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## Corridos

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discursive storytelling in *A Gentleman in Moscow* but also scan the headlines daily for breaking news. That reads an entire collection of poetry in one sitting but still satisfies the need to click on a McSweeney’s link posted by a friend. This will grow the independent reader who will search out companion readers to help grapple with the darkness in *Lincoln in the Bardo* (Saunders), or who will know to put a book aside when it’s too much.

Deep reading takes time, but its rewards are deeper, too. I did not become the reader, learner, and

teacher I am today without a commitment to deep reading, and today I hold the same hope for my students’ future learning as I do for my own. **EJ**

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**BETSY WOODS** teaches English and serves as department chair at Milford High School in Milford, Ohio. She also teaches Composition at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio, and serves as the professional coordinator for the Ohio Writing Project at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. She has been a member of NCTE since 2007.

**Corridos**

*A poem by Güero*

I used to not respect corridos,  
 thought they were just songs  
 for narcos and nacos alike.  
 I would not even listen  
 to family and friends’ attempts  
 to explain why I was wrong.  
 Then my English teacher Ms. Wong  
 teamed up with Mr. Gil,  
 our local history guru,  
 and they did a thematic unit  
 on corridos and border history.  
 I learned that the Spanish ballad  
 was adapted by mestizo folk  
 to serve as way to transmit truths  
 that the rich and powerful  
 might try to hide.

The coolest thing to me  
 was how Mexican Americans  
 here on the border  
 used corridos to counter lies  
 about heroic men and women  
 who struggled against erasure.  
 Juan Cortina, for example,  
 and his war against the Texas Rangers.  
 We read excerpts from a book  
 by Américo Paredes:  
*With His Pistol in His Hand*  
 and we listened to a corrido  
 that grew longer and more popular  
 every day that Gregorio Cortez  
 evaded the unjust law.

Now I’m fascinated by these epics  
 and want to know more.  
 Sure, there are musicians  
 who praise crime cartels,  
 composing ballads  
 that I can’t stand,  
 but that doesn’t take away  
 from the draw and power  
 of the original form.  
 There are so many untold tales to sing . . .  
 maybe I’ll write my own someday.

—DAVID BOWLES  
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**DAVID BOWLES** is a Mexican American author and professor from South Texas. Among his novels are the award-winning *The Smoking Mirror* and the novel-in-verse *They Call Me Güero*. “Corridos” is excerpted from an in-progress sequel to *They Call Me Güero*. Bowles can be reached at [www.davidbowles.us](http://www.davidbowles.us).