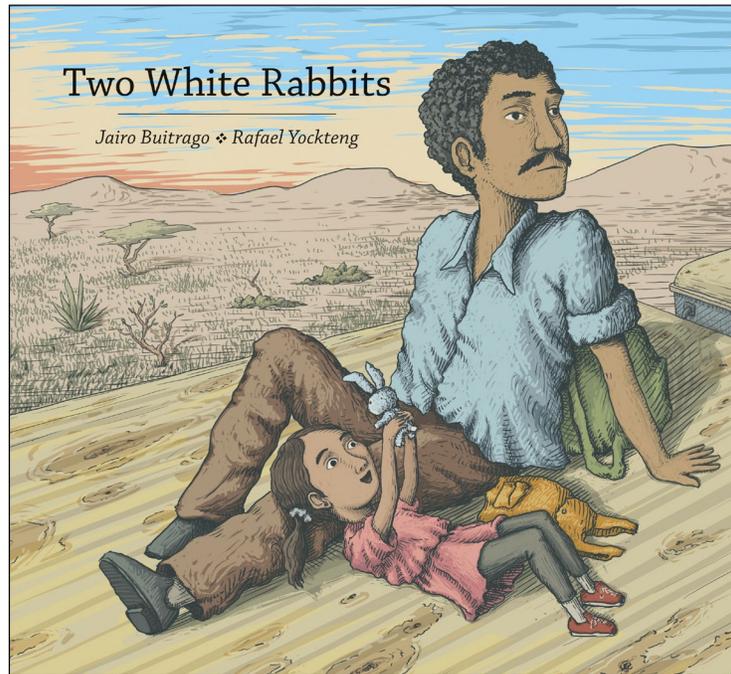




GROUNDWOOD STUDY GUIDES

Two White Rabbits

Written by Jairo Buitrago
Illustrated by Rafael Yockteng
Translated by Elisa Amado



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.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

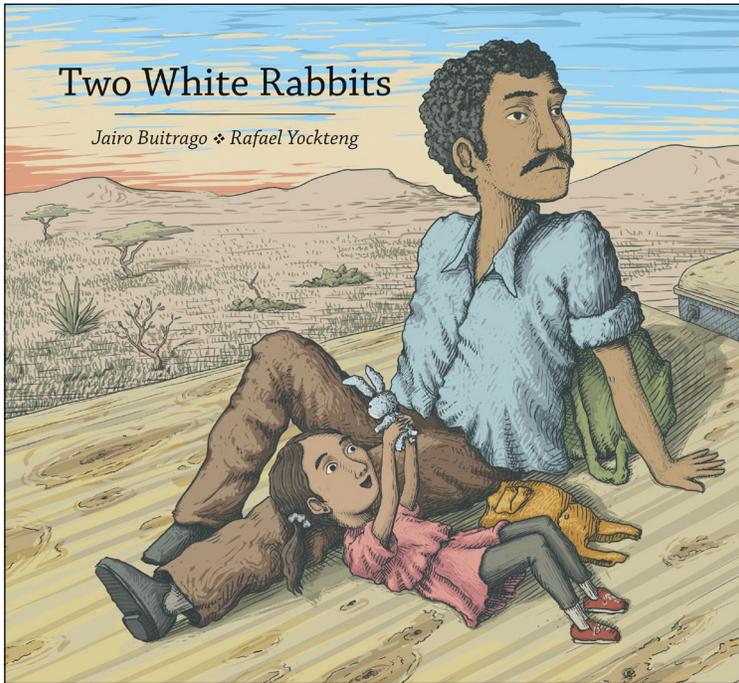
Ages 4 to 8 / Grades K to 3

JUVENILE FICTION / People & Places / United States / Hispanic & Latino /
Social Themes / Homelessness & Poverty / Emigration & Immigration

Full-color illustrations / 8.86 x 8.27 / 56 pages

Hardcover with jacket / \$18.95 / 978-1-55498-741-2 / ebook / 978-1-55498-742-9

groundwoodbooks.com



BOOK DESCRIPTION

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.

Note: The activities in this guide align with Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts for Grades 2 and 3 but standards for other grades may also apply.

PRE-READING QUESTIONS & ACTIVITIES

Ask students: When you are traveling from one place to another, do you play any games to pass the time?

Look at a map of Central America, Mexico and the United States with students to show them where *Two White Rabbits* takes place.

VOCABULARY

Many Spanish words appear in this book, some in the text and some in the illustrations. Before reading the book, familiarize students with the following words. Have students be on the lookout for these words as you read the story.

- chucho
- frontera
- plaza comercial
- coyote del sur
- frutas
- vegetales
- chuleta
- leche



POST-READING QUESTIONS & ACTIVITIES

The story begins with the little girl saying, “When I travel, I count what I see.” Ask students if they count things when going on a trip. As a class, study the first illustration. Could this be a picture of a student in the class traveling with her father? When did students first realize where this story is set and what it is about?

From the beginning of the book the little girl tells us she likes to count. Have students study the words and pictures in the book to identify the different things she counts. Is there anything she doesn't count? Why do students think the girl loves counting so much?

The chucho that the girl meets at the beginning of the book ends up traveling with her and her father. Look through the illustrations as a class. Where is the dog in each scene? What is he doing? What do students think happens to him at the end of the story?

The text in *Two White Rabbits* is very simple and the story is told from the point of view of an innocent young girl traveling with her father. The illustrations, however, tell a more complex story, showing actions and emotions she might not notice or understand. As a class, go through the book and identify instances where the illustrations tell the reader a part of the story that the text does not. What parts of the story were told by the illustrations that were not communicated by the text?

While her father is working to earn money, the girl plays with a little boy. Have students write a story that tells this episode from his point of view. What is his life like? What does he think of the girl and her father? How does he feel when they leave?

This story is told in the first-person, narrated by the little girl. Discuss with students how the father's point of view might be different. Assign each student an illustration. Have them rewrite this part of the story from the father's point of view. Come together as a class and have students arrange the rewritten scenes in the proper order from the book. What comes first? What happens next? How does the story end? Now reread the story as it might have been told by the father. How is the new story different from the original?

Have students close their eyes and listen to the story as it is read to them. Then break students into pairs and have them retell the story to each other without reading the words, just looking at the illustrations. Once they are done, have each pair work together to write a plot summary of the story. Come together as a class to discuss. Compare the length of their summaries to the amount of text in the original book. How did the book tell such a complex story with so few words?

There are several parts of this book where the text is open to interpretation. Working as a class, discuss the possible meanings of the following passages.

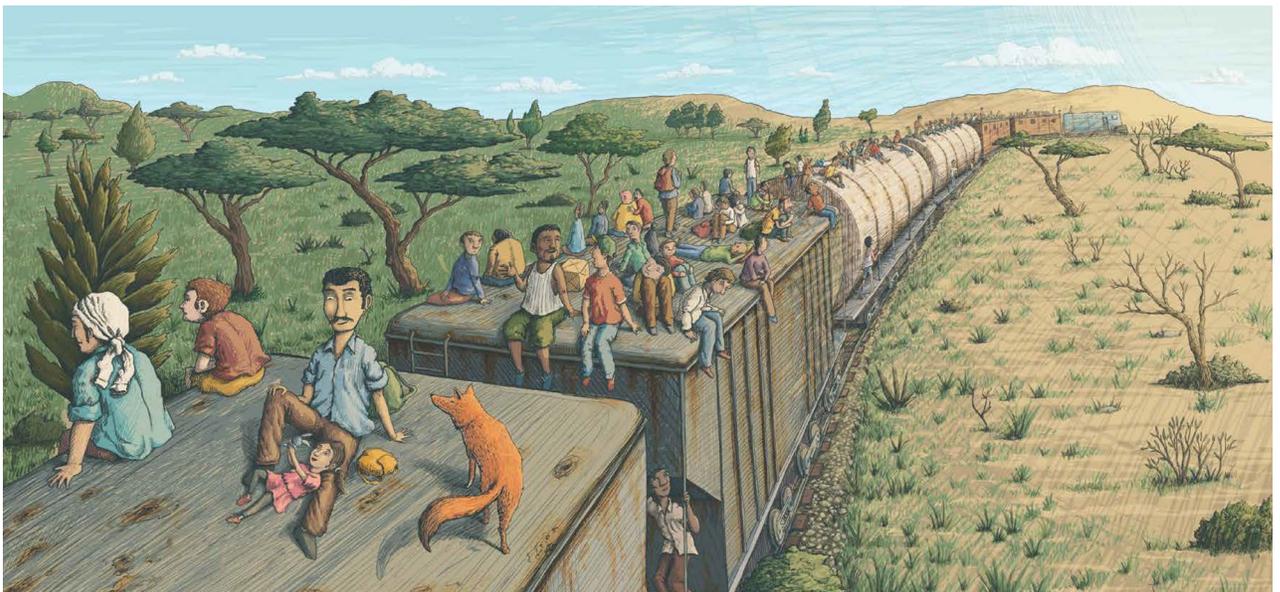
“But we do stop. Because the people who are taking us don’t always take us where we are going.”

“The truck that is going to take us arrives. The boy and his grandmother look at us the way that people that meet us on the road look at us.”

“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.”

Two White Rabbits tells the story of a father and daughter who are traveling, but the little girl does not know where they are going. In fact, this story is about migrants headed north, through Mexico to the USA in the hopes of finding a better life. The story remains a personal one, telling about the emotions and adventures of this girl and her father. Background information about the life of migrants of all ages will help students make connections with the events in the book and understand what is happening. The book includes a publisher's note that is a good starting point. Team with a social studies teacher, or other resource in your community, to create a lesson to acquaint students with the real-life issues addressed in this story. If you like, read the book first and discuss what students think it is about. Then read it again when students have completed the background lesson. How did their perspectives change?

After students have read and discussed the book, ask them to reexamine the title. What do students think it means? How does it relate to the story as a whole? Have students cite specific evidence from the book (pictures and text) that shows how the little girl feels about rabbits. What do students think her father feels about the two white rabbits? Have students explain what they think happens at the end of the story and why.



INTERNET RESOURCES

Note: The following links are intended to provide background for educators, who can then refine the information and decide what and how to share with students.

Migration Policy Institute

Central American Migrants and “La Bestia”: The Route, Dangers, and Government Responses

<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/central-american-migrants-and-“la-bestia”-route-dangers-and-government-responses>

Geography AS Notes

Mexico to USA Migration

<https://geographyas.info/population/mexico-to-usa-migration/>

The New York Times

Mexico Makes Route Tougher for Migrants

<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/22/world/americas/mexico-makes-route-tougher-for-migrants.html>

The Guardian

La Bestia: The Hit Song the US Border Agency Made to Scare Off Immigrants

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/shortcuts/2014/jul/16/la-bestia-song-commissioned-us-border-control-stop-immigration>

Washington Office on Latin America

Central American Children Fleeing Violence: Links to Service Providers

<https://www.wola.org/analysis/central-american-children-fleeing-violence-links-to-service-providers>

AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR BIOGRAPHIES



Jairo Buitrago is a children’s book author who has collaborated with Rafael Yockteng on many picture books, including *Jimmy the Greatest!* (six starred reviews), *Two White Rabbits* (three starred reviews), *Walk with Me* (three starred reviews, Kirkus Prize shortlist), *Lion and Mouse* (two starred reviews) and *Cave Paintings*. They won the “A la Orilla del Viento” contest for the Spanish edition of *Walk with Me*, which was also named to IBBY’s Honor List. Their books have also appeared on “Los mejores libros del año” (Venezuela’s Banco del Libro), Kirkus Best Books, the Horn Book Fanfare and in the White Ravens Catalogue. Jairo has also won the Hispanoamericano Castillo prize for children’s literature and the Antonio García Cubas Award.



Rafael Yockteng has illustrated many highly acclaimed children’s books, including *Sopa de frijoles / Bean Soup* by Jorge Argueta (USBBY Outstanding International Books) and *Jimmy the Greatest!* (six starred reviews), *Two White Rabbits* (three starred reviews), *Walk with Me* (three starred reviews, Kirkus Prize shortlist) and *On the Other Side of the Garden* (three starred reviews) by Jairo Buitrago. Together, Jairo Buitrago and Rafael Yockteng have won the “A la Orilla del Viento” contest, and their books have been included on IBBY’s Honor List, “Los mejores libros del año” (Venezuela’s Banco del Libro), Kirkus Best Books, the Horn Book Fanfare and in the White Ravens Catalogue.