



Six Kinds of Sky: A Collection of Short Fiction

Luis Alberto Urrea

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"Home isn't just a place, it is also a language." Born in Tijuana, the son of an Anglo woman and a Mexican father, Urrea says that "Home isn't just a place, it is also a language." In these six stories—each wandering beneath different kinds of sky, from the thick Mazatlan starry night to the wide open spaces of the Sioux Nation in South Dakota—Urrea maps the spiritual geography of what he calls "home."

"I always thought Luis Urrea was six skies rolled into one (I mean that in a good way), and this book proves that he speaks with a multitude of passionate, powerful and hilarious voices. This book is a beautiful kind of crazy."—Sherman Alexie

"With this new collection of stories, Luis Urrea makes the short list of essential American writers. His glittering landscapes, which warp and ennoble the human spirit, bring to mind the work of Salman Rushdie. I found myself going back and rereading whole passages; Urrea's got a way with words that raises the bar for the rest of us. What a marvel of a book!"—Demetria Martínez

"Urrea goes in for the big picture, and there seems to be no world he cannot capture. He writes with wit and ingenuity, and the stories possess a powerful sense of acceleration. With each story I was transported to an intense and fully imagined world."—Robert Boswell

Luis Urrea is a novelist, essayist and poet. His books have received The American Book Award for non-fiction, 1998, and The Western States Book Award for Poetry, 1994, and *The New York Times* named his non-fiction *Across the Wire* a Notable Book of the Year, 1993. Luis lives in Chicago.

Six Kinds of Sky: A Collection of Short Fiction Details

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Dave says

Urrea is truly a master of voice. The characters of his fiction are distinct and convincing (even the characters in the magical realism inflected first story seemed startlingly authentic). Each one of the six pieces in this collection seems to deal with 'home' or 'place' and the effort it takes to travel to it or escape from it (and even what 'it' really is).

Karen Michele says

I chose Luis Alberto Urrea's *Six Kinds of Sky* because I rated *The Hummingbird's Daughter* 5 stars and because I love short stories. I was not disappointed and I have just added most of his other books to my TBR. I enjoyed the touch of magical realism and the multiple points of view and voices woven throughout the stories. The last three were my favorites. That may be because they are the freshest in my memory, though, because all of the stories were excellent. They were emotional and poignant and moved me to the core. I loved this line from "A Day in the Life": "Our lives are gone." "No, viejo, our lives are here." She puts her hand on his chest. "Our lives are here, no?" Although many of the stories were filled with sadness, Urrea threaded a lot of humor throughout the stories as well. His "Afterward" was also worth reading. I don't often feel that way about afterwards, but this one brought out the reason we read and listen to story and why we are grateful to those who can write them in both short and long form successfully as Urrea has done.

Sasha says

The details in these stories wrap the reader right into the atmosphere of the setting; Urrea immerses us in the scene with description, and the characters feel authentic. I liked the magical twist at the end of "Mr. Mendoza's Paintbrush", and the adolescent narrator's perspective was well done, really drawing me in to the boy's comical take on life in a small Mexican village. In "Taped to the Sky" I liked the character of Don Her Many Horses—he seemed to drive into the narrative fully formed, both no-nonsense and playful, and his sarcasm was very revealing. The wry sense of humor really comes through in these characters and lightens the narrative.

As for the afterword, I liked how Urrea talked about writing as "a way of seeing, a way of being. The world is not only the world, but your personal filing cabinet. You lodge details of the world in your sparkling nerve-library that spirals through your brain...You write, even if you can't always 'write'". Writers are always observing, making little connections and keeping them, even if they don't appear in writing right away. I also loved the quote about "understory" as "the dark stirrings in the basement of the story...Down there, where it's cobwebby and dusty, oily and stinky, weird and a little frightening, that's where the jars with the metaphors and similes and symbols and dreams are stored". Both of these ideas rang true for me, and I liked the imagery his descriptions evoked.

Jim Cantu says

Each new book I read from Luis reminds me of what a gifted storyteller he is.

Les says

4.5+

I love Urrea's writing and will be reading more by him very soon. This is one of my favorite collections of short stories ever. There is a GG Marquez-esque magically real story and the other five are realistic, poetic, brilliant, and wonderful. I am not often a fan of short stories because I do not like to invest time in a world that will end so quickly. In these stories, Urrea creates worlds that exist on their own, suck you in, and continue to grow despite the relatively few pages they actually inhabit. Brilliant stuff.

Kalen says

I never thought a volume of short stories could move me as much as this did. Brilliant through-and-through. *A Day in the Life* and *Father Returns from the Mountain* are particularly powerful. Urrea's *The Hummingbird's Daughter* is big and epic but he's proven he can handle the short form just as deftly. I've got a library book right now and will be ordering this one because it needs to be on my bookshelf.

C says

Read as four and a half stars.

Brilliant. Funny. Gritty. Heartbreaking. Haunted. Whimsical.

What a collection of short stories. Just fantastic.

Rebecca McNutt says

A compelling collection of stories that anybody can relate to, *Six Kinds of Sky* is sometimes very unconventional but very well-written with a style all its own.

Wade says

This collection reminds me that one of my favorite genres is farce. When it's done well, farce makes you laugh at the situations without turning away from the hard realities it describes. This book does that - makes me laugh and almost cry at the same time. While I don't know much about the realities of Mexican-US border life, I suspect that the underlying realities that Urrea describes are actually as stark and unjust, even if the actual people are not as broadly drawn, as slapstick, as he writes them. His descriptions of American missionaries are perfect! I'll be reading more of his books.

John Paul Jaramillo says

I was unfamiliar with Urrea's work but I've been reading through my list of Latino authors and I have to say there was much to admire. I enjoyed "Mr Mendoza's Paint Brush" perhaps most out of the collection. Urrea gives a mix of straight story telling and farce and perhaps a bit of the surreal mixing in the story. This seemed to be a constant throughout the stories. I also enjoyed "Bid Farewell to Her Many Horses"--a story about a white guy mourning the loss of his wife. A nice mix of the tragic and the beautiful. I was also intrigued by the final non-fiction essay of the book "Amazing Gracxe: Story and Writer." I liked the insight into Urrea's craft and thought process.

Paul Mena says

To read the short stories of Luis Alberto Urrea is to travel to forbidden places, magical places, forgotten places. His ability to spin a tale is matched by his eloquent, almost-musical prose. Each of these stories, from "Mr. Mendoza's Paintbrush" to "Bid Farewell to Her Many Horses", left me spellbound and breathless. My only consolation after finishing was that I could easily go back and read them again. Needless to say, this is the collection that made me an unabashed fan of his work.

Sheila A. says

Loved it...very gritty and heart-rending....you could feel the characters emotions!!

meg says

a really, really excellent collection. maybe one of my favorite books ever.

Caroline says

six short stories. a bit uneven, but full of honest, eloquent turns around outcasts and generally

underrepresented characters. this one's not for kids. and it's a fast read.
