



Two White Rabbits

Jairo Buitrago , Rafael Yockteng (Illustrations) , Elisa Amado (Translation)

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In this moving and timely story, a young child describes what it is like to be a migrant as she and her father travel north toward the US border.

They travel mostly on the roof of a train known as The Beast, but the little girl doesn't know where they are going. She counts the animals by the road, the clouds in the sky, the stars. Sometimes she sees soldiers. She sleeps, dreaming that she is always on the move, although sometimes they are forced to stop and her father has to earn more money before they can continue their journey.

As many thousands of people, especially children, in Mexico and Central America continue to make the arduous journey to the US border in search of a better life, this is an important book that shows a young migrant's perspective.

Two White Rabbits Details

Date : Published October 1st 2015 by Groundwood Books

ISBN : 9781554987412

Author : Jairo Buitrago , Rafael Yockteng (Illustrations) , Elisa Amado (Translation)

Format : Hardcover 32 pages

Genre : Childrens, Picture Books, Cultural, Family



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From Reader Review Two White Rabbits for online ebook

Liz Murray says

A heart wrenching tale that doesn't shy away from the brutal truth of the journey north for too many migrants today. It's not an easy book to read, all the more so because of the young girl narrator. She counts many of the things she sees, and talks about the shapes she sees in the clouds, as children do; we also see people being taken away off the train by armed men and the face of the father as he takes this journey, especially as he looks in his wallet as the girl is looking at the two white rabbits she has been given.

I'm not sure how I would use this book in a classroom. There is no ending as such, the story ends with a view of the border wall and the two rabbits running away. We don't know if the girl and her father make it across. We also don't know why they are fleeing, but there is no doubt the journey wouldn't be taken if it wasn't a matter of life or death.

This story is written originally in Spanish but the translation is flawless and conveys the emotion well. I'm not sure how easy it would be to get the Spanish version. An English version certainly gets it in the hands of many more people who need to hear this story. It's haunting and will stay with you a long while. I don't know of any other books that treat the issue of forced migration in this way, aimed at a young audience.

Highly recommended and to be treated with care in an early elementary classroom.

Jen says

This book is about counting and the relationship between a father and daughter and finding new communities... and about fear and being a migrant. When introducing big issues to small kids, some books do it well, and some not so well. This one does it brilliantly.

Irma Dogic says

This children's book depicts a father and daughter as they travel to the United States border. The two travel by foot and train. They stop often due to soldiers, and depending on if the father has to earn money to continue their journey north. The young girl passes the time by counting interesting things she sees. These include animals, people, clouds and stars. There is a general idea that numbers are constant in this little girl's life even when her day-to-day life is not. Throughout the book she is curious about their journey, but never receives a concrete answer. That does not matter to her however, because she is happy to be with her father and two white stuffed bunny rabbits. The book is great tool for introducing immigration. This book emphasizes the closeness between a father and daughter. It takes the audience on a journey with two individuals in hopes of a better life and new opportunity.

Jillian says

It was...okay? I didn't really like it or dislike it. It starts and ends in the middle of the story, and raises more

questions than it answers.

While I do like that the story isn't specific - the girl and her dad could be on the move for dozens of reasons, and none of them is really relevant; the fact is they're going and that's that - I feel like at times it was SO vague that it was difficult to get truly wrapped up. It doesn't help that the little girl really doesn't seem to understand what's going on, and so while the pictures tell thousands of words, we don't get to know most of them.

This would be a really good book to introduce the concept of migrant workers/illegal immigrants/refugees - how it's hard to tell what someone's story is, and the many steps involved in leaving one country and entering another.

Kit says

Children's book about immigration.

Edward Sullivan says

A devastatingly simple, profoundly moving portrait of the complicated, difficult life of one migrating family. An important and timely picture book.

Crystal says

I've seen some mixed reviews on this. Some people think it is confusing for children and too vague. I feel the vagueness works here. The father and child are in a kind of limbo. They are moving from one place to another and the child doesn't totally know what is happening. There was not a lot of text, but that worked for me. It really gave me the sense that the child is unsure about what is happening, but is also trusting her father to figure it all out even if he doesn't explain everything or have all of the answers. The book stirred emotions as I saw her experiencing fear, but always trusting and being resilient.

I think this would work well with Tonatiuh's book *Pancho Rabbit and Coyote*.

Todd Strader says

“Sometimes, when I’m not sleeping, I count the stars. There are thousands, like people. And I count the moon. It is alone. Sometimes I see soldiers, but I don’t count them anymore. There are about a hundred.”

This is a well told story from a child's point of view. It is the story of a little girl on a journey with her father. That it is the journey of refugees in flight is apparent to the discerning adult without being obvious to a listening or reading child. This book deftly approaches a serious issue with subtlety. The little girl occupies herself along the journey, as children do, with whatever is at hand and whatever her imagination can muster. Her favorite preoccupation is with counting things. The severity of her situation, the constant flow of desperate strangers, the isolation from friends and family, the narrow escape from dangers like soldiers, do not seem to register in her child's mind. Or so it would seem until we read the quote with which I began.

Jairo Buitrago's voice is simple, childlike and poignant. He adeptly tells two stories one of a child's journey and one of a global crises. It is poignant without being preachy. There is no need the simplicity and tone convey all that is necessary. Our characters are not given names. We are not told from what these refugees are escaping. Is it poverty? Is it violence? Is it both? I think this was a good choice. It puts the story of these "everyman" characters in the broader context of a worldwide crisis. As is mentioned in the post script written by Patricia Aldana, millions of people become refugees yearly and approximately a hundred thousand children make the trip described in the story.

At first I was curious about the importance of the two white rabbits in the story and as the title. Admittedly, I can be a little slow on the uptake. It was while looking over the illustrations featuring these title characters that the symbolism became obvious to me. In one illustration the little girl is asking the rabbits "Where are we going?" To this one of the rabbit's anthropomorphically (I know I changed an adjective to an adverb... I take liberties) responds with a shrug. The two rabbits in the illustration are constrained to a box as are the two characters who are riding in the back of a pick-up truck. I made the connection between the two white rabbits and the girl with her father, constrained by box or circumstance, not free or very much in control. In a following illustration we see the rabbits running free with a wall in the background. Is the promise of freedom for child and father just beyond that wall?

This is an important read. It is one that must be shared with future generations. I would especially recommend it to older children who might find the reading level simple but the concepts advanced. As of the writing of this review this is a current crises. This book should be read and discussed. Perhaps one day its merit will be historical in nature. We can only hope.

"What do those of us who have safe comfortable lives owe to people who do not?" Patricia Aldana from the post script.

Janine Darragh says

There isn't a lot of text, but the reader certainly, through the illustrations, can piece together this story of a father and daughter leaving Mexico to come into the United States. The final illustration, of a desolate land with a big, long wall, makes my heart hurt a little.

Tiffany Ng says

This tells the story of two migrants on their way towards America to find a better life. The story is vague with where exactly they are going because the story comes from a child's perspective. She counts the things she notices like the things in the sky like the stars and the moon. She mentions seeing soldiers all the time so she stopped counting them.

She knows she is always moving but she is never quite sure where she is going. I wish the story can also tell the story from the father's perspective so readers have better understanding of why they left or what they are planning on doing. Overall this is a great story to read to children when you want to teach about migration and immigration.

Lauren says

A particularly timely afterword about the plight of refugees seeking safety in the US.

Marissa Elera says

Incredibly moving, sorely needed depiction of migration/immigration from a child's point of view. Beautifully illustrated.

Carrie Gelson says

This title is weighty in its simple, missing pieces kind of narration. Nothing is specifically clear but this is what I enjoyed about this title. Rich in emotion, its multitude of stories and our human need to find home and safe.

Jill says

This book shows a Hispanic father and his young daughter who have left their home and are trying to get somewhere else - sometimes on their own, and sometimes with the assistance of a "coyote" - a person paid to hide migrants and help them get across a border.

We don't know why the two left, nor where they are trying to go. Thankfully for the cause of realism, the two protagonists wear the same clothes throughout, although they do manage to look showered, and the father regularly shaven. The more unpleasant aspects of emigration are omitted. For example, we see them traveling the desert by night, but not during the day, when they would have been plagued by the heat and by thirst, even in winter. They always seem to be healthy, and never hungry.

Of course one could ask just how much misery and unpleasantness is appropriate to show very young children, but this particular story doesn't make the horrific trek usually experienced look so bad. On the other hand, all the omissions provide plenty of opportunity for parents or teachers to fill in the blanks or not, as they deem appropriate for each child.

The excellent illustrations by Rafael Yockteng clearly show the father expressing despair over his finances, but happiness when he is with his daughter.

Evaluation: In today's political climate, this book will provide an excellent corrective to the canard that all illegal immigrants are rapists and/or criminals of some kind.

Rating: 3.5/5

Matt says

A slightly disjointed story that did not hold Neo's attention as much as we might have hoped. A migrant father and his daughter are constantly on the move, with soldiers looking. No work? Refugees? Poor? It's not entirely clear.
