



Somos como las nubes / We Are Like the Clouds

Jorge Argueta , Alfonso Ruano (Illustrator) , Elisa Amado (Translator)

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Why are young people leaving their country to walk to the United States to seek a new, safe home? Over 100,000 such children have left Central America. This book of poetry helps us to understand why and what it is like to be them.

This powerful book by award-winning Salvadoran poet Jorge Argueta describes the terrible process that leads young people to undertake the extreme hardships and risks involved in the journey to what they hope will be a new life of safety and opportunity. A refugee from El Salvador's war in the eighties, Argueta was born to explain the tragic choice confronting young Central Americans today who are saying goodbye to everything they know because they fear for their lives. This book brings home their situation and will help young people who are living in safety to understand those who are not.

Compelling, timely and eloquent, this book is beautifully illustrated by master artist Alfonso Ruano who also illustrated *The Composition*, considered one of the 100 Greatest Books for Kids by *Scholastic's Parent and Child Magazine*.

Somos como las nubes / We Are Like the Clouds Details

Date : Published October 1st 2016 by Groundwood Books

ISBN : 9781554988495

Author : Jorge Argueta , Alfonso Ruano (Illustrator) , Elisa Amado (Translator)

Format : Hardcover 36 pages

Genre : Poetry, Childrens, Picture Books, European Literature, Spanish Literature, Nonfiction

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From Reader Review Somos como las nubes / We Are Like the Clouds for online ebook

Shannon says

Read Harder 2017: Translated poetry, topic other than love

I came across this book as a part of a series of recommendations on books about the refugee and immigrant experience. I loved the way the poems were printed in both Spanish and English. It let me read the poems in their original Spanish and then confirm the meaning in English.

The meaning of the title is best explained by the dedication: "To our children, because you are like the clouds, like dreams, you come and go."

The imagery of longing - and sometimes pain - was beautiful and moving. This is a great book to read alone or share with a child. (I plan to share this book with my daughter who takes Spanish.)

Cherilyn Munoz says

Overall this book reaches its goal of educating the audience on how the children in the story feel about coming over to the U.S. The children are those who wrote the poems according to the author and the children describe all of the different experiences and how the journey over to the U.S. made them feel along the way. These poems are aimed at higher elementary school grades such as 4th or 5th grades because of the format and the feelings towards immigration. The characters in the poems show a connection to the author and allow the reader to put themselves in their shoes. This is creating empathy towards to the children which is something many of the people who judge them for coming here, undocumented.

The illustrations are accurate because the children and the places where they are drawn are accurate. There are no stereotypes adding to these immigrants, on the contrary, they are teaching about how difficult and accurate the experiences are for the children. They are laying on the floors of the desert they travel on trains and they hold interest, there is always something in the illustrations left for interpretation. The illustrations add to the story because there might be instances where the audience might not understand what is going on then the illustration describes how it truly is living in the situation such as feeling clueless and how their reactions are to the scenarios.

The book demonstrates and breaks the myth that all undocumented immigrants are from Mexico. Consistently throughout the book, there are other countries mentioned and this will allow the reader to acknowledge and learn that they come from all of Latin America. The children are exposed to multiple points of view. The lifestyle is accurately described because the plot shows the journey through their eyes. There are no negative stereotypes of the children. The children constantly express their views and I think this is important because other books focus on one point of view instead of showing from a variety of countries.

Amanda says

No matter what you believe on this topic, this collection of bi-lingual poetry shows and tells beautifully what

the experience is like for children, and what forces them to leave their homes. Suggest pairing with *The Journey* by Francesca Sanna, *My Two Blankets* by Irena Kobald, and *I'm New Here* by Anne Sibley O'Brien.

Christianna Woodling says

Title: Somos como las nubes/We Are Like the Clouds

Author: Jorge Argueta

Illustrator: Alfonso Ruano

Genre: Poetry

Theme(s): family, immigration, tragedy, family separation, new beginnings,

Opening line/sentence: "Elefantes, caballos, vacas, cuches, flores, ballenas, pericos. Somos como las nubes./ Elephants, horses, cows, pigs, flowers, whales, parakeets. We are like the clouds. "

Brief Book Summary : Jorge Argueta describes the risks and hardships that young Central American children undergo on their journey to a new life that they hope will bring them safety and opportunities. These young ones fear for their lives and are forced to leave their families and friends behind. The entire book is composed of poems that represent this journey of so many refugees.

Professional Recommendation/Review #1:

Kirkus (Kirkus Reviews, August 1, 2016 (Vol. 84, No. 15))

<http://www.clcd.com.ezaccess.librarie...>

"With tenderness and humanity, this bilingual book describes the hopes, fears, and uncertainties of the thousands of displaced children that arrive every year at the southern border of the United States.....Ruano's realistic artwork conveys an immediacy that complements and extends the poems, allowing readers not familiar with the experience to be able to "see" it. "

Professional Recommendation/Review #2:

Sonia Alejandra Rodriguez (Booklist, Sep. 1, 2016 (Vol. 113, No. 1))

<http://www.clcd.com.ezaccess.librarie...>

"Argueta and Ruano present a unique and much-needed perspective on the reasons driving young people to immigrate to the U.S., in particular the desire to reunite with family. The scarcity of Latino children's and young-adult books that center on Central American experiences makes this poignant poetry collection extremely vital."

Response to Two Professional Reviews: I think this is a really important book as it talks about a subject that not many people know or think about. Both reviews mention this and I couldn't agree with them more. The illustrations beautifully match the words and the overall meaning of the collection of poems. This is an exceptional work of art that as the second reviewer stated is extremely vital.

Evaluation of Literary Elements: As Tunnell quotes, "How a story is told is as important as the story itself." The writing style in this work is exceptional. Argueta powerfully illustrates the journey of children escaping Central America through his words. The illustrations are beautiful, but Argueta's writing style could be solo and still give an equally powerful effect. Lines like "Los pintados, aparecen a todas horas. Los pintados tienen los ojos duros." perfectly captures the danger of the "painted people" in the town.

Consideration of Instructional Application: I previously mentioned the use of imagery in this book and I think this would be a useful tool in teaching imagery to children and showing how important it is in literature and especially poetry. I would use this for upper elementary age or middle school students. I would print out a few of the poems and read them to the class and have them create pictures or images based off of the readings without seeing the illustrations first. This would help them to see how powerful imagery is.

Yuridia says

Somos como las nubes is a bilingual book written in Spanish and English. Its great translation allows a non Spanish speaker to follow along the meaningful poetry revealing stories that are very similar to those of thousands of children who have migrated from Central America. These poems uncover the tragic truth of what many have suffered to find refugee in the United States. The realistic illustrations and stunning details aid in bringing each verse to life. This book can be utilized for grades 3-5 when discussing migration to bring connection to current issues.

Sara Lenahan says

This book of poetry depicts the hard journey that young people take as they walk thousands of miles to the United States in search of a better life. These stories are for the people who risk everything and uproot from their homes, told in beautiful rhythms in Spanish and English.

A blend of Spanish and English text on the pages shows the beauty of both languages. This topic is full of such emotion that it could only be told in poems. The author is able to convey so much in such a short amount of pages. I love that there are so many different people being represented in this story from almost all countries in Central America.

I would pair this book with "Stepping Stones :A Refugee Family's Journey" by Margriet Ruurs and "Talking with Mother Earth/Hablando con Madre Tierra" by Jorge Argueta

Teach about the refugee crisis and connect with Spanish speaking students with these powerful texts. "My father says, if we keep singing, we will scare away all of the tiredness and all the fear and become a song."

Cheri says

really well done book about immigration. I loved that each poem and every aspect of the book was initially in Spanish with the English translation beside it. I really enjoyed the easy way the author depicted the internal struggle with leaving a homeland where a family member or more are left to go to another family member in America. It depicts situations in a safe way that open up the door to talk about immigration and why people would leave one place for another. well done and I really liked the pictures as well.

Sarah Rusk says

Argueta describes the migrations of thousands of children from Central America to the United States through various poems. These poems are in both Spanish and English, with vocabulary words defined as needed. His descriptions are beautiful and real, making the reader feel as if they are with the children. Ruano's illustrations are detailed and support the poems, providing visuals for the poems. There are times that the

poems use figurative language and the illustrations support that. This would confuse younger readers, however, the topic of this text is inappropriate for primary-aged children. This book of poems would support students learning about the migrations as it provides a good perspective of those who went through this.

Kristin says

Source: 2017 Notable Poetry Books selected by the NCTE Award for Excellence in Children's Poetry Committee

We Are Like the Clouds is a collection of Spanish and English poems that provides the reader with the understanding and perspective of those that leave El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico to come to the United States in hopes of better opportunities and a better life. The poems detail the journey many children made—sleeping on the desert sand, running through the desert, and riding on a father's back through the desert. Some of the poems illustrate the children's hopes and dreams, while others depict the danger and fear. The acrylic on canvas illustrations help to tell the story of those immigrating. One illustration shows the packed trains migrants travel on; another depicts a child flying through the sky among clouds shaped like different animals.

This book would be appropriate for students in upper elementary school when discussing immigration. The poems would help students to gain insight of what it is like for some to leave their country to come to the United States.

Marianne says

Beautiful, heart-wrenching, and full of hope - the measured, not the ignorant, kind.

Susan says

This book seemed to have so much promise, but I was disappointed. It is certainly not a good intro for young kids who don't yet understand the situation. It's all short poems, speaking FOR the children, but really TO adults. I think it's inappropriately classified as a children's book. Perhaps it would be better appreciated by somewhat older children, in class, with time to absorb and discuss in a group. It's not a book I can imagine choosing to read over and over, which is my standard for buying rather than borrowing a book.

It's a truly bilingual book, with all poems in both Spanish and English. And the art work is very well done, with a few very striking images. Still, ... not what I'd hoped for when I read about it.

Lauren Perlstein says

Categories/Genres for this class fulfilled by this book: Poetry

Copyright Date: 2016

Estimate of age level of interest: Grades 3-9

Estimate of reading level: Grade 4

Brief description: A series of poems that describe the journey of migrants fleeing El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico.

Identify at least 2 characteristics of this genre and subgenre and discuss how they appear in your book:

Poetry creates sensory images of sight, touch, smell, or taste: The poetry in this book compares people to clouds, describes the sounds of crickets singing, and the feeling of the desert sand. The illustrations go above and beyond to make the words come alive.

Poetry uses figurative language that is appropriate to children's lives: (are the similes and metaphors ones that a child would appreciate and understand? I think that most children have thought about what it's like to be a cloud, or sit on cloud, which brings the repetitive metaphor close to home. The repetitive nature of the poetry, in the way it repeats how the migrants crossing the desert are like the clouds, like the wind, like the butterflies and the rivers and oceans, creates a common understanding of what it really means to be free. It goes back and forth from "we are like the clouds" to "we are the clouds." An older audience may be able to distinguish the meaning there, while younger readers will be able to see that all people should be as free as the clouds.

In what ways and how well does the book as a whole serve its intended audience?:

This book is touching, simple, and incredibly beautiful. The poetry can be read to children young and old, and while they may see different meaning depending how much they know, the illustrations and metaphors will capture people of all ages.

Awards if any:

Winner of the Lee Bennett Hopkins Poetry Award 2017

Selected for the NCTE Notable Poetry List 2017

Selected for the SLJ's Top 10 Latinx 2016

Selected for the USBBY's Outstanding International Books List 2017

Selected for the ALA Notable Children's Books 2017

Selected for the Booklist Top 10 Diverse Nonfiction for Youth 2017

Selected for the Cooperative Children's Book Center Choices List 2017

Selected for the Américas Award 2017

Selected for the Bank Street College of Education Best Children's Books of the Year 2017

Published reviews from professional sources e.g. ALA, Booklist, Kirkus, SLJ, etc. if any:

Booklist starred (September 1, 2016 (Vol. 113, No. 1))

Horn Book Guide starred (Spring 2017)

Horn Book Magazine (January/February, 2017)

Kirkus Reviews starred (August 1, 2016)

Publishers Weekly (October 24, 2016)

Jennifer says

"He is the boss. He is the one who tells the gang, Hit this one, hit that one. I don't want to be this one or that

one.” This quote stood out to me while reading, *Somos como las nubes/We Are Like the Clouds*. I found it very telling as to how a child is feeling and how scary new places can be.

Somos como las nubes/We Are Like the Clouds is an English/Spanish poetry book, and was honored for the 2017 ALA Notable Books for Children award. This book has the poems in English and Spanish on each page. The poems document a child, who is immigrating to the United States. Each page has one to three short poems, telling about different parts of the trip. These poems include the events and how the immigrants are feeling. The focus is the hardship and challenges they come across while making this scary journey, searching for a better life.

This diverse book has many tools within the text to help readers further understand the information in each poem. At the bottom of the pages, there is information with the meaning of certain vocabulary words, to help the reader understand the meaning of words. In the beginning and end of the book, there is information about the credibility of the author, and how the author’s real life experiences helped to develop the ideas for this book. The illustrations are simple, realistic, and portray people how they might have been feeling at the time of their travels. This book would be appropriate for 3rd to 5th grade students. The content and vocabulary used would be appropriate for middle-elementary students. Themes in this text are diversity, perseverance, and hardship. This text could be used to teach poetry, or in social studies to teach about immigration.

Kaylee Rowson says

Genre: Poetry

Unique feature of the book: The translations of the poems from Spanish to English

Grades: This book could be used for students in a variety of grades depending on the use. For students who are learning Spanish it could be used all the way to middle school or high school. In these higher grades this book could be utilized to compare Spanish and English translations and examine words in specific dialects (Central American/Salvadorian). It could also be utilized in grades 3-5 as well to expose students to stories of refugee and immigrants who leave their homes to come to the United States.

Date completed: 9/21/2017

Tasha says

This stunning book of poetry looks at the flood of children from Central America who are making their way to the United States. 100,000 of them have walked to our country, escaping to safety and what they hope is fresh opportunities. The book opens with a few poems that show the beauty of Central America and then swiftly moves to the problems and the gangs that are in control. Then begins the long march north, the trust placed in coyotes that lead them, the dangers they face, the rough conditions and the courage it takes to head towards the unknown. The book ends with poems of Los Angeles and hope.

Written by a Salvadoran poet, this book’s poetry soars and lifts even when speaking of dark and dangerous subjects. Throughout there is a focus on hope and the distant wonder of the United States. There are poems of the journey that are aching with loss. There are poems of strong parents who carry children and others of the children alone and fearful. It is a book that captures the range of immigrants coming to the United States, particularly children from Central America whose story is shared with such poignancy on these pages.

The art by Ruano is startling and beautiful. He has surreal moments in the art that capture a little touch of playfulness at first. That moves quickly to sense of isolation at times, of being alone in a stark landscape. Towards the end, there is one painting of a child afloat in the air on a blue, cloud-like sleeping bag who is finally heading home with his parents. It is a picture of such tenderness and captures the youth and dreams of these children.

An important book that shows the plight of Central American children as they walk to the United States, this is a challenging book of poetry that demands attention. Appropriate for ages 8-12.
