

## DELVE DEEPER READING LIST

# BRIMSTONE AND GLORY

A film by Viktor Jakovleski



This list of fiction and nonfiction books, compiled by Hanna Lee, MLIS of First Regional Library in Batesville, MS, provides a range of perspectives on the issues raised by the POV documentary *Brimstone and Glory*.

*The National Pyrotechnic Festival in Tultepec, Mexico, is a site of festivity unlike any other in the world. Conflagrant revelry engulfs the town, while artisans show off their technical virtuosity. For the three-quarters of Tultepec residents who work in pyrotechnics, the festival anchors their way of life. It is an explosive event with unrestrained delight and real peril. Plunging headlong into the fire, *Brimstone & Glory* honors the spirit of Tultepec's community and celebrates celebration itself.*

## ADULT NONFICTION

**DeVincent Hayes, Gianni. *Zambelli: The First Family of Fireworks: A Story of Global Success*. Paul S. Eriksson, 2003.**

The story of the Zambelli family, the world's largest manufacturer and exhibitor of fireworks, unfolds in this biography about an Italian family that came to America in search of a better life and, through hard work and determination, achieved extraordinary success in the pyrotechnic industry. The Zambellis have been in charge of some of the largest and most prestigious firework displays and have contributed to more than 100 years of Fourth of July celebrations. The moving stories behind the family and their business are intertwined with information about how and where fireworks are made, what goes on behind the scenes at a fireworks show, and what bigger and brighter fireworks will ignite the future.

**Kelly, Jack. *Gunpowder: Alchemy, Bombards, and Pyrotechnics: The History of the Explosive that Changed the World*. Basic Books, 2004.**

When Chinese alchemists fashioned the first manmade explosion sometime during the tenth century, no one could have foreseen its full revolutionary potential. Invented to frighten evil spirits rather than fuel guns or bombs—neither of which had been thought of yet—their simple mixture of saltpeter, sulfur, and charcoal went on to make the modern world possible. As word of its explosive properties spread from Asia to Europe, from pyrotechnics to battleships, it paved the way for Western exploration, hastened the end of feudalism and the rise of the nation state, and greased the wheels of the Industrial Revolution.

**Fehrenbach, T. R. *Fire and Blood: A History of Mexico*. Da Capo Press, 1995.**

There have been many Mexicos: the country of varied terrain, of Amerindian heritage, of the Spanish Conquest, of the Revolution, and of the modern era of elections and the rule of bankers. Mexico was forged in the fires of

successive civilizations, and baptized with the blood of millions, all of whom added tragic dimensions to the modern Mexican identity. T. R. Fehrenbach brilliantly delineates the contrasts and conflicts between them, unraveling the history while weaving a fascinating tapestry of beauty and brutality.

**Merchasin, Carol M. *This is Mexico: Tales of Culture and Other Complications*. She Writes Press, 2015.**

*This is Mexico* is a collection of essays on the often magical and mysterious—and sometimes heartrending—workings of everyday life in Mexico, written from the perspective of an American expatriate. By turns humorous and poignant, Merchasin's stories provide an informed look at Mexican culture and history, exploring everything from healthcare, Mexican-style, to religious rituals, and from the educational role of the telenovela to the cultural subtleties of the Spanish language.

## ADULT FICTION

**Borodale, Jane. *The Book of Fires*. Penguin Books, 2009.**

It is 1752, and seventeen-year-old Agnes Trussel is pregnant with an unwanted child. Facing certain misery at home, she flees rural Sussex for London. Overwhelmed by the crowded, grim streets, Agnes finds herself at the home of Mr. J. Blacklock, a brooding fireworks maker who hires her as an apprentice. As she learns to make joins his quest to make the most spectacular fireworks the world has ever seen. Meanwhile, the clock is ticking on Agnes's secret—but her mysterious mentor is hatching plans of his own.

**Jensen, Jane. *Millennium Rising*. Ballantine Publishing Group, 1999.**

Shortly after the change of the Millennium, in a tiny Mexican village, people of different faiths are flocking to Santa Pelagia from all over the planet to witness a miraculous visitation. Among them are twenty-four who experience something more personal: a messenger clothed in the raiments of his or her own beliefs—the Virgin Mary, an angel of Islam, the Hindu goddess Kali. And each is given the same terrifying message: the Day of Judgment is at hand.

**Rulfo, Juan. Translated from the Spanish by Ilan Stavans and Harold Augenbraum. *The Plain in Flames*. University of Texas Press, 2012. (Originally published in 1953.)**

Considered a classic of Mexican literature, Juan Rulfo's short story collection is set during the post-Revolutionary upheaval of 1920s Mexico. In these powerful stories, rural Mexicans living in poverty become disillusioned with the broken promises of the Mexican Revolution. This translation preserves the author's lyricism and the Spanish dialogue's "peasantisms".

**Urrea, Luis Alberto. *The Hummingbird's Daughter*. Little, Brown and Company, 2005.**

It is 1889, and civil war is brewing in Mexico. A 16-year-old girl, Teresita, the illegitimate but beloved daughter of the wealthy and powerful rancher Don Tomas Urrea, wakes from the strangest dream—a dream that she has died. Only it was not a dream. This passionate and rebellious young woman has arisen from death with a power to heal—but it will take all her faith to endure the trials that await her and her family now that she has become the Saint of Cabora.

**Paz, Octavio. *The Labyrinth of Solitude*. Translated from the Spanish by Lysander Kemp, Yara Milos and Rachel Phillips Belash. Grove Press, 1989 (Originally published in 1950).**

This short story collection by Nobel-prize winning author Octavio Paz explores Mexico's national identity, which has been shaped by both colonialism and indigenous cultures. The stories are both poetic and political, addressing topics such as the relationship between Mexico and the United States and the foundational myths of Mexican culture.

**Bolaño, Roberto. *The Savage Detectives*. Translated from the Spanish by Natasha Wimmer. Picador, 2007. (Originally published in 1998).**

New Year's Eve 1975, Mexico City. Two hunted men leave town in a hurry, on the desert-bound trail of a vanished poet. Spanning two decades and crossing continents, this remarkable quest is a journey told and shared by a generation of lovers, rebels and readers, whose testimonies are woven together into one of the most dazzling Latin American novels of the twentieth century.

## NONFICTION FOR YOUNGER READERS

**Ancona, George. *Fiesta Fireworks*. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books, 1998.**

This book provides an introduction to the festival honoring and celebrating San Juan de Dios, the patron saint of Tultepec, Mexico, and offers a look at the preparation of fireworks in full-color photos.

**Einhorn, Kama. *The Explosive Story of Fireworks!* Simon Spotlight, 2015.**

This book for early readers describes the history of fireworks from their invention in China to their use in celebrations today and explains the science behind pyrotechnics.

**Murphy, Charles. *Celebrations Around the World*. Gareth Stevens Publishing, 2017.**

It's time to party with people around the world! Readers will want to celebrate with the fascinating, diverse peoples featured in this culturally enriching book. Da de los Muertos in Latin America, Festima in West Africa, Loy Krathong in Southeast Asia, and Japans Obon are just some of the festivals featured. Important vocabulary and cultural concepts are stressed in the accessible text, while striking photographs highlight important associated events.

**Wood, Alix. *Explosives Expert*. PowerKids Press, 2014.**

There are a surprising number of ways to make an honest living by blowing things up. From demolition to film pyrotechnics, there has never been a better time to enter the field of explosives. This book provides up-to-date overviews of several specialty careers and will enable readers to channel their own destructive tendencies into a productive profession.

## FICTION FOR YOUNGER READERS

**Barss, Karen. *Fireworks for All*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011.**

For Martha and the other dogs in town, Saturday-night fireworks are the worst part of summer—they are so scary to canines with their sensitive ears! Crabby Mrs. Demson couldn't agree more. In fact, she's collecting signatures for a petition to ban fireworks, and Martha is happy to add her pawprint to the list. But when Helen and her friends are devastated about the fireworks ban, Martha realizes that she helped Mrs. Demson ruin their fun. Can Martha find a way to reverse the ban and still protect her doggy ears?

**Flora, James. *The Fabulous Firework Family*. M.K. McElderry Books, 1994.**

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**Medine, Meg. *The Girl Who Could Silence the Wind*. Candlewick Press, 2012.**

All her life, Sonia has been asked to pray for sick mothers or missing sons, as worried parents and friends press silver milagros in her hands. Sonia knows she has no special powers, but how can she disappoint those who look to her for solace? Still, her conscience is heavy, so when she gets a chance to travel to the city and work in the home of a wealthy woman, she seizes it. At first, Sonia feels freedom in being treated like all the other girls. But when news arrives that her beloved brother has disappeared while looking for work, she learns to her sorrow that she can never truly leave the past or her family behind.

**Stork, Francisco X. *Disappeared*. Scholastic/Arthur A. Levine Books, 2017.**

Sara, a reporter at her Mexican hometown, writes a column in the local newspaper detailing numerous cases of abducted young girls in Ciudad Juárez, including her best friend Linda. When the young woman receives a coded email message hinting at her friend's whereabouts and captors, she investigates further and discovers how deeply the corruption and criminality runs in her city. Her brother, Emiliano, lives a normal life focusing on soccer, his crush Perla Rubi, and a budding artisanal crafts business.