A Long Journey
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As central as immigration is to U.S. national identity, there is a substantial body of literature, including picture books for the youngest readers (4-8 years), that bring the stories of those who peopled the American colonies and states, of the enslaved, of contemporary refugees and migrant laborers, to life. They are the stories of the American (U.S.) experience.

It is its focus that distinguishes *Un largo viaje* from most immigration-themed picture books in U.S. libraries. *Un largo viaje* is not an American story; it tells the universal story of migration taking place right now, all over the world.

Un largo viaje juxtaposes the stories of two families migrating concurrently: one a goose and her gosling; the other a human father, his young daughter and son. Readers/listeners learn the two families have a lot in common. Both families have compelling reasons for migrating. The geese must fly south to escape the winter cold; the humans are fleeing north to escape war. Each family faces daunting challenges along the way; both families dig deep to find the motivation to keep going. The two families' paths actually cross, although each is oblivious to the other.

Writer and illustrator work carefully to cultivate empathy for the migrants in ways that resonate with the young target audience. Illustrations of the anonymous human family, its home and town contain a few elements adult readers might recognize as culturally specific. Young readers, however, will be comfortable with the overall context, and easily identify with the little girl in her Minnie Mouse t-shirt, or the toddler tightly clutching his stuffed elephant. They are, after all, kids, just like themselves.

Similarly, the parallel dialogues between human parent and child, goose and gosling that drive the two stories are spoken in voices all children know and understand. Parents' words are firm and straightforward, but comforting and encouraging. The offspring ask questions, voice their discomfort and fears, and seek parental reassurance.

The illustrations are realistic, but not photo replicas. They are softly sketched in just the right amount of detail to see the sadness, exhaustion and hunger in the migrants' faces. Tones of light brown dominate, with an occasional spot of color in a subtle detail. In sharp contrast is the vivid blue of the panoramic expanses of sky and ocean throughout the book that inspire a sense of the migrants' hope.

Un largo viaje has a clear political message that is stated in the illustrator's dedication: "Por un

mundo sin fronteras." As the stories show, geese, unlike humans, know no borders. The book's final illustration captures the ethnically diverse faces of human migrants, present and past, the well-dressed and the poor, as they stare through the barbed wire fence standing between them and a more secure future.

Un largo viaje is a thought- and emotion-provoking book that is very accessible, in all respects, to young readers. An English-language edition (and increasingly across the U.S., the Spanish version as well) should be added to home, school, and public libraries to broaden children's understanding of immigration as a global, not just U.S., phenomenon. Perhaps, as the book's creators clearly hope, their book will also engender compassion towards the migrants, especially those seeking asylum, currently arriving at so many borders around the world.