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# The Book Of Unknown Americans: A Novel (Vintage Contemporaries)



## Synopsis

â œA triumph of storytelling. HenrÃ-quez pulls us into the lives of her characters with such mastery that we hang on to them just as fiercely as they hang on to one another and their dreams. This passionate, powerful novel will stay with you long after youâ ve turned the final page.â • â Ben Fountain, author of Billy Lynnâ s Long Halftime Walk Â A boy and a girl who fall in love. Two families whose hopes collide with destiny. An extraordinary novel that offers a resonant new definition of what it means to be American. Arturo and Alma Rivera have lived their whole lives in Mexico. One day, their beautiful fifteen-year-old daughter, Maribel, sustains a terrible injury, one that casts doubt on whether sheâ ll ever be the same. And so, leaving all they have behind, the Riveras come to America with a single dream: that in this country of great opportunity and resources, Maribel can get better. When Mayor Toro, whose family is from Panama, sees Maribel in a Dollar Tree store, it is love at first sight. Itâ s also the beginning of a friendship between the Rivera and Toro families, whose web of guilt and love and responsibility is at this novelâ s core. Woven into their stories are the testimonials of men and women who have come to the United States from all over Latin America. Their journeys and their voices will inspire you, surprise you, and break your heart. Suspenseful, wry and immediate, rich in spirit and humanity, The Book of Unknown Americans is a work of rare force and originality. This eBook edition includes a Reading Group Guide.

## Book Information

File Size: 2393 KB

Print Length: 306 pages

Publisher: Vintage (June 3, 2014)

Publication Date: June 3, 2014

Language: English

ASIN: B00H6JFIGO

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #34,855 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #17 inÂ Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Literature & Fiction > United States > Hispanic American #45 inÂ Books >

## Customer Reviews

Arturo and Alma Rivera lived a happy life in Mexico until their beautiful teenage daughter, Maribel, sustains a serious injury in an accident. Unsure if she'll ever be the same again, they migrate to the United States—Delaware, specifically—where Maribel will be able to attend a special school and hopefully begin to recover some semblance of normalcy. But America is difficult for the Riveras—the job Arturo secures to sponsor their journey to America is brutal, Maribel doesn't seem to be making much progress in school, and Alma struggles with English, and trying to become acclimated to a different life. "Because a place can do many things against you, and if it's your home or if it was your home at one time, you still love it. That's how it works." The one bright spot is that the Riveras meet Celia and Rafael Toro, who came to the U.S. years ago to escape the destruction and violence in Panama. The Toros are more settled into their American lives, although Celia in particular longs to return home, at least for a visit. And when their teenage son, Mayor, who struggles with self-confidence in the shadow of his more athletic, popular older brother, sets eyes on Maribel for the first time, he finds himself completely in her thrall, and wants nothing more to spend time with her, despite what others perceive as her challenges. As the relationship between the Riveras and the Toros grows stronger, it is tested—as are relationships within each family—by secrets, incorrect assumptions, fears, longing, and struggles. And a number of incidents occur which set in motion a chain of events which will affect each member of both families in vastly different ways.

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