



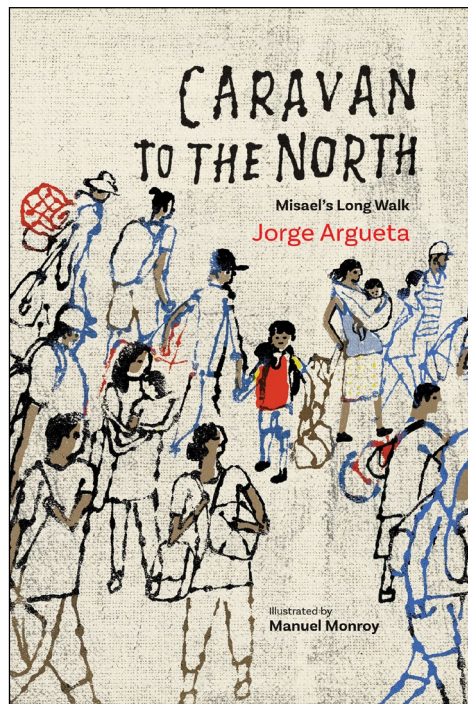
GROUNDWOOD STUDY GUIDES

Caravan to the North

Misael's Long Walk

Written by Jorge Argueta

Illustrated by Manuel Monroy



An urgent and eloquent account of a boy traveling in a caravan from his beloved homeland of El Salvador to the US border.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Ages 9 and up / Grades 4 and up

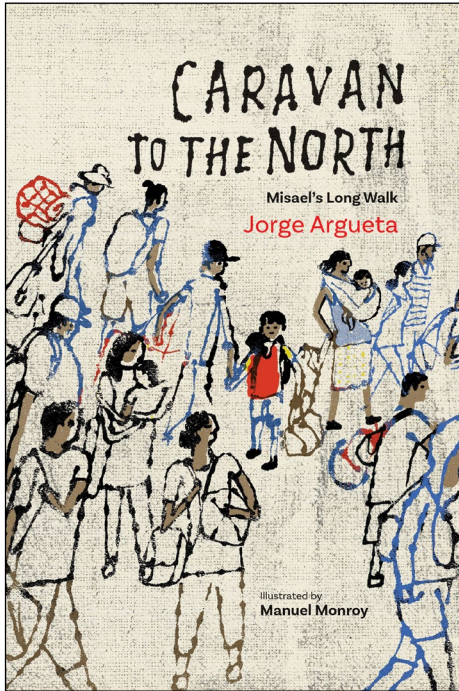
JUVENILE FICTION / Social Themes / Emigration & Immigration

People & Places / Hispanic & Latino

15 black-and-white illustrations / 5.5 x 8.5 / 112 pages

Hardcover with jacket / \$16.95 / 978-1-77306-329-4 / ebook 978-1-77306-330-0

groundwoodbooks.com



BOOK DESCRIPTION

This novel in verse is a powerful first-person account of Misael Martínez, a Salvadoran boy whose family joins the caravan heading north to the United States. We learn all the different reasons why people feel the need to leave — the hope that lies behind their decision, but also the terrible sadness of leaving home. We learn about how far and hard the trip is, but also about the kindness of those along the way.

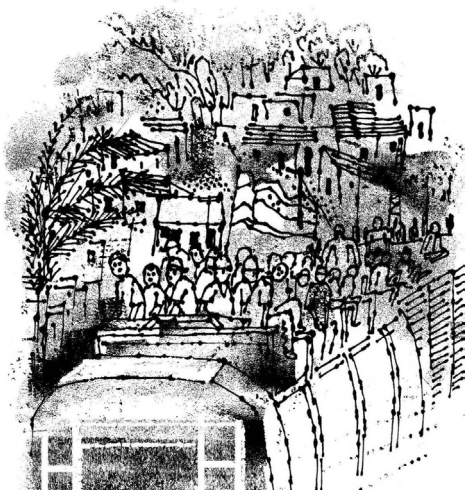
Finally, once the caravan arrives in Tijuana, Misael and those around him are relieved. They think they have arrived at the goal of the trip — to enter the United States. But then tear gas, hateful demonstrations, force and fear descend on these vulnerable people. The border is closed. The book ends with Misael dreaming of El Salvador.

This beautiful and timely story is written in simple but poetic verse by Jorge Argueta, the award-winning author of *Somos como las nubes / We Are Like the Clouds*. Award-winning Mexican illustrator Manuel Monroy illuminates Misael's journey. An author's note is included along with a map showing the caravan's route.

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

Students will need to keep a record of their answers here for one of the exercises they will do after reading the book. If this discussion is taking place as a class, designate a student to act as secretary to take notes on the answers to these questions. If students are reading the novel individually, recommend they write a journal entry using the below questions to record their expectations of the novel.

1. As a class, consider the title of this novel: *Caravan to the North: Misael's Long Walk*. What topic might this book be about? What does the term “caravan” mean?
2. What do you see on the cover of the book? What can you tell about what the people are going through? Who do you think the boy in the red shirt is?
3. Now read the dust jacket description and the afterword on page 110. What inspired the author to write this book? What do you expect will happen in the book? What kind of ending do you predict?
4. What do you know about refugees, immigrants and mass migration? Why do you think so many people have had to leave their homes? What do you wish you knew more about these topics? Why do you think this is an important book to read?
5. Finally, take a look at the map found on the last page of the book. In what city and country does Misael's journey begin? Where does it end? What do you know about the countries and cities along the way? What questions do you have about this map?



POST-READING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Re-examining predictions

After reading *Caravan to the North*, revisit the notes made in response to the pre-reading questions. Which predictions most aligned with the story as it unfolded? Which ones strayed most from the actual story? What surprised you about the story and why? What did not surprise you?

A story in verse

Caravan to the North is a novel told in verse. We read of Misael's long and difficult journey through short, fragmentary bursts rather than long and detailed prose. Why do you think the author would use this form to write a story about a refugee caravan? How does the form help convey the meaning of the story? What thoughts and emotions did these short verses inspire as you read the book? How would the book have differed if it had been told through prose? As an optional writing exercise, have students write about a vacation or trip they have taken—first only in verse, then a second time in prose. How do these two accounts convey a different mood and style of the same trip?

Misael

Spend some time discussing or reflecting on Misael. How would you describe him? What is one thing you have in common with him? What do we know about him? What do we not know about him? What motivates him to leave his home? What does he miss about El Salvador once he leaves? How would you describe Misael's outlook at the end of the novel?

A long walk

In the afterword, the author of *Caravan to the North* explains that the route from San Salvador to Tijuana is 2,500 miles (4,000 kilometers). Using a tool like Google Maps, find a location that is about the same distance away from your home or school. How long would it take to drive that distance? Walk? What cities would you pass through along the way? What different climates or geographical features would you be likely to encounter? Does putting the distance in these terms change your understanding of Misael's journey, and the struggle of refugees across the world? How?

▣▣▣ WHAT IS A REFUGEE?

“Refugee” is one of those words we hear a lot but may not fully understand. We also forget that along with adults, children can be refugees too—like Misael was. With your class, watch this five-minute video from UNICEF that is specially designed for classroom use to start conversations with children about refugees: <https://bit.ly/30KEfYp>

The second half of the video features Basel, an eleven-year-old refugee from Syria who now lives in Canada. Use this as an icebreaker to talk as a class afterwards. According to Basel, why do refugees leave their homes? Does Basel remind you of Misael? Why or why not? What do Gabby and Timmy conclude about refugees after meeting Basel?

Alternatively, teachers may wish to use the questions outlined by UNICEF, particularly if there are refugees in the class: <https://bit.ly/2ImfAmJ>

Hope and disappointment

The caravan in this book ventured so far north only to be faced with resistance and tear gas at their destination. At the end of the book, their future is yet uncertain. Why do you think Misael and his fellow travelers were willing to take such a big risk even when the outcome was not guaranteed? Share about a time in your life when you took a risk and weren't sure how it would turn out. What persuaded you to take the risk? Would you have done anything differently looking back?

Examining images

The illustrations of this book were created by Manuel Monroy. How did these images add or subtract from your experience of the story? What makes the style of these images unique? How does the artist's technique help convey the topic of the book?

Things to notice about the artistic technique:

1. The ink-blotted texture of the lines, like waysides on a road or parties in a caravan.
2. The gesture-like impressionistic nature of the images, like the verses of the novel, convey brief vignettes, forcing the viewer to imagine and wonder about the bigger story.

What would you take?

If you had to leave your home like Misael did, what items would you choose to take with you? Make sure they are small and light enough to carry for a long journey. Make a list or draw the items you would bring with you. What items would you miss? How does this exercise make you think about what's most important to you?

Hold a special “show and tell” session as a class, giving each student a chance to describe the item(s) they have chosen and explain why these items are significant. Afterwards, discuss as a class the different ways students made this decision and what they learned about one another.

Teachers may also wish to view this two-minute video with their students that World Vision produced to help convey the weight of this question in regard to the Syrian refugee crisis: <https://bit.ly/2ob6nGV>



Learning about El Salvador

Misael comes from El Salvador, a country we don't hear much about in the news. What do we learn about El Salvador from *Caravan to the North*? What are some of the foods, sights and animals you would expect to find there based on the descriptions in the book?

Expand on this knowledge by researching El Salvador and the struggles children may face there that prompt families like Misael's to flee.

Helpful sites to start with:

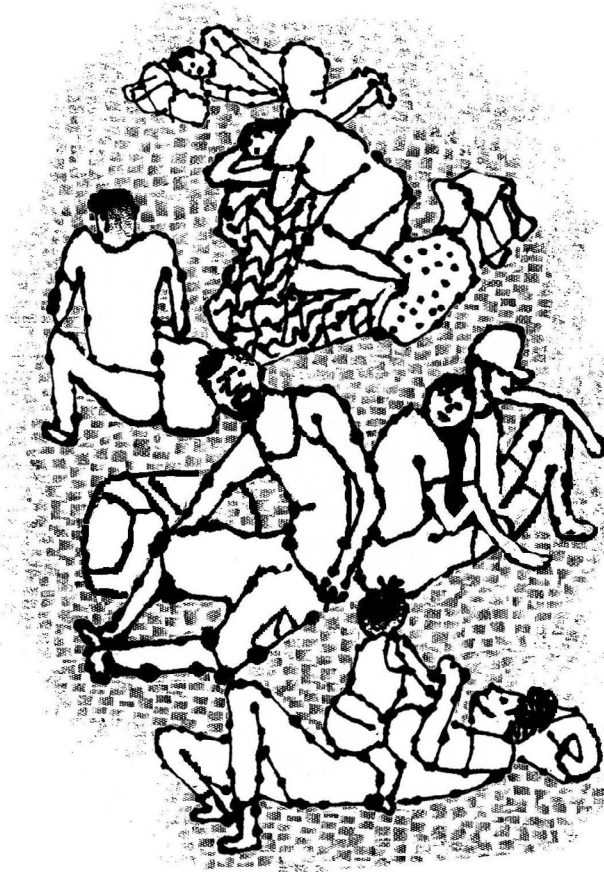
- "El Salvador," by National Geographic Kids: <https://bit.ly/2ImilUX>
- "Children of El Salvador: Realizing Children's Rights in El Salvador," by Humanium: <https://bit.ly/2VcJjn3>

With help from an adult, students may also wish to try making papusas, the savory flatbread treat from El Salvador mentioned in the book (a simple recipe with ample pictures may be found here: <https://bit.ly/2VchD1Q>).



Cover the story

Ask students to pretend they are journalists and have been asked to write a newspaper story about a caravan traveling from El Salvador to Tijuana. Many parts of the book are in the first person and can serve as quotations a reporter might gather from interviews; students can also integrate what they've learned about the social impact of migration and the issues in El Salvador in particular. Like a real journalist, their objective is to write a story that somehow answers the five W's: who, what, where, when, why and how this caravan is making the journey to Tijuana.



AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR BIOGRAPHIES



Jorge Argueta is an award-winning author of picture books and poetry for young children. He has won the International Latino Book Award, the Américas Book Award, the NAPPA Gold Award and the Independent Publisher Book Award for Multicultural Fiction for Juveniles. His books have also been named to the Américas Award Commended List, the USBBY Outstanding International Books Honor List, Kirkus Reviews Best Children’s Books and the Cooperative Children’s Book Center Choices. *Somos como las nubes / We Are Like the Clouds*, illustrated by Alfonso Ruano, won the Lee Bennett Hopkins Poetry Award, was a Malka Penn Award for Human Rights in Children’s Literature honor book and an ALA Notable book, and received many other honors. A native Salvadoran and Pipil Nahua Indian, Jorge Argueta has returned to El Salvador to build libraries and inspire a love of reading in children who previously had no access to books.

Manuel Monroy is one of Mexico’s most celebrated illustrators and has exhibited his art in Mexico, Cuba, the Czech Republic, Italy, the Netherlands and Japan. He has won the A la Orilla del Viento and the Noma Concours Encouragement Prize, and he has been included on the IBBY Honour List. His illustrations appear in *Rooster / Gallo*, *Be a Baby (Se un bebé)*, *When I Was a Boy Neruda Called Me Policarpo*, *What Are You Doing?* and *Why Are You Doing That?* He lives in Mexico City.