



Leaving Home: Stories about Immigration, Migration, and the Diaspora

—Emily R. Aguiló-Pérez

Charles, Veronika Martenova. *The Land Beyond the Wall: An Immigration Story*. Nimbus, 2017. 32 pp. \$22.95 hc. ISBN 9781771084659.

Díaz, Junot. *Islandborn*. Illustrated by Leo Espinosa, Penguin, 2018. 48 pp. \$17.99 hc. ISBN 9780735229860.

Gay, Marie-Louise. *Mustafa*. Groundwood, 2018. 40 pp.

\$19.95 hc. ISBN 9781773061382.

Morales, Yuyi. *Dreamers*. Porter, 2018. 40 pp. \$18.99 hc. ISBN 978082344055.

Tran-Davies, Nhung N. *Ten Cents a Pound*. Illustrated by Josée Bisaillon, Second Story, 2018. 24 pp. \$18.95 hc. ISBN 9781772600568.

Current discourses about immigrants and refugees tend to characterize those leaving their homelands as criminals, monsters, and not deserving of being in the place to which they have migrated. In his introduction to a special issue of *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* on migration, refugees, and diaspora, Philip Nel notes that in 2018 “244 million people live outside the country of their birth. Of that number, 65.6 million have been forced to leave their homes. Nearly 22.5 million are refugees” (357). Now more than ever, we need books that depict these experiences and that humanize the children and families who endure difficult situations in search of a better life or in search of a safe(r) place to live. The books under review in this essay depict the difficult experiences of migration propelled by various reasons and circumstances.

In *The Land Beyond the Wall: An Immigration Story*, young protagonist Emma leaves behind her world on the dark side of the Iron Wall and embarks on a journey on her own to a new land where she cannot speak the language and where she confronts the realities of immigration. In *Mustafa*, the titular young boy has moved to a new country with his family. There, he often has dreams about the dangers his family escaped—smoke, fire, loud noises—and at the same

time feels alone in the new country, where he neither knows anyone nor speaks the language. *Dreamers* depicts the experiences of a mother and her child who leave their country in search of a better life. In their new country they encounter challenges with language and navigating an unknown place but eventually find comfort and a sense of belonging in the books they read. *Islandborn* tells the story of Lola, who cannot remember the island she, as just a baby, left when her family emigrated to the US. Through stories from her family, she learns more about her previous country and gains an even stronger sense of belonging in both the new country and the one she had to leave. *Ten Cents a Pound* offers a conversation between a mother and daughter; the former encourages her daughter to leave their country in pursuit of a better life, while the latter wants to stay home to help her mother.

All five books offer stories that can help facilitate conversations about immigration, migration, diaspora, and refugees. Some of them—especially those authored by what Corinne Duyvis identifies as #OwnVoices¹—seem to represent the experiences in stronger and more authentic ways than others. Yet they are successful in creating for readers what Rudine Sims Bishop calls “mirrors and windows” that expand the representation of migrant experiences. By doing so, these books bring a crucial and extremely relevant issue into children’s—and adults’—hands in an accessible and understandable way.

¹ A hashtag created by Corinne Duyvis to recommend children’s literature written by authors who share the marginalized or underrepresented identity of the characters in the stories they create.

² She explains this and offers more context in her author’s note at the end of the book; yet I wish more of her story had been included in the actual book.

Chasing Dreams

The Land Beyond the Wall: An Immigration Story, written Veronika Martenova Charles, draws on her own experiences of being born and growing up behind the Iron Curtain, in the Eastern Bloc controlled by the Soviet government.² Charles tells the story of Emma, a girl who finds herself in a new place full of opportunities but also challenges. Through a third-person narrator, the text begins by describing a world divided by a “BIG wall,” where one side was bright, sunny, and free and the other a place where “the sun rarely shone” and people “were afraid of each other.” The accompanying illustration depicts this stark contrast between the two worlds divided by the Iron Curtain. On the left, the sky is blue, the sun shines, colourful flowers are in full bloom, and children roam and play joyfully. On the right, a mostly black and white picture depicts a few leafless trees, smoke coming out of industrial chimneys, and two

people who appear sad—slumping as they walk around a place with no flowers, no blue skies, no brightness. The latter is where Emma lives.

Listening to people on the other side of the wall was “FORBIDDEN,” which the text emphasizes to highlight this rule’s severity. In a very simple way, the book tells the young reader what would happen if anyone disobeyed rules: “We could be punished if someone told on us.” So, when one afternoon a neighbour caught Emma’s parents listening to the voices, he reported them to the authorities, and they were punished. While the book does not show the moment Emma’s parents are punished, the reader knows they are taken away, and she never sees them again. This sets off the events that begin Emma’s migration.

The sadness and oppression felt on Emma’s side of the wall is further presented throughout the time she “live[s] with her aunt in a small town by the sea.” To her aunt, Emma is “just an extra mouth to feed,” so there is no affection toward the child who just lost her parents. Emma has to earn her keep and perform hard labour around the house, while also enduring oppressive circumstances created by her aunt: Emma’s aunt forbids her from drawing and painting, discourages her from wanting to become an artist, and threatens to send her to bed without supper if she sees her drawing again. Emma is mistreated because of her parents’ mistake. The conditions under which Emma lives are not as inhumane as some of the concentration camps where hundreds of children are currently held in the US. Yet readers can use Emma’s sudden separation from her parents and her restrictive life at her aunt’s home—deprived of love and care—to talk about family separation and the inhumane treatment many immigrants experience.

One morning Emma looks out her window and sees a sailboat from the other side of the ocean, from “a land where dreams come true.” Searching for a better life, Emma gets on the boat and goes to a new and unfamiliar place. This new place is hopeful and colourful, with blue skies and blooming flowers. The rest of the narrative focuses on Emma’s biggest obstacle: the language barrier. The reality for many immigrants, migrants, and refugees is that they may enter a place with a completely different language and set of cultural rules and practices. It is not surprising, then, that losing one’s voice in a new place because of a language barrier is such a predominant theme in this and other books in this review. For Emma, feeling at home in

the new place is difficult because she cannot not understand anyone. An old doll that used to belong to her mother serves as a comfort after she found it in her aunt's attic. In times of need and confusion, this doll "speaks" to her and serves as a friend. Little by little, Emma pays attention to everything around her, creating art that can transcend the language barrier, until one day she is finally able to speak the language and does not need her doll as a "translator" anymore. The book's narrative depicts the movements between the place Emma leaves behind and the one that becomes her new home. It illustrates some of the conditions that pressed Emma to leave by herself and the difficulties she faced on her own, giving readers a glimpse of the immigration process and the hardships that immigrants endure.

Escaping Danger

Mustafa, written and illustrated by Marie-Louise Gay, similarly depicts the movement from one country to another, though it mostly focuses on the new place. Readers witness the hardships of the old country and how difficult it is to leave everything behind through Mustafa's nightmares and drawings. Just like *The Land Beyond the Wall*, this book illustrates the stark difference between the two places, mostly depicting the new place as colourful and hopeful. The book tells the story of Mustafa, who with his family "traveled a very, very long way to get to their new country." This migration from one place to another is represented only through the illustrations. While the text informs the reader that Mustafa and his family had to leave their home, the pictures (starting with the title page) are the ones showing some of what they endured in their journey. And thus, we witness the family carrying their bags through what looks like a desert, then we see them in a sailboat in high waters, and then finally walking from the shore into a city. This series of images can show, rather than just tell, the reader what it means to embark on a long journey in search of a safer life. Yet most of the story focuses on Mustafa's present life in his new home. There is space for readers to further imagine the dangers Mustafa and his family left behind. For instance, from time to time, he wakes up terrified from nightmares that include heavy smoke and loud noises, implying that Mustafa's family has sought life in a new country to escape a war-torn one.

Similarly, readers are given a window into Mustafa's past experiences when he begins going outside and exploring his new home. Using a stick on the sand, he draws an airplane flying over his former house, clouds of smoke, raging fires, and broken trees. Through these drawings, readers see what he left behind, what his life was like before his family migrated to this new country. Through this drawing stick and the images he produces in the sand, Mustafa is able to channel some of his fears and deal with the emotions that he experienced during these traumatizing life events. It is worth noting that this book, just like *The Land Beyond the Wall*, depicts a stark contrast between the previous country and the new one: the former is illustrated as dark and scary while the latter is depicted and described as colourful and bright. In this way, the book certainly alludes to the terrifying reality Mustafa's family left behind to be safe. At the same time, while the book sometimes talks about the new place as an idyllic one, it also depicts moments of difficulty that anyone who feels displaced can experience. At various times when Mustafa is outside playing and exploring his new surroundings, he admits to feeling "invisible" because "nobody notices him." In part, his feelings of not belonging and being invisible stem from the language barrier. Earlier in the narrative, Mustafa walks around the park, he hears music and people talking, and while he can recognize the tune of a song, he cannot understand the conversations that are taking place. Because Mustafa does not speak the language, he feels alone and out of place. He is scared to approach anyone because he cannot understand them, or perhaps he is unsure of how people will respond to him, but the narrative does not explain this very real fear about being an immigrant.

There is one person who does approach him early on and at several points in the narrative. Mustafa encounters a "girl-with-the-cat," who sees him and speaks to him, but he cannot understand her: "Her words float in the air and disappear." When she sees his drawing on the sand, she speaks to him and begins drawing flowers and butterflies on top of his depictions of smoke and fire. On my first reading of this moment in the book, I considered how both children were using visual language through drawings to attempt communication when verbal language was a barrier. Partly, this was informed by my previous reading of *The Land Beyond the Wall* and my own interest in visual communication. I noted how their drawings complemented each other, how she was helping him see that this new place was safe and that

he did not need to fear it. With this reading, the book can be a powerful story of friendship and of how this girl is helping him feel included rather than invisible. Her drawings on top of his could be seen as a form of collaboration through which she tries to help Mustafa move on and heal. It is this girl, Maria, who eventually becomes Mustafa's friend, and it is thanks to her that "Mustafa doesn't feel invisible anymore." Her drawings can be read as a beautiful act of kindness toward Mustafa.

Yet upon further reading, I also considered whether, if by drawing on top of his drawings, Maria (who physically reads as white) could unknowingly be erasing something that is such a part of Mustafa's identity. For better or for worse, his old country and home are crucial parts of his life. The fact that Maria is seemingly white is not inherently an issue. Her drawings and her act of kindness, however, decentre Mustafa's experience from the narrative. And while it is an act of kindness and friendship, it could also reflect an erasure of the arduous work that so many people of colour do in order to liberate themselves. The argument could be made that Emma in *The Land Beyond the Wall* also receives help from people in her new place and that her doll serves as a translator/friend, just like Maria helps and serves as a translator/friend for Mustafa. Yet the implication in Emma's case is that her doll served more as a companion rather than a "real translator"; Emma did the work herself by listening attentively and actively learning to navigate her new country. Thus, in the way Mustafa was constructed, his life is affected by what others do, rather than by what *he* does to heal and cope with his experience, and in doing so, some of his agency is taken away.

The inclusion of Maria as the only, or the main, source of help for Mustafa could open up conversations about her serving as a white saviour for him, especially because the author does not seem to be part of the population the book depicts. As a reader, I often look for an author's note because I am interested in learning about the inspiration for the book and in reading about the process of creating it. I especially look for an author's note when the book is about a social issue and when the author is not part of the group that experiences it, or an #OwnVoice, because I want to ensure as a reader that there was research involved in creating the book. I want to know where the author draws from and what connection they might have to their characters' lived experiences. Thus, I was left wanting an author's note from Marie-

Louise Gay, to read more about her process, and, in turn, I was left wanting to know more about Mustafa's life.

Still, Mustafa's story is a compelling one, and I do appreciate its message of kindness and acceptance which can be so vital for migrants. The book can be a useful resource to learn about and understand the refugee experience. For those who work with migrant families, especially refugees, and for those whose story is reflected in the book, *Mustafa* can be a good addition to their libraries.

Becoming Immigrants

"What if you dreamed of a new life, and it came to you? What if that new life led you to a new country, where no one spoke your language, where you felt alone and ignored? What if you had to make that new place your home?" With these questions in the front matter of the book, Yuyi Morales's *Dreamers* informs readers that there are reasons for leaving the home and that migrating to a new place can be full of obstacles. As in the previous two books in this review, *Dreamers* also depicts the movement from one place to another—from Mexico to the US. Told from the narrative voice of a mother speaking to her child, this book tells the story of how they "became immigrants." With a backpack filled with gifts and items that reminded them of home, they crossed a bridge and made it to the other side, and "unable to go back, we became immigrants." The detailed illustrations show the precarity of their journey. For instance, the bridge that the mother and child (in her arms) must cross is surrounded by barbed wire and covered in rocks, showing the dangers the two of them endured in order to be on the other side. The double spread image of their arrival to the new country is tinted with muted colours. This is a contrast from other books like *Mustafa* and *The Land Beyond the Wall*, which immediately show the new place as bright, colourful, and full of opportunities. In doing so, Morales presents a more sobering yet realistic portrayal of what immigration can look and feel like, especially as an #OwnVoice author and illustrator who experienced what she depicts in the book. An author's note at the end of the book provides more of her story as an immigrant and her inspirations for this book.

Dreamers has few yet powerful words, but the images complement the text by adding rich details to the story; this is one way in which this book shines. Take for example the inclusion of Monarch butterflies on every page; they follow mother and child along their journey not only from Mexico to the US but within the new country as they figure out their way. As Morales explained during her 2019 Pura Belpré Award acceptance speech, she learned about the Monarch butterflies' migration patterns and realized that "their migration is an incredible story of survival," just as the protagonists' story is. There are also cultural details dispersed throughout the book—like *alebrijes*, a Sacred Heart, and a *calaca*—that remind us how much love the mother has for her old country. Additionally, there are moments that show readers the different *luchas* of which people, and especially immigrants, have been a part. For instance, when the mother tells the child "You and I became *caminantes*," the illustrations depict their footprints along various paths they walked on and the activism they witnessed. In the background, readers can see a group of people holding signs that read: "Power to the people!"; "¡Sí se puede!";³ "Hear our voices"; "Justice is to not be alone." This is a powerful way both to invite readers to use their voices to stand up for their rights and for immigrants' rights and to be aware that there is much to be done in the fight for justice.

³ This translates to the idea that things can be done: "Yes, we can."

While there is a hopeful tone in the narrator's voice, Morales's book illustrates the challenges and hardships this mother/child duo—and immigrants in general—often face. "There were so many things we didn't know. Unable to understand and afraid to speak, we made lots of mistakes." The narrator remembers, as the illustrations depict, some of these "mistakes" the mother makes as she learns to navigate the new country. At one time, she and her child take a dip in a public fountain and only realize it is not a place for swimming once a police officer—a white police officer—lets them know. Morales does not include words from the officer in the illustrations that capture this moment, but the officer's stance in front of the mother and child with his hands on his waist show that he is letting them know this is not the place for that. "¡Ay!" the mother reacts, as she does not only each time she realizes one of her "mistakes," but also when she realizes that she is not being understood. Language is part of the "mistakes" the mother makes. As in *The Land Beyond the Wall* and *Mustafa*, a crucial part of the protagonist's journey is encountering a new language that she cannot understand at first,

with the mother noting here that “The sky and the land welcomed us in words unlike those of our ancestors.” This makes the change in their location, culture, and understandings even more real. The illustrations that accompany this moment depict the words “Say something,” “What?” and “Speak English” spelled out in the smoke that comes out of nearby chimneys. “Speak English” is a phrase repeated to immigrants, migrants, refugees, diaspora, or anyone that is othered; in this case, it is a reminder to the mother and child that they are “migrantes.” It reminds them of the challenges that they will face and that the road ahead might be long. Books are the vehicle through which she learns to navigate their new reality and later, it is art—making her own books—that help her heal.

Part of the healing power of books for our protagonists, and especially the mother, is the ability to imagine and travel to unimaginable places. More importantly, books are powerful when readers can see themselves reflected in them (Bishop). Once again, this is a detail that Morales provides through the beautiful illustrations. As the mother and child become immersed in library books, readers can observe some of the titles they are reading. They include a variety of genres and authors, but more crucially there are a number written by Latinxs and other minoritized authors: *Una película en mi almohada (A Movie in My Pillow)*, by Jorge Argueta; *El canto de las palomas (Calling the Doves)*, by Felipe Herrera; *Prietita y la Llorona (Prietita and the Ghost Woman)*, by Gloria Anzaldúa; *The Arrival*, by Shaun Tan; and *When We Were Alone*, by David A. Robertson, to name a few examples.⁴ Furthermore, one poignant illustration depicts the mother holding a book while many things surround them—a shark, a fire truck, a baseball, and fish, among others—accompanied with just one word: “Unimaginable.” Mother and child are finally able to imagine so many possibilities in their lives thanks to the books they read. What is so poignant in this illustration is that while many books are floating around them, the one in the mother’s hand appears to be see-through. In other words, while the mother holds the book in front of her, readers can see her face and hair through it. To me, this illustrated scene represents a moment when they are seeing themselves represented in books, a moment when they are holding a mirror book (Bishop). In turn, *Dreamers* can be a clear mirror book for a plethora of readers who desperately need to see themselves and their experiences represented.

⁴ Morales provides a bibliography at the end of the book, titled “Books that Inspired Me (And Still Do).”

⁵ In my writing I adhere to Díaz's capitalization of the Island.

Seeking Memories

“Every kid in Lola’s school was from somewhere else. Hers was the school of faraway places.” But when the teacher asks students to each draw a picture of the country they are from, Lola does not know what to do since she cannot remember where she is from. Yet, since her whole neighbourhood remembers—as they are “*always* talking about the Island”⁵—she enlists them to help her remember her country. *Islandborn*, written by Junot Díaz and illustrated by Leo Espinosa, tells the story of Lola as she ventures to remember and learn more about her Island through the stories her family and neighbours tell her. While the Island is never named in the story, readers can find out it refers to the Dominican Republic by paying attention to the cover art, where the Dominican flag hangs from a balcony. Moreover, as Lola’s family and neighbours share their stories about the Island, readers can deduce it is the Dominican Republic based on the history Lola learns about it. Unlike the previous books reviewed, *Islandborn* takes place entirely in the “new” place, the US, so the reader does not see the refugee and immigration processes through Lola’s own experience. Yet, because Lola is collecting stories about her country, readers have the opportunity to see the movement from one place to the other through her family and neighbours’ memories.

Their stories paint a picture of life on the island that is colourful and vibrant while also highlighting the dire circumstances that forced Lola’s family to migrate. A neighbour, for instance, remembers the Island for its music; “There’s more music than air!” she tells Lola. Another neighbour remembers how colourful everything is on the Island: “Colorful cars, colorful houses, flowers everywhere. Even the people are like a rainbow—every shade ever made.” Espinosa’s illustrations match the colorful descriptions and bring to life the breathtaking aspects of the Island that everyone around Lola remembers. They depict the brightness of the country that was left behind but not forgotten. Her *abuela* remembers the Island’s beaches the most, describing them as poetry, while her mother remembers the hurricane that hit the Island right after Lola was born. Each person describes Lola’s country in a way that shows how much her family and friends still love it. It is not surprising, then, that Lola questions why anyone left such a wonderful place.

Díaz does not directly name dictator Trujillo as the force that prompted Lola's family and so many other people to leave their Island and instead uses symbolism. When Lola asks the building superintendent, "[who] knows more about the Island than almost anybody," he explains to her that a long time ago, before she was born "[a] monster fell upon our poor Island." He continues, "[i]t could destroy an entire town with a single word and make a whole family disappear simply by looking at it." Earlier in the story Lola's cousin describes her memory of the bats from the Island, so at the moment when Lola hears about the Monster, Espinoza's illustration depicts an enormous bat threatening the Island. There are a couple of significant aspects here. First, by bringing up the Monster, the book explains in an accessible manner the reasons why people are forced to leave their home countries. Many books for young readers about immigration present the results: leaving to a new country. Yet few of them highlight the factors that cause the migration. Thus, through the inclusion of the Monster, the book presents an opportunity for conversations about the various and complicated reasons for migrating. There is a balance between the wonderful memories of the Island and the terror the Monster caused, which shows the complexity of leaving a place that is greatly loved but which at the same time is not safe at the moment. Second, the illustration of the Monster underwent a slight but important change right before the book's publication. A review by *Social Justice Books* titled, "Why is the Monster black in *Islandborn*?" questioned, with great reason, why the book's producers had allowed the Monster to be painted black, giving children the message that black is bad and evil. They questioned this decision especially because "that monster is supposed to represent Trujillo who was light skinned and persecuted countless people, most notoriously those who were black." Yet the response from the publishers was to immediately delay the publication in order to make the necessary changes. The final version of the book depicts the monster as green: their response was commendable and certainly one that made the book all the better. The third aspect I must point out is what I consider a flaw and a missed opportunity for the book to provide crucial information to the reader. When Lola continues learning about the Monster, she is told that "in the end the heroes found the Monster's weakness and banished it forever;" yet when she asks what happened to the heroes, the response is: "No one knows, really. It was so long ago."

The problem is that while many unknown citizens were involved in the downfall of Trujillo's dictatorship, there are people whose names and faces are known who helped banish the "Monster." Most notably, the Mirabal sisters—Patria, Minerva, and María Teresa—were key activists who mobilized citizens of the Dominican Republic to defeat Trujillo. Following their assassination, the public outcry propelled the end of his regime. By stating that "[n]o one knows, really" what happened to the heroes, the book misses an opportunity to highlight the key role the three women, along with the citizens, had in ending a regime of terror. It erases a crucial part of the Dominican Republic's history.

Despite this, the book is a necessary addition to the discourses about immigration, as it stars a young girl of colour, from the Dominican Republic, who, while grateful of the life she has in the US, also shows love for the country of her birth. Leo Espinosa's illustrations will help children, especially of colour, see themselves represented in a book through the diversity in the range of skin colours and hair textures among Lola's family, friends, neighbours, and in Lola's Afro-Latinidad.

Making Choices

Ten Cents a Pound, written by Nhung N. Tran-Davies—a refugee herself—and illustrated by Josée Bisaillon, departs from the rest of the books here reviewed in that it takes place in its entirety in the "old" country, or the one from which the main character will migrate. The book begins with a child speaking to her Mama, letting her know that she understands how hard her mother works—her hands "coarsened and scratched"—and thus, she will stay with her. Having the narrative voice of a child invites readers to place themselves in her place and try to understand early on the difficult decision that she must make. What readers might not realize immediately is that the book presents a conversation between a child and her mother. As they turn the page to the second block of text, readers encounter the mother's response to the child. She asks her child to hold some books and discover that there is so much beyond their home. The mother's work will allow for the child to have more opportunities than she did: "Ten cents a pound is what I'll earn / To buy these books and set you free."

Throughout the book readers witness the back-and-forth dialogue between mother and daughter and, in turn, gain insight into the difficult process of deciding whether to leave in hopes of a better future or to stay home to help and care for the family. *Ten Cents a Pound* is an emotional representation of what so many families go through when they must look beyond their home for opportunities, especially when children are involved. When people question and criticize families sending their children to another place or bringing children with them in their search for a better life, they fail to consider how dire the need is that they must resort to a potential separation: it is not an easy choice. It is not negligence or disregard for the child's well-being. It is, oftentimes, a matter of life or death.

Regarding children's role and reality in border crossing, Cristina Rhodes notes, "[w]hereas children are often regarded as being in need of protection, the reality is that undocumented children are responsible for protecting themselves" (21). It is not clear where the child in *Ten Cents a Pound* would be migrating to, whether she would be crossing a national border, or whether she would be undocumented or not. Nevertheless, it is the child's responsibility to decide, a task that traditionally falls on an adult, and if the child were to "cross the border" by migrating to a place beyond their village, she would likely need to protect and take care of herself. What is clear is that while the child is aware of the opportunities she could have by leaving her village, she is also keenly aware of her mother's decaying health and how much her mother might need her. "Your back, Mama. I can see / How it bends and stoops in pain / Under the weight of your work," she says and assures her, "I will stay with you." The child also points out that her mother's vision is not as sharp as it once was and that her feet are "[c]alloused and blistered" by the gravel on which she walks daily to work the fields. The imagery created by the text is only enhanced by the detailed close-ups Josée Bisailon's illustrations offer. We can see one of the mother's blistered feet, standing on the ground, with a mixture of blood and dirt covering her toes and the callouses wrapping around her soles. When the child notes her mother's decreasing vision, the illustration offers a frontal view of the mother's face; her eyes, however, are covered by a white cloud, further showing how "blurred and strained" they have become and why the child insists on staying there to help her mother count change "coin by coin."

Ultimately, the conversations lead up to the child understanding that in order to go to school and follow her dreams, she must leave. She makes a promise to her mother that, no matter how far away she is from her in the new place, she will come home to her Mama. Unlike most of the books in this review, *Ten Cents a Pound* does not present the movement from one place to another. Yet, while readers don't get to see the migration taking place, they gain insight into the process that leads to the decision. This in itself is crucial because, while novels or longer texts are able to spend time on the events that lead to migration, picture books do not always have the space to do so.

Conclusion

All these books feature protagonists who are migrants: immigrants, refugees, or part of the diaspora. Each of these books offer opportunities to understand the process of migration and, in some cases, the reasons why a person must leave their home country. While adults might consider this topic "too difficult" for children to understand, the reality is that many children migrate. Thus, it is important to offer books that can open these conversations in ways that are understandable and accessible to children. At the same time, it is crucial for children who have experienced migration to see their own stories presented in ways that uplift them rather than construct them as monsters or criminals. Even with flaws, all five present these opportunities for children. They each depict and describe important aspects of immigration: the reasons for leaving, the process of leaving, the challenges in the new country, the hope that things will be better. Read together, the collection provides a more complete picture as one book can fill the gaps that another has left.

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