

**Review of *The Journey*
By Francesca Sanna**

Adult/ Educator Reviewer: Ann D. David
University of the Incarnate Word
Student Review: Jack Ziegler, 3rd Grade



Sanna, F. (2016). *The Journey*. London, England: Flying Eye Books.

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Adult Review: Ann D. David

The journey begins beautifully with a family—mother, father, sister, and brother—enjoying their annual vacation on the beach. This tradition is interrupted by a war, with death and fear following close behind. The mother and children leave their home for a “place across the mountains where we’ll be safe” becoming refugees. The remainder of the narrative follows the family as they drive, ride in a car, bike, walk, sail, and ride on the train hoping for this place in the mountains.

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The pivot point in the story occurs as the family seeks to cross the border wall—situated in a forest and well-guarded. Across several pages, they are turned back, almost captured, and then snuck across by a shadowy figure. This crossing leads to a frightening boat ride. Through many days of rough seas the family’s stories sustain them. While the remainder of the story is more hopeful, it ends without the closure of a happy ending.

The illustrations are the heart of this book. The author-illustrator, Francesca Sanna, plays with size and perspective throughout, shifting from intimate pictures in the home to sweeps of war and landscapes. The Author’s Note at the end explains that the stories do not represent a particular individual’s story or refugee group’s experience, instead the narrative is meant to represent the emotions and difficulty of the refugee experience. The

illustrations, similarly, are not of a particular place, but there are hints of Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

Refugee stories are difficult ones to tell, especially to young people. This book offers an opportunity for young readers to experience that story in a way that does not hide the fear and pain, though balances it with the hope refugees may have for a better life. I would recommend reading this book with children, in the context of a whole class read aloud or discussion. This shared reading allows the adult or educator to contextualize the family’s story, and talk into the more frightening pages. Being sensitive to any children in the class who are refugees or have stories of fleeing violence would also be an essential part of using this book responsibly.

While the tendency when choosing picture books may be to shy away from books with complicated stories, children need books that serve as windows and mirrors (Bishop, 1990). Reading *The Journey* will offer some students the chance to see their lives in a book, and others the chance to see a life they never imagined. This story will help young readers grow in compassion and empathy, both of which are sorely needed in the world today. *The Journey* is a beautiful text that I highly recommend for all classrooms.

References:

Bishop, R. S. (1990). Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. *Perspectives: Choosing and using books for the classroom*, 6(3).

Student Review: Jack Ziegler

This story is about a family of refugees leaving home. One of my favorite things about this book is the art. On spread 2, I like how the city is like a giant sandcastle that the family is making. On spread 6, I think that it is cool when the person talks it shows mountains. In a lot of spreads there are a lot of larger than life characters. For example, on spread 11 there's the giant guard on the border wall saying, "Go back!"

This story reminds me of the Jews in WWII. The wall they cross is the

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Berlin wall and the guards are German-Axis Powers-Hitler-bad guys.

The story also reminds me of when my house burned down and me having to move from house to house and I still haven't gotten home yet.

What I've been trying to say this whole time is that this is a very, and I mean very, good book!