers?

Are América's sensations real or paranoid? Do US Americans think ill or less of persons of different race or nationality? What preconceptions do they have about Hispanic immigrants? Are they the same as for Asian immigrants? African immigrants? How do each differ, if at all?

4. Delaney, Kyra, and others in their luxurious gated community (Arroyo Blanco Estates) frequently dine at ethnic (including Mexican) restaurants. How do they justify their contempt for people of another culture while simultaneously embracing its many facets, such as food, language, and architecture? Do they see the people of a culture as distinct from it?
5. In the beginning of the story, immediately after hitting and injuring Cándido with his car, Delaney—previously having described himself as a “liberal humanist” (p. 3)—was consumed with guilt. However, when shortly thereafter he realized that Cándido was an illegal alien, “Delaney felt his guilt turn to anger, to outrage” (p. 11). Why?
6. After seeing litter and trash—“a little Tijuana”—midst the fragile ecology of Topanga Canyon when searching for Cándido following the car accident, “Delaney was seething, ready to write his congressman, call the sheriff, anything—but then checked himself. Maybe he was jumping to conclusions. Who knew who this man was or what he was doing. Just because he spoke Spanish didn't make him a criminal. Maybe he was a picnicker, a bird-watcher, a fisherman; maybe he was some naturalist from South of the Border studying the gnatcatcher or the canyon wren . . .” Why was Delaney willing to jump into political action against the rights of people he believed to be illegal immigrants, yet hold different standards and expectations for individuals interested in nature? Consider Delaney's occupational concerns as a nature writer (p. 32):

He tried to confine himself to the flora and fauna of Topanga Canyon and the surrounding mountains, but increasingly he found himself brooding over the fate of the pupfish, the Florida manatee and the spotted owl, the ocelot, the pine marten, the panda. And how could he ignore the larger trends—overpopulation, desertification, the depletion of the seas and forests, global warming and loss of habitat? We were all right in America sure, but it was crazy to think you could detach yourself from the rest of the world, the world of starvation and loss and the steady relentless degradation of the environment. Five and a half billion people chewing up the resources of the planet like locusts and only seventy-three California condors left in all the universe.

Of course, Delaney is right to be concerned about our deteriorating environment. But does this passage suggest some double standard of duty or obligation toward the natural environment, on the one hand, and human suffering, on the other? Does it suggest different socioeconomic priorities as between the rich and the poor? Delaney later writes a column, *Pilgrim at Topanga Creek* (pp. 76-79) where he celebrates, “as intensely as Wordsworth’s leech-gatherer,” human unity with “the whole grand scheme of things, drinking from the same fount as the red-tailed hawk.” But his holism seems not to include human beings except as they feed Malthusian overpopulation trends of hunger and disease that strain ecological sustainability such that the poor themselves are a kind of plague—“*norteamericanos* . . . , hordes of them, jumping in and out of cars, hustling into stores and hustling back out again with their bags full of beer and wine and little sweet things to put in their mouth. They looked at Cándido like he was a leper” (p. 91). What is your response to this seeming tension between environmental degradation and global poverty? Which is more important? Given that there are only 24 hours in a day, to which should each of us devote most of our time and energy?

7. Delaney writes an article about a recent camping experience he had (p. 76). A member of the Sierra Club, Save the Children, the National Wildlife Federation, and the Democratic Party, he sees his camping as a positive experience that brought him closer to nature. Meanwhile, Cándido and América camp every night out of necessity. Delaney is furious when he realizes what Cándido is doing (p. 11). How does Delaney reconcile his camping experience with his outrage at Cándido’s camping? Is he a hypocrite? An ethnical or racist hypocrite?
8. Later, in a discussion with his conservative neighbor Jack Jardine (pp. 100-102), who speaks against immigration and argues that the borders should be closed down, Delaney argues, hesitatingly: “I don’t know. I lean more to the position that we live in a democracy I mean, we all have a stake in things, and locking yourself away, from the rest of society, how can you justify that?” How do you answer Delaney’s question? Do you lean as he does? Why? Consider

Jack's reply: "Safety, Self-protection. Prudence. You lock your car, don't you? Your front door?" To which, after Jack's "cluck of the tongue, a shift from one hip to the other, blue eyes, solid as stone," Delaney replies: "That's racist, Jack, and you know it" (p. 101). To which Jack retorts: "Not in the least—it's a question of national sovereignty. Did you know that the US accepted more immigrants last year than all other countries of the world *combined* . . . ? And that's the *legal* immigrants, people with skills, money, education. The ones coming through the Tortilla Curtain down there, those are the ones that are killing us. They're peasants, my friend. No education, no resources, no skills—all they've got to offer is a strong back." In turn, Delaney replies: "Do you realize what you're saying? Immigrants are the lifeblood of this country—we're a nation of immigrants—and neither of us would be standing here today if it wasn't." Then follows this rebuttal and surrebuttal: "Clichés," says Jack. There's a point of saturation. Besides which, the Jardines fought in the Revolutionary War" Responds Delaney: "My grandfather came from Bremen and my grandmother was Irish—does that make me any less a citizen than the Jardines?" With whom do you agree? Is Jack a racist? Is he wrong? Is Delaney's response relevant? Does it rise effectively to Jack's challenge? Imagine if the would-be immigrants were not from Mexico, but from the Middle East. How might Delaney respond then? Does his environmental newsletter column about introduced species and population conflicts suggest an answer? What is your viewpoint? How would you respond?

9. Delaney felt pity for the way Cándido was treated when he was shoved and fell against Delaney's car in the parking lot of the grocery store. Yet, when Delaney meets Kyra for lunch at an Indian restaurant and gives the keys of his new replacement car to a young Latino valet, he feels a "deep shameful stab of racist resentment—did they *all* have to be Mexicans?—that went against everything he had believed in all his life" (p. 149). Later, he encounters and challenges José Navidad distributing flyers in Arroyo Blanco Estates. He grabs José's arm with force, outraged: "The man was a thief, a liar, the stinking occupant of a stinking sleeping bag in the state forest, a trespasser, a polluter, a Mexican" (p. 229). He asks himself "what was happening to him, what was he becoming?" (p. 229). How do you answer this question? How does Delaney? Are his responses natural, unavoidable, inevitable? Are they appropriate? How would you react if you were in Delaney's position?
10. Having concluded that Cándido walked in front of his car to get insurance money, Delaney wants to believe that Cándido is responsible, also for the vandalism that occurs in and near Arroyo Blanco Estates (e.g., graffiti saying "Pinche Puta"—fucking whore, directed at his wife Kyra). But there is no reason to suspect Cándido or any other immigrant, and ultimately Delaney finds evidence that absolves Cándido. He discovers that Jack Jardine, Jr. is responsible. But Delaney's response is to destroy the evidence. Further, he persists in his misbegotten belief despite the proof that Cándido committed no vandalism. Why?

11. On a hot day, when Kyra meets Delaney for lunch following Delaney's purchase of a new car, she notices an Afghan dog locked in a Jeep Cherokee parked outside the restaurant. She becomes irate that someone has left a dog in a locked car in hot weather—"the animal could die of heat exhaustion," she shouts at the unperturbed parking lot attendant (p. 151)—and so she tries, unsuccessfully, to get the dog out of the car. Soon thereafter, she confronts the owner and chastises him for his accused negligence: "Don't you know you could have killed the poor animal? Don't you care?" The dog's owner does not seem to care. Instead, he expresses vulgar irritation with Kyra—"Why don't you just fuck off, lady" (p. 153), and drives off. Was his behavior warranted? Should the dog's owner have taken Kyra's concern so dismissively? Do not animals have rights?
12. And what of Kyra's behavior in the above-described encounter? A high-end real estate agent, worried about the invasion of too many brown people in her neighborhood, her strong feelings for the rights of the dog seem to outweigh her concern for human suffering, for the rights of immigrants. Instead of dedicating herself to the poor, she dedicates herself to the rich and, in the end, wages war on the street corner day labor market—the "labor exchange"—that had become the source of gainful employment for Cándido, América, and other immigrants (legal and illegal). She believes that groups of Mexican and other immigrants milling about in search of day work will discourage home buyers and undercut her real estate business. Is Kyra right or wrong in this judgment? To identify more with the needs of a dog than the needs of immigrants? Is her behavior tantamount to saying that the rights of animals may trump human rights? If so, is this appropriate? Delaney is not sure. He wrestles with his feelings, "trying to reconcile the theoretical and the actual" (p. 185):

Those people had every right to gather on that street corner—it was their inalienable right, guaranteed by the Constitution. But whose constitution—Mexico's? Did Mexico even have a constitution? But that was cynical too and he corrected himself: he was assuming they were illegals, but even illegals had rights under the Constitution, and what if they were legal, citizens of the USA, what then?

Who is right, Kyra or Delaney? Are non-citizens protected by the US Constitution? Note that the Fifth and Fourteenth amendments to the US Constitution guarantee due process of law to "persons," a category of people larger than "citizens." Note also that, in Plyer v. Doe, 457 U.S. 202 (1982),² the US Supreme Court held, at p. 210, that, "[w]hatever his [sic] status under immigration laws, an alien is surely a 'person' in any ordinary sense of that

² See <http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/scripts/getcase.pl?court=US&vol=457&invol=202>.

terms. Aliens, even aliens whose presence in this country is unlawful, have long been recognized as 'persons' guaranteed due process of law by the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments." Should non-citizens be protected by the U.S. Constitution? Why? Why not?

13. Consider the book's attention to animals. Are the coyotes metaphors for the immigrants and the pet dogs metaphors for the well-to-do white families in Arroyo Blanco Estates? The Mossbacher's two dogs and cat are named Osbert, Sacheverell, and Dame Edith, respectively, after three British siblings in the Sitwell family, all writers born in the early part of the 20th Century. The dogs were Kyra's—an expensive, somewhat unusual breed of small dogs (Dandie Dinmont terriers) originally bred "to hunt badgers, foxes, rats, and weasels." The breed has been popular with gypsies as well as aristocracy at various times in history. It can be protective of its property, wary of strangers, dominant, and independent. Does this description fit Kyra and Delaney as well?
14. Compare the Mossbacher's attitude toward their pets with that of the Rincóns. Is Cándido right to see the pets as anything but pampered, dispensable luxuries when he confiscates dog food bowls for use in cooking? Later, he sees one of them as a source of food for his family. He knows that the affluent residents of Arroyo Blanco Estates can replace the items and pets. Does this justify his thievery? Why? Why not?
15. Compare also the environmental impact of the Mossbachers and their neighbors versus that of the Rincóns. The former live luxuriously in their gated community. The latter are fighting off starvation deep in the ravine. But in each case, living in Topanga Canyon impacts its ecology. Arroyo Blanco Estates is imposed upon a fragile area in the hills, with wildlife—and the Rincóns—nearby, and ultimately there is a canyon fire caused by the Rincóns. Note the readiness of the residents of Arroyo Blanco Estates, without knowledge of the actual cause, to cast blame for the fire and the mob mentality that begins to overtake them. At the same time, Delaney realizes that floods, fires, and mudslides are events that can easily happen in this kind of ecosystem. Should the Rincóns be held accountable for the fire they caused? Are the residents of Arroyo Blanco Estates willing to take responsibility for their impact on the environment?
16. In an earlier scene, while Delaney hikes in the hills, Kyra checks on workers who are building a new fence around their property. Later, on a job-related tour, she drives to one of her favored business properties to lock it for the night. She finds a shopping cart on the lot and for that reason elects to tour and survey the grounds. She finds two Mexicans on the property who pretend to be hikers, but it soon becomes clear that they are actually camping on the property. Kyra is afraid they may attack her, and pretends to believe they are merely hikers. Are her fears warranted?

17. Arroyo Blanco Estates starts out with a gate at its entrance but quickly moves to a wall around the subdivision. Are the gate and walls a metaphor for the US-Mexican border, which is designed more to keep people out (from the South) than to keep people in (on the North)? At one point Delaney says to Kyra: "This [wall] isn't about coyotes, don't kid yourself. It's about Mexicans, it's about blacks. It's about exclusion, division, hate. You think Jack [Jardine] gives a damn about coyotes?" Is Delaney right? If so, are gated/fenced communities inappropriate in professedly democratic societies? In the end, it may be argued, all are penetrable, surmountable. So why bother? Is there not another way to deal with self-protection? If so, what? How?
18. América enters the United States pregnant. Not long thereafter, she gives birth to her daughter Socorro.³ Under US law, dating back to the 1898 US Supreme Court case of *US v. Wong Kim Ark* (169 U.S. 649),⁴ children born in the United States to non-citizen parents are considered US citizens. But all legal rights that Socorro had were denied, with disastrous results, due to América's illegal status and her inability, at great personal risk, to secure food, shelter, and health care as a consequence. Does the United States have a legal obligation to ensure the good health and well-being of its citizens—including Socorro, and without penalizing Socorro's parents? Does the international community as a whole?
19. América is brutally raped and robbed at the hands of another migrant worker as she walks through the canyon. She shares what happens to her with Cándido, at least in part. But neither Cándido nor América seek help from the police. Why? Does the threat of exposure which keeps migrants from seeking such basic services as police protection violate their human rights? Don't all persons, regardless of alienage or other status, have a right to basic bodily protection or to health care in the United States?
20. What are the responsibilities of the home countries and the countries of destination of immigrants when persons are forced to leave because their home countries are not providing employment, education, health care, or a voice in how their society is or should be run? Are their human rights being violated? Is the failure to promote and enforce international human rights standards, resulting in poor working conditions and falling or suppressed wages, a violation of human rights? Consider Cándido's realization that he could not go back to Mexico, "a country with forty percent unemployment and a million people a year entering the labor force, a country that was corrupt and

³ Names in the book seem clever. "Socorro" means help, aid in Spanish. "Rincón" means corner or nook and describes the kinds of places in which this family of the same name is forced to live. "Cándido" means rank/candid. Is the author using these names (like "América") in an effort to drive home messages? What about "Mossbacher"?

⁴ See <http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/scripts/getcase.pl?court=US&vol=169&invol=649>.

bankrupt and so pinched by inflation that the farmers were burning their crops and nobody but the rich had enough to eat" (pp. 199-200).

21. In recent years there have developed alternative identities to the traditional identification of each individual with one state and one state's interests (two states in the case of "dual nationals"). One of these alternatives is "supranational citizenship," involving the sharing of a common legal-political identity across national boundaries. The European Union (involving 27-member states at this writing) and The Commonwealth of Nations (consisting of 53 independent states, almost all of them former territories of the British Empire), are examples of "supranational" entities to which an individual can belong. As the Migration Policy Institute has articulated:⁵

With the rise of globalization, the concept of citizenship as a form of membership and identity in one nation-state has changed. . . . [M]igrants' transnational behavior has made national citizenship less relevant. As legal scholar Linda Bosniak has written, national affiliations do matter, but they are not necessarily paramount in many people's experiences.⁶

On the other hand, the rise of nativism, in part the result of globalization and concerns about the risks of immigration linked to terrorism, has reinvigorated debates about national membership and loyalty to one state. What these trends mean, both for states and for immigrants, is the subject of present and future research.

Would some form of "supranational citizenship" (a Western Hemispheric citizenship, for example?) or "global citizenship" (possibly under United Nations auspices?) resolve the difficulties of people like Cándido, América, and Socorro? How? How not?

22. Absent "supranational citizenship" in the Western Hemisphere and "global citizenship" under UN auspices (the present reality), the laws governing immigration are national laws and the law of international human rights. Which should take precedence? Can they be balanced? If so, how?

23. Reconsider the cycle of undocumented migration, which is rife with actual and potential human rights abuses from the country of origin, to the process of transition, to resettlement in the country of destination:

a. *Country of Origin*

⁵ See <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?id=369>.

⁶ L. Bosniak, "Denationalizing Citizenship" in *Citizenship Today: Global Perspectives and Practices*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, A. Aleinikoff & D. Klusmeyer, eds. 2001), pp. 237-52.

What problems in Mexico caused Cándido and América to leave in search of a better life? What are the obligations of the country of origin in this respect? The country of destination? The world community?

b. *Transit*

What dangers did Cándido and América face as they crossed the border? Were their human rights violated in any way? The US has proposed to build a wall along the US-Mexico border. How might this impact upon the human rights of people like Cándido and América?

c. *Country of destination*

Who should take responsibility for the rights and needs of undocumented migrants once they have crossed the border? Should undocumented migration be allowed?

24. The Preamble to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), of which the United States is a signatory, recognizes “the inherent dignity and . . . equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family,” and Article 1 of the UDHR proclaims that “[a]ll human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” and that “[t]hey are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.” *The Tortilla Curtain* opens with a quotation from John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*: “They ain’t human. A human being wouldn’t live like they do. A human being couldn’t stand it to be so dirty and miserable.” How do these two statements—one proclaiming an international standard for the treatment of all people, the other recognizing the human tendency to dehumanize those who challenge our sense of identity and worth—inform or influence your approach to the book’s plot and characters?

25. Other provisions of the 1948 UDHR are implicated throughout the book as well. Consider, for example, the following:

a. *Preamble, ¶ 5: . . . the peoples of the United Nations have in the [UN] Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women . . .*

In many ways throughout the book, we see a narrative on and reversal of traditional gender relations: Cándido in taking care of América, América having to go out and earn money after Cándido was injured (much to Cándido’s angst and even shame), her relationship with her father which was in some ways responsible for her coming with Cándido to the US. Thus, at p. 182, Cándido ruminates::

If she was lying to him it was to spare him, he knew that, and his heart turned over for her in his drunkenness. Seventeen years old, and

she was the one who'd found work when he couldn't, she was the one who'd had them sniffing after her like dogs, she was the one whose husband made her live in a hut of sticks and then called her a liar, a whore and worse. But as he lay there watching the sparks climb into the sky, the wine infesting his veins, knew he would follow her into that hut and slap his own pain out of her, and that was so sick and so bad he wanted nothing more in that moment than to die.

Did such disruption and tension in gender roles result in the abuse of América and her rights as a woman? What are the rights of women and of men and in relation to one another? Did Delaney and Kyra's socioeconomic well-being give them space and freedom to act outside of traditional gender roles, with Delaney as the homemaker and Kyra as the breadwinner? Is gender equality or inequality a function of wealth? Culture? Something else?

- b. *Art. 1: Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.*
Art. 5: No one shall be subjected to torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Throughout the book we are confronted with violations of bodily integrity: Cándido getting hit by a car, being beaten up several different times, getting pushed around, getting robbed. América being sexually assaulted, exposed to the elements, endangered by walking along the road. Do these violations of bodily integrity fall within the meaning of articles 1 and 5? Should they?

- c. *Art. 2: Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.*

Throughout the book, we see clearly the intersections of culture and ethnicity that have come to define the so-called US "melting pot" and the globalized society in which we live—use of the Spanish language and architecture (e.g., "Arroyo Blanco"), ethnic restaurants and grocery stores, the commercialization of Eastern religions (América cleaning Jim Shirley's Buddha imports). Yet, throughout the book at the same time, we are presented with fears of cultural, economic, moral, and social invasion from "the other." For example, Jack Jardine (p. 342):

It's an angry, fragmented society out there, Delaney, and I'm not only talking about your native haves and havenots, but the torrent of humanity surging in from China and Bangladesh and Colombia with no shoes, no skills, and nothing to eat. They want what you've got, my

friend, and do you really think they're going to come knocking at the door and ask politely for it?

How do you answer Jack Jardine's question? Why do you think the residents of Arroyo Blanco Estates are so willing to adopt isolated pieces of other cultures into their daily lives, yet are so resistant to opening up their community to people from cultures and communities outside their own?

- d. *Art. 7: All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of the Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.*

A prominent theme is that of discrimination and incitement to discrimination. From the very existence of the gated community of Arroyo Blanco Estates to the first meeting of its residents to Jack Jardine son's invidious spray-painting to the incessant stereotyping of the undocumented immigrants, the book is rife with examples of discriminatory thoughts, words, and deeds. Is discrimination a good or bad thing? All discrimination? Some? Which? Most governments are accountable for discrimination based on "race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status" (quoting UDHR art. 2). It is among the most fundamental of human rights principles. Are individuals and others in the private sector similarly accountable? Should they be? If so, when and how? If not, why not?

- e. *Art. 23 (1): Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.*

1) At pp. 93 and 131, América goes to work for the *patrón* (who subsequently turns out to be Jim Shirley from Arroyo Blanco Estates), (pg. 93 & 131). She is hidden in the domestic sphere from the protections that normally are guaranteed through public regulations in the formal labor environment. What human rights protections, proclaimed in Article 23, were violated in her informal employment arrangement through the labor exchange? Can the exposure to the same risks and human rights violations be said about Cándido's day labor working arrangements? Is the seeking of informal employment greater for women than for men?

- 2) On the one hand, Jack Cherrystone booms (p.192):

Why should we be providing jobs for these people when we're looking at a ten percent unemployment rate right here in California—and that's for citizens. Furthermore, I'm willing to bet you'll see a big reduction in the crime rate once the [labor

exchange is] closed down. . . . No offense, but it's beginning to look like fucking Guadalajara or something down there.

On the other hand, Cándido (at pp.199-200), "his feet like lead," staggers past "the storefronts, the bright windows, the cars line up like ciphers of the wealth that bloomed all around him, unattainable as the moon," despairs:

And what was it all about? Work, that was all. The right to work, to have a job, earn your daily bread and a roof over your head. He was a criminal for daring to want it, daring to risk everything for the basic human necessities, and now even those were to be denied him. It stank.

Is it a violation of human rights to deny access to employment, as Jack Cherrystone might have it? Is it a violation of human rights to be unemployed, as Cándido would seem to have it? Who is responsible for protection against unemployment and for just and favorable conditions of work? The state? If so, which state? Private business? The individual? Who should benefit? Everyone or working age? Non-citizens? Illegal or undocumented immigrants? Does the United States recognize the human right to employment?

f. Art. 25: Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself [sic] and his [sic] family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services

- 1) Muses Cándido (p. 10): "It was crazy to refuse treatment like that, just crazy. But he had. And that meant he was illegal—go to the doctor, get deported." What rights to health care do undocumented immigrants have? What rights to health care should they have? What would have happened had Cándido gone to the hospital? Whose responsibility would/should it be to pay for undocumented migrant health care? Cándido? The health care facility? The Mexican government? US taxpayer money? If it is true, as Cándido believes, that Mexico is a country "so pinched by inflation that the farmers were burning their crops and nobody but the rich had enough to eat" (p. 200), can it be said that Mexico is violating the rights of its citizens to food, or at least adequate food? Why? Why not? And what of the US government, especially in relation to residents below the so-called "poverty line"? Does the United States recognize the human right to health and health care? Should it? For citizens and non-citizens alike? Only citizens? And what about the other rights recognized in UDHR Article 25—food, clothing, housing, social services? Do these human rights extend to illegal or undocumented aliens? To Sorocco, a natural-born US citizen under US law (see Question 18, above)? Do

US citizens have a right to food, clothing, housing, social services? If not, should they? Are the rights to free speech and religion guaranteed in the US Constitution more important than the right to food, clothing, housing, and health care, which are not? Why? Why not?

- 2) Muses América (p. 29): "She wanted. Of course she wanted. Everybody who'd stayed behind to dry up and die in Tepoztlán wanted too—hell, all of Morelos, all of Mexico and the Indian countries to the south, they all wanted, and what else was new? A house, a yard, maybe a TV and a car too—nothing fancy, no places like the gringos built—just four walls and a roof. Was that so much to ask?" How do you answer América's question? Are a house, a yard, a TV, and a car guaranteed her as human rights? Should they be? Why? Why not?

- g. *Art. 29 (1): Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his [sic] personality is possible.*

How is "community" defined or used in the book? Does it include undocumented immigrant workers such as Cándido and América? What kind of community do the Mossbachers have? Is it restricted to Arroyo Blanco Estates? And, however demarcated, what is their duty towards it? Is it based on their economic well-being or do all members of the community, regardless of socio-economic status, have a duty to help others in times of need?

26. In the catastrophic end of the book (p. 355), after the fire, the torrential river flood, the desolation of América at the loss their baby girl, Cándido "felt the cold seep into his veins, a coldness and a weariness like nothing he'd ever known." Midst the dark water all around him "[h]e was beyond cursing, beyond grievance, numbed right through to the core of him." Nevertheless, "when he saw the white face surge up out of the black swirl of the current and the white hand grasping at the tiles, he reached down and took hold of it." Why? What is the author telling us here?