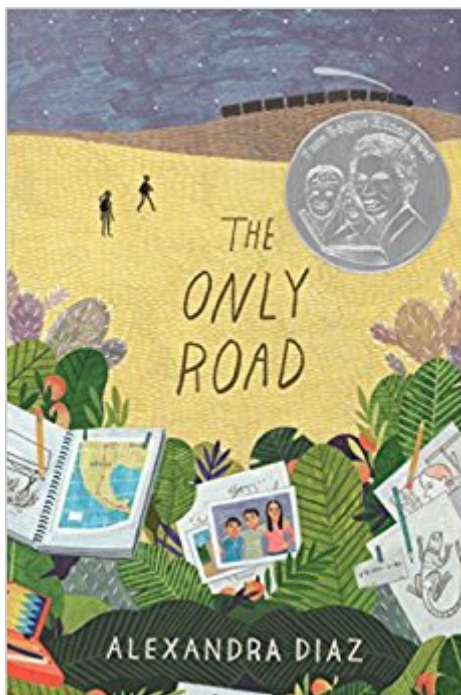


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# The Only Road



## Synopsis

PURA BELPRÉ **HONOR BOOK ALA NOTABLE BOOK** “Powerful and timely.”  
“An important, must-have addition to the growing body of literature with immigrant themes.”  
“Booklist (starred review)  
“An important, must-have addition to the growing body of literature with immigrant themes.”  
“School Library Journal (starred review)

Twelve-year-old Jaime makes the treacherous and life-changing journey from his home in Guatemala to live with his older brother in the United States in this gripping and realistic middle grade novel. Jaime is sitting on his bed drawing when he hears a scream. Instantly, he knows: Miguel, his cousin and best friend, is dead. Everyone in Jaime’s small town in Guatemala knows someone who has been killed by the Alphas, a powerful gang that’s known for violence and drug trafficking. Anyone who refuses to work for them is hurt or killed like Miguel. With Miguel gone, Jaime fears that he is next. There’s only one choice: accompanied by his cousin Angela, Jaime must flee his home to live with his older brother in New Mexico. Inspired by true events, *The Only Road* is an individual story of a boy who feels that leaving his home and risking everything is his only chance for a better life. It is a story of fear and bravery, love and loss, strangers becoming family, and one boy’s treacherous and life-changing journey.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 320 pages

Publisher: Simon & Schuster/Paula Wiseman Books (October 4, 2016)

Language: English

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ISBN-13: 978-1481457507

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 1 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 7.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 13 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #68,658 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #24 in Books > Children’s Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Central & South America #172 in Books > Children’s Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Fiction #2371 in Books > Children’s Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Terrorized and threatened by a local drug gang, a 12-year-old boy and his 15-year-old cousin flee their Guatemalan village and seek refuge in the United States. . . . Crossing into Mexico after a nighttime getaway, Jaime and Ángela meet fellow runaway teens, each with different reasons for fleeing home. Their passage, nevertheless, proves treacherous for everyone, child or adult. . . . Though Jaime and Ángela's story features dizzying acts of violence and abuse, Diaz explores such complex, grim matters with great care. The author's use of third-person narration situates readers at a distance from the horrors that assail the protagonists while at the same time allowing opportunities to dig into Jaime's grief during crucial moments. It's Jaime's sorrow over Miguel's death that best defines Diaz's novel, reminding readers of the real-life struggles afflicting many Latin American immigrants every day. (Kirkus Reviews) Powerful and timely. (Booklist) Jaime's first person perspective enables readers to begin to comprehend the realities of undocumented youth immigration, its underlying causes, and the sacrifices and hardships made to reach safety in the United States. An important, must-have addition to the growing body of literature with immigrant themes. (School Library Journal (STARRED))

Alexandra Diaz is the author of *Of All the Stupid Things*, which was a ALA Rainbow List book and a New Mexico Book Award finalist. Alexandra is the daughter of Cuban refugees and lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico, but got her MA in Writing for Young People at Bath Spa University in England. A native Spanish speaker, Alexandra now teaches creative writing to adults and teens. Visit her online at [Alexandra-Diaz.com](http://Alexandra-Diaz.com).

Jaime threw a fistful of dirt over his cousin's coffin. The Alphas watched from the hillside above the cemetery. Anger and fear washed over him. Jaime couldn't suppress his thoughts as he watched the murderers staring down at him: It should have been my funeral. Within hours, the Guatemalan gang delivered a message: Jaime and his cousin Angela were their next recruits. The Alphas would force them to kill the next victims. Failure to join the gang meant certain death. The two families gathered to consider their options. There was only one road for them. Jaime's brother worked on a ranch in New Mexico. Tiny hope flickered within Jaime, nearly overwhelmed by fear. The trip was four thousand kilometers—an overwhelming distance for a boy of twelve. In the dark of the night their journey began. Immigration officers stopped their bus and forcibly removed a Salvadoran woman, twisting the screaming woman's arm behind her back. Jaime

knew he and Angela would be thrown in white deportation vans and probably beaten if they were caught too. Each day held new dangers—getting stabbed by brutal gangs, robbed by other immigrants, or abandoned by traitorous “coyotes” who’d been highly paid to get them to the United States. In the desert, out of food and fainting from blistering heat, death seemed certain. Jaime knew the price of trying to jump onto a moving train. More than one refugee they’d met had lost their limbs. They were completely alone, and Angela was terrified. Was it time to give up? *The Only Road* casts clear light on the desperate road to freedom for children trapped in the horrors of gang violence in Central America. Alexandra Diaz is an Americas Award Winner, and her book won the Pura Belpre Honor.—Kate Calina

An absolutely brilliant book that brings us face to face with the horrific circumstances children face in Guatemala, through the story of two children fighting to get to the safety of America. Timely, tremendously engaging, and illuminating. You will not be able to put it down, and your heart will travel with Jaime and Angela as they make the perilous journey to freedom.

Wow, what a story. It’s one of those books that you want to rush to finish to find out what happens and then when you get to the end you feel like you have lost members of your family. This book puts a human face on the issues of gangs, immigration and loss of family and is both heartbreaking and uplifting. Hope to see more coming from Ms. Diaz.

I purchased this book for my 10 year old son as a Christmas gift. He enjoyed the book and would recommend it.

My 13 yo boy loved it!

Great book! Captivating story for old and young; I highly recommend it!

It’s heartbreaking to read how horrific your situation and options must be if you resort to sending your children on the treacherous trip from Guatemala to the US - without a guaranteed safe path or end. *The Only Road* is, I believe, considered a mid-grade book but was very difficult to read a times. While the book is hopeful, it doesn’t shy away from the things Jamie and Angela see on their journey to New Mexico. My heart was pounding and I was holding my breath hoping they would be

ok. I suggest parents read \*with\* their children and additionally look into some of the suggested teachers resources and bibliography from the lists provided at the end of the book. Immigration is such an important topic, especially right now, and education - not fear should be our guide. This is a great book to use as a jumping off point. There is also a helpful glossary to refer to for some terms and words used in story.

According to the description of the book from the publisher: Inspired by true events, *The Only Road* is an individual story of a boy who feels that leaving his home and risking everything is his only chance for a better life. It is a story of fear and bravery, love and loss, strangers becoming family, and one boy's treacherous and life-changing journey. I had so many emotions run through me as I read this book. Right now as we are dealing with the Syrian refugee crisis in Canada, reading this book at this time made it seem so much more real. The dangers many refugees and illegal immigrants face trying to come to a country where they can feel safe are mind boggling. In this story it is two children (12 and 15) travelling alone with only names, maps, information and money sewn into their clothes that take the treacherous journey from Guatemala to the U.S. When Angela's brother and Jamie's cousin Miguel is killed by the local gang because he refused to join them, the family believes the only way to keep Angela and Jamie safe is to get them away from Guatemala. Tomas, Jaimie's brother, lives in New Mexico, so that is their destination. The journey is dangerous, but they go anyway. They meet other children on the way and they become friends. They rescue a dog, near death from the dog fights and nurse her back to life. They work sewing and drawing portraits to earn even more money to get safe passage across the border. Unfortunately, out of the small group of five children travelling together, they are the only ones to make it. We do not find out exactly what happens to the others, but from what is happening in the story, we can imagine. This journey took courage, guts, a little naivete and luck to get to their final destination. Many try and do not make it, many try multiple times, many disappear or are killed. A very hard story to read. This book should be read by all students to help them understand the plight of refugees and immigrants. It should also give them an appreciation of what they have and how they live. Thank-you to Paula Wiseman Books / Simon & Schuster for generously providing me a copy of this book to read. It is one that will be with me for a while.

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