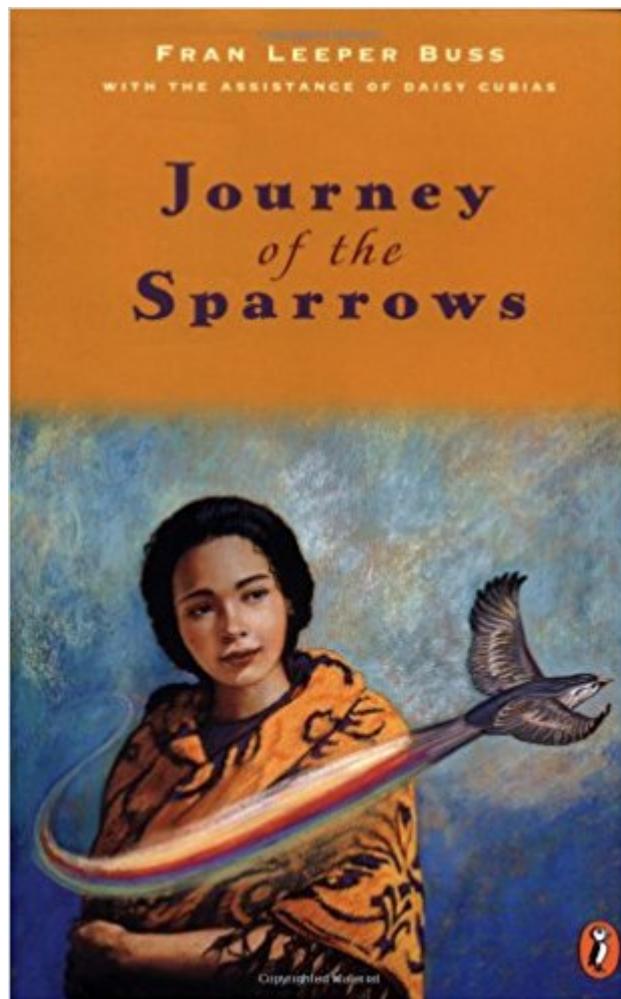


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# Journey Of The Sparrows



## Synopsis

Nailed into a crate in the back of a truck, fifteen-year-old Maria, her older sister, Julia, their little brother, Oscar, and a boy named Tomas endure a terrifying and torturous journey across the U.S. border and then north to Chicago. There they struggle to find work-cleaning, sewing, washing dishes-always fearful of arrest and deportation back to the cruelties of El Salvador. By turns heartbreaking and hopeful, this moving story of the secret lives of immigrants is not to be missed. A gripping, lyrical portrayal of a continuing American dilemma." (Kirkus Reviews, pointer review)

## Book Information

Paperback: 160 pages

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Shipping Weight: 4.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 11 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #376,074 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #49 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Runaways #132 in Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Central & South America #151 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Adoption

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

Maria , her brother and sister arrive in the U.S. from El Salvador, jammed inside a nailed crate. Having left their mother and baby sister in Mexico, they are ready to take up the twilight existence of the illegal alien in Chicago. Maria and her siblings not only face extradition if caught, but nearly certain death if returned to their homeland. Sister Julia is pregnant, and it falls to Maria to learn English, look for work and find food for her family. In retelling the plight of Central American refugees, Buss, with the assistance of Cubias, a poet and activist from El Salvador, delicately avoids the obvious and didactic pitfalls in describing this all-too-common problem. By not dwelling on the brutality of the Guardias in El Salvador (who killed Maria's father and Julia's husband) and the numbing details of poverty, she makes this a surprisingly entertaining and hopeful story. Ages

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Grade 5-8-- Maria, her older sister Julia, and small brother, Oscar, are illegal aliens, having been smuggled into the U. S. nailed in crates and shipped in the back of a coyote's truck. They are Salvadorans from a peasant village whose men have been openly murdered or "disappeared." Their ordeal presages an almost unrelentingly bleak existence, living in poverty on the margins of norteamericano culture in wintertime Chicago. Small events brighten their lives: a friend buys Maria a pack of colored pens with which she creates pictures that she sells for tiny sums; a kind priest gives her a job cleaning his church. The climactic moment arrives when Maria must make a dangerous return trip to Mexico to get her baby sister, left in the care of friends along the way. The theme is indeed a strong one, and characterization suffers under its weight. In spite of the many tragedies these children face, they never really come to life. Thus, while readers will admire Maria's spirit, they are likely to feel detached from her anguish. Buss makes heavy use of symbolism: of birds flying free or guiding followers to safety; of colors, the bright clothes of the Indians, the green feathers of the quetzal; and of the many religious images. The icons of the various virgins that Maria sees are colorful and benign, but cold. The power of events in her life nearly overwhelm her, but a thread of hope, very thin, nevertheless pulls her onward. A worthwhile book, but one that is not totally successful at drawing readers into the world of its characters. --Ruth Semrau, Lovejoy School, Allen, TX

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This book is definitely worth the price! Read it for the first time in elementary, then junior high, then high. No I'm 30 and I still can't forget this book. And I discovered it served as an "AR" book for my sister-in-law.

This was 9ne of the most wonderful books that i have read. Thank you for help8ng me send a copy to gabby in arizona.

As a mother who screens everything her 12-year-old daughter reads, I often find it challenging to discuss current affairs that involve serious injustice without some kind of introduction from good historical fiction. I've found "The Royal Dairies" and "Dear America" series to be terrific starting points: historical fiction, when well-written, provides a decent background to the initial understanding

of what is going on in the news. "Journey of the Sparrows," by Fran Leeper Buss with the assistance of Daisy Cubias, is a stand-alone book that is more authorized biography than historical fiction, and serves well to initiate the very controversial issue of illegal immigration. Although the story is set in the United States, the problems facing (in particular) the female immigrants in the story are pretty universal - whether the immigrants are from China into Hong Kong pre-1990, or Cambodia into Thailand, or Russia into France or Germany even now. What may concern some parents might be references to prostitution and rape. These are mentioned in passing - and, in our case, it allowed me to point out to said daughter that life for the average twelve-year-old is not the same in other parts of the world (or even the country), so, gee, how lucky is she, right? My point though, is that said daughter is mature enough to handle this important book. I think it should be required reading at some point in any academic curriculum - but it does depend on the maturity of the child and the mind-set of the supervising adult. "The book, 'Journey of the Sparrows,' by Fran Leeper Buss with the assistance of Daisy Cubias, is a novel that depicts the lives of secret immigrants who courageously triumph over incredible obstacles." Maria, her pregnant older sister Julia and their little brother, Oscar, are illegal aliens. They sneak into the Land of Hopes and Dreams, a.k.a the U.S.A., from Mexico, where the Guardias had terrorized and killed Julia's husband, and their father. They arrive in the dark inside a crate, together with Thomas, a boy Maria's age, who is good and kind. But America isn't all it's cracked up to be. Maria, the strongest of her family, must find work in a factory with other illegal immigrants that they share an apartment with. But will Maria be able to save enough money to bring her mother and baby sister, Teresa to their new home? Or will the Guardias get them first? "My favorite part was when Maria finds out that the little drawings she makes and she sells for two dollars apiece have been sold for thirty-nine dollars. It made me feel happy that Maria, although she was an illegal immigrant, a teenage girl, could draw, with just her little felt tip pens on wood, something that people want enough to pay a lot of money for." I would give the book five stars: one for the characters, two for the plot and two for the ending. I would recommend this book to anyone who likes adventure and some romance in a story. However, if you are looking for a happy, happy story - this story is not for you. It is hopeful, yes, romantic, yes, but not happy."

My fifth grade teacher gave this to me as a gift. I read it several times, mainly because I thought that if a teacher had given it to me, then it must be good. Needless to say, it wasn't exactly my cup of tea. I didn't really sympathize too much with the characters, and I found it unbelievable that a girl could see pictures that she had created with...magic markers. Anyway, I had no other exposure to anything remotely south of the border before, so it was a new experience. The reason why I give this

four stars is because it really wasn't as bad as I seem to be saying. Things happen to Maria that are easy to relate to--falling in love for the first time, trying to be an adult while still very young, and dodging sexual exploitation while working and living illegally in the States. Maybe the reason why I was disappointed was that this could have been a more vividly described story. The story of the bird seemed more like a blatantly literary device which wasn't properly integrated. Well, this is my two sense. Worth investigation, worth a read.

I had to read this book for a class and I am so thankful that my professor introduced me to it. While reading this book, I found that I could not put it down. It is an easy read and is appropriate for 6th grade and higher. This book gives the reader an understanding of the hardships of migrating to a new country and how scary it was to be on the lookout for Immigration. Furthermore, this book offers an incite to how non-criminal illegal immigrants are - that they are people who are just trying to survive.

Full of romance and struggles to understand a new language and the people around her, this book has the greatest elements to draw you in as a reader to read this book again and again until it falls apart. The beginning was gripping, you kept wondering if they'd make it...the only bad thing about this book was that the "quizel" the bird in other words was a corny element and should have been left out. Other than that, this book was fantastic and should be read by all at one point of their lives when stressed and searching for self understanding.

With this book, the elements aren't really for you as a person to relate to the characters and their ancestry but the book and plot itself. Just like LETTERS FROM RIFKA, a young female immigrant migrates to America but runs into problems. Like how she has to work for money, her hidden talents and loves, her romance with one her age, taking care of her pregnant sister and so forth. I found this book to be a fabulous read, I read it twice in a row, afraid I missed something. I highly recommend this as a historical romance.

Maria and her family are trying to escape from El Salvador. The Gaurdias had killed her Papa. Now Maria, Oscar(her brother), and Julia (her pregnant sister) are all hiding in Chicago. Due to a raid on the place she worked, her best friend was sent back to El Salvador. Julia's baby was about due and she might have to go to the hospital, where most illegal Latino's are caught. To find out what happens to Julia you'll need to read the book. I enjoyed this book because it is a multicultural book

based on an actual event in the past. I enjoyed it and I hope you read it, and like it as much as me.\*\*\*\*

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