Delve Deeper into *El Velador*
A film by Natalia Almada

This multi-media resource list, compiled by Sara Franzoi of San Diego Public Library, provides a range of perspectives on the issues raised by the POV documentary *El Velador.*

Award-winning director Natalia Almada (*Al Otro Lado*, POV 2005; *El General*, POV 2009), returns with a beautiful and mesmerizing new film. From dusk to dawn, *El Velador* (*The Night Watchman*) accompanies Martin, a guard who watches over the extravagant mausoleums of some of Mexico’s most notorious drug lords. In the labyrinth of the cemetery, this film about violence without violence reminds us that amid the turmoil of a drug war that has claimed more than 50,000 lives, ordinary existence persists in Mexico and quietly defies the dead.

ADULT NONFICTION

**Culture and History of Mausoleums**

*Edwin Heathcote. Monument Builders: Modern Architecture and Death. 1999.* Structures built in response to death pose unique architectural challenges – challenges that transcend the physical to encompass symbolism, beliefs, and culture. Monument Builders highlights this rarely discussed yet fascinating building type, exploring the links between different perceptions of death and their expression in architecture over the course of the twentieth century. Sensitive but never somber, it features the work of an impressive international roster of architects as it moves from neo-classicist and modernist treatments of death to holocaust memorials and other difficult projects.

*Xavier Cronin. Going Out in Style: The Architecture of Eternity. 1997.* From a nationally renowned photographer and author team, *Going Out in Style: The Architecture of Eternity* provides an engaging and at times surprising look at America’s forgotten architecture: the mausoleum. Elegant, full-color photographs display the grandeur of the mausoleum, documenting the work of some of America’s most noted architects and in some cases the only remaining examples of a particular architect’s work.

*Burial Customs*

*Douglas Keister. Stories in Stone: A Field Guide to Cemetery Symbolism and Iconography. 2004.* Stories in Stone provides history along with images of a wide variety of common and not-so-common cemetery symbols, and offers an in-depth examination of stone relics and the personal and intimate details they display – flora and fauna, religious icons, society symbols, and final impressions of how the deceased wished to be remembered. Douglas Keister has created a practical field guide that is compact and portable, perfect for those interested in family histories and genealogical research, and is the only book of its kind that unlocks the language of symbols in a comprehensive and easy-to-understand manner.

*Martina Will de Chaparro, Miruna Achim. Death and Dying in Colonial Spanish America. 2011.* When the Spanish colonized the Americas, they brought many cultural beliefs and practices with them, not the least of which involved death and dying. The essays in this volume explore the resulting intersections of cultures through recent scholarship related to death and dying in colonial Spanish America between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. The authors address such important questions as:

What were the relationships between the worlds of the living and the dead? How were these relationships sustained not just through religious dogma and rituals but also through everyday practices? How was unnatural death defined within different population strata? How did demographic and cultural changes affect mourning?

*Penny Colman. Corpses, Coffins, and Crypts: A History of Burial. 1997.* Drawing on extensive historical and anthropological research, personal accounts, and interviews with people who work in the funeral industry, Penny Colman examines the compelling subjects of death and burial across cultures and societies. This comprehensive book also includes a list of burial sites of famous people, images in the arts associated with death, fascinating epitaphs and gravestone carvings, a chronology and a glossary, and over a hundred black-and-white photographs, most of which were taken by the author.

**Mexico’s Drug War**

*Courtney Farrell. The Mexican Drug War. 2012.* Essential Issues presents factual information on contemporary social issues, introducing and examining the topic from an array of political, societal, statistical, and scientific angles.

*Sylvia Longmire. Cartel: The Coming Invasion of Mexico’s Drug Wars. 2011.* Having followed Mexico’s cartels for years, border security expert Sylvia Longmire takes us deep into the heart of their world to witness a dangerous underground that will do whatever it takes to deliver drugs to a willing audience of American consumers. Channeling her long experience working on border issues, Longmire brings to life the very real threat of Mexican cartels operating not just along the southwest border, but deep inside every corner of the United States. She also offers real solutions to the critical
problems facing Mexico and the United States, including programs to deter youth in Mexico from joining the cartels and changing drug laws on both sides of the border.

**John Gibler. To Die in Mexico: Dispatches from Inside the Drug War. 2011.** Combining on-the-ground reporting and in-depth discussions with people on the frontlines of Mexico’s drug war, To Die in Mexico tells behind-the-scenes stories that address the causes and consequences of Mexico’s multibillion-dollar drug trafficking business. John Gibler looks beyond the myths that pervade government and media portrayals of the unprecedented wave of violence now pushing Mexico to the breaking point.

**Charles Bowden and Julián Cardona. Murder City: Ciudad Juárez and the Global Economy’s New Killing Fields. 2010.** Ciudad Juárez lies just across the Rio Grande from El Paso, Texas. A once-thriving border town, it now resembles a failed state. Infamously known as the place where women disappear, its murder rate exceeds that of Baghdad. Last year 1,607 people were killed, a number that is on pace to increase in 2009. In Murder City, Charles Bowden, one of the few journalists who has spent extended periods of time in Juárez, has written an extraordinary account of what happens when a city disintegrates. Interweaving stories of its inhabitants, a raped beauty queen, a repentant hitman, a journalist fleeing for his life with a broader meditation on the town’s descent into anarchy, Bowden reveals how Juárez’s culture of violence will not only worsen, but inevitably spread north.

**Howard Campbell. Drug War Zone: Frontline Dispatches from the Streets of El Paso and Juárez. 2009.** In this anthropological study of drug trafficking and anti-drug law enforcement efforts on the U.S.-Mexico border, Howard Campbell uses an ethnographic perspective to chronicle the recent Mexican drug war, focusing especially on people and events in the El Paso/Juárez area.

**ADULT FICTION**

**Carlos Fuentes and Edith Grossman. Destiny and Desire. 2011.** The severed head of Josué Nadal, floating in the Pacific Ocean off the shore of Mexico, remembers his life, friends, enemies, and lovers, and his involvement in the drug trade and the corruption frequently encountered in his country.

**Luis Alberto Urrea. Into the Beautiful North. 2009.** Nineteen-year-old Nayeli works at a taco shop in a Mexican village that is threatened by. Her father left for the US when she was young, but she realizes that by now most of the men in the village have also left town and gone up north to the US, leaving almost no men behind. Inspired by The Magnificent Seven, Nayeli decides to go north and find seven men who will rejuvenate her village and protect it from the bandidos.

**Roberto Bolaño. 2666. 2008.** Composed in the last years of Roberto Bolaño’s life, 2666 was greeted across Europe and Latin America as his highest achievement, surpassing even his previous work in its strangeness, beauty, and scope. Its throng of unforgettable characters includes academics and convicts, an American sportswriter, an elusive German novelist, and a teenage student and her widowed, mentally unstable father. Their lives intersect in the urban sprawl of Santa Teresa — a fictional Juárez — on the U.S.-Mexico border, where hundreds of young factory workers, in the novel as in life, have disappeared.

**Don Winslow. The Power of the Dog. 2005.** The seemingly disparate lives of a DEA agent, a drug lord, a call girl, a hit man, and a priest intertwine around a nexus of the drug trade involving the Latin American drug cartels, the American underworld, and the U.S. government.

**NONFICTION FOR YOUNGER READERS**

**Anita Ganeri. Journey’s End: Death and Mourning. 2004.** This book looks at how Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jewish, Christian and Muslim faiths mourn, and the rites and rituals surrounding death, including funerals and burials, and beliefs about the afterlife.

**Margaret Berrill. Mummies, Masks and Mourners. 2001.** Berrill discusses mummies from around the world, and shows how archaeologists and historians gather information to give a picture of how people lived and civilizations developed. This series focuses on the history of great discoveries, showing how archaeologists and historians gather clues and piece together evidence to give a picture of how people once lived and how civilizations developed.

**Courtney Farrell. The Mexican Drug War. 2012.** Elements of Mexico’s drug war such as cartels, police and government corruption, kidnappings, and The United States’ involvement are discussed in detail, as are the drugs that are traded such as marijuana, opium, heroin, methamphetamine, and ecstasy. Issues related to drug use such as child neglect and abuse, low user achievement, meth mouth, disease transmission, and its affects on children including their recruitment into cartels are covered. Legislation and programs to address drug use, such as the Merida Initiative, Controlled Substances Act, the use of paraquat, and the argument to legalize drugs are introduced.
**FICTION FOR YOUNGER READERS**

Michael Boughn. *Into the World of the Dead: Astonishing Adventures in the Underworld.* 2006. Into the World of the Dead takes preteens on a tour of the deep and dark places that haunt their dreams through a collection of stories from many cultures about the land of the dead. Dramatic retellings of legendary tales and striking photos of artwork and artifacts reveal the forces and events that have challenged humanity to envision this most forbidding of environments.

**FILMS, VIDEOS and BROADCASTS**

*The Two Escobars.* A film by Jeff Zimbalist; Michael Zimbalist; Nick Sprague; All Rise Films; ESPN Films. United States: ESPN Films, 2011. DVD Video: Spanish. While rival drug cartels warred in the streets, the Columbian national soccer team took a rapid rise to glory, with Andres Escobar its inspirational captain. After a mistake by Andres led to a loss at the 1994 World Cup, less than ten days later he was gunned down outside a bar, a tragedy documented in this thriller about the intersection of crime and sport.


*Drug Wars: The Camarena Story.* A film by Branko Lustig; Ann Powell; Rose Schacht; Mel Frohman; Christopher Canaan. United States: Artisan Home Entertainment, 2003, 1990. DVD Video: English. The film is based on the true story of the abduction and assassination of U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency agent Enrique "Kiki" Camarena, which marked a turning point in the war against drugs.