

Title: *We Are Not from Here*
Author: Jenny Torres Sanchez
Genre: Realistic Fiction

Reviewer's Name and Grade: Benjamin W., 9th Grade

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Pulga, Chico, and Pequeña all have their reasons to run, but none of them are ready to do so. When those reasons become all too real, they know they have no choice but to run, and leave their families and homes behind. For Pulga and Chico, it's the threat of getting killed each day. By chance, they were in the back room of a store when gang members broke in and killed the owner. As they were the only witnesses, the gang leader, Rey, decided to force them to work for him, keeping the fact that he could have very easily killed them instead clear. For Pequeña, it's her boyfriend, who happens to also be Rey. Rey has forced himself on her, making her deliver a baby she never wanted. He has come up with a twisted fantasy of what they would become and Pequeña wants nothing to do with it. Together the three of them take the 3 A.M. bus out of Puerto Barrios with hopes of reaching the United States.

Their ticket to the border is La Bestia, a series of trains that run through Mexico. Since they don't have the money to ride inside the train, Pulga, Chico, and Pequeña are forced to ride on top. Pulga decides that they will hop the train when it starts leaving, instead of waiting on top of the train in the burning heat. As days go on, they jump more and more trains, sometimes being forced to jump off to avoid kidnappers and the police. On one such occasion, Chico obtains a concussion while jumping off, forcing the three of them to seek a shelter. Chico doesn't want to leave the shelter, but Pulga pushes him on. This turns out to be too much for him, as one day, he falls off when riding on top and dies. Pulga, heartbroken and defeated, wants to go back to Puerto Barrios. But Pequeña urges him onward, saying that Chico wouldn't have wanted him to return home. Eventually, they reach Altar, where they must now cross a desert into the United States. Pequeña uses a diamond ring Rey gave her to pay for a coyote, a person that will guide them across the desert. Now on the final leg of their journey, they must survive the dangers and challenges of the desert to reach el norte, the north.

Now, I will answer some questions about the book:

Did the plot keep you interested? - This plot definitely kept me interested. There was a lot of tension and action in the story. It was mentioned at the beginning that the journey was very dangerous and that a lot of people didn't make it, so I was left constantly wondering whether or not the three of them would make it past the next obstacle.

Was the pace of the book too fast, too slow, or just right? - I think the pace of this book was just right. The book would be interrupted by fast, adrenaline-pumping moments that made the book much more exciting and interesting.

What grade level(s) is this book appropriate for? - I think this book is appropriate for kids in grades 7-12. There is death, violence, sexual content, and cursing in this book so it wouldn't be appropriate for younger kids. Older kids would get a better understanding of the plot.

What type of reader would you recommend this book to? - I would recommend this book to readers who like a suspenseful, emotion-packed book.

What other information do you think would be helpful for teens to know about this book? - There are some Spanish words in this book. Most of them aren't important but the ones you should know are tía, which means aunt, and la bestia, which means the beast.

Rating:

I would rate this book *4 stars*. The plot was really good but was a little slow at the beginning. Pequeña was kind of a confusing character, especially the part of her where she could go into imaginary worlds. Overall, the characters were well built and would leave me still thinking about them after I finished reading.