

The Tortilla Curtain

General Information

- Written by the American T.C. Boyle who was born in 1948
- Published by Viking Press in 1995 after California's vote on Proposition 187, which would restrict illegal immigrants from public resources (e.g. health care)

Summary

The novel presents the difficulties of immigrants in the US by telling the story of Cándido and América who left Mexico in the hope of a better future. They face many problems including racism. In contrast to that Delaney and his wife Kyra, an upper middle-class couple, are unhappy due to the appearance of more and more immigrants in their hometown. Their behavior is ruled by prejudices and wrong assumptions which turn into a racist attitude. Throughout the novel both couples interact with each other beginning with a car accident in which Delaney hits Cándido.

Main Characters

Delaney Mossbacher

- Upper middle-class white American
- Lives with his wife Kyra, her son Jordan and two dogs in a community in Los Angeles
- Passionate about hiking and the outdoors in general
- Does not work but runs a blog about nature
- Claims to be in favor of immigrants but is actually a racist

Kyra Mossbacher

- Real estate agent who is concerned about the rising number of immigrants
- Works a lot and spends little time with her family

Cándido Rincón

- Illegal immigrant from Tepoztlán, Mexico
- Wants to achieve the American Dream but fails
- América gets pregnant by him and he takes her to the States with the promise of a better life
- Is not able to work due to his injury after the car accident

América Rincón

- 17-year-old illegal immigrant from Tepoztlán, Mexico
- Pregnant
- In love with Cándido even though he was married to her own sister, who cheated on him, and is responsible for their terrible situation
- Loss of dignity and morals as she starts stealing in order to survive

Quiz

- a) What does the name "Tortilla Curtain" refer to?

- b) Name three major themes of the novel

- c) How did Cándido and Delaney first meet?

- d) Why did Cándido and América decide to come to the US?