



90 Miles to Havana

By Enrique Flores-Galbis

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90 Miles to Havana is a 2011 Pura Belpré Honor Book for Narrative and a 2011 Bank Street Best Children's Book of the Year.

When Julian's parents make the heartbreaking decision to send him and his two brothers away from Cuba to Miami via the Pedro Pan operation, the boys are thrust into a new world where bullies run rampant and it's not always clear how best to protect themselves.

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90 Miles to Havana By Enrique Flores-Galbis Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Gr 4-7—Based on Flores-Galbis's experiences, this novel is deeply affecting. In 1961, Julian and his two brothers leave Cuba with 14,000 other children, in what is known as “Operation Pedro Pan.” History comes alive through the author's dazzling use of visual imagery and humor, which ranges from light to dark. This book is sophisticated, but can be read on many levels. Most children will be able to relate to the terror and excitement that Julian feels when he is separated from his brothers and all alone in an orphanage in Miami. The writing is poetic, yet clear as glass, and the gorgeous sentences do not slow down the briskly paced plot. Julian emerges as a more endearing, likable character with every page, and readers will be fully absorbed in his journey. The only minor disappointment is toward the end, when the narrator's heroism in helping strangers distracts readers from the more meaningful, long-awaited reunion with his family. Reluctant readers might need some help in early chapters, but once Julian's adventure begins in earnest, it's hard to imagine any child putting this book down. *Jess de Courcy Hinds, Bard High School Early College Queens, Long Island City, NY*

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From [Booklist](#)

Drawing on his own experience as a child refugee from Cuba, Flores-Galbis offers a gripping historical novel about children who were evacuated from Cuba to the U.S. during Operation Pedro Pan in 1961. Julian, a young Cuban boy, experiences the violent revolution and watches mobs throw out his family's furniture and move into their home. For his safety, his parents send him to a refugee camp in Miami, but life there is no sweet haven. He tries to avoid the powerful camp bullies (“the big eat the small”) while he waits in anguish for his parents, and in a wrenching parting, his two older brothers are sent away to a harsh orphanage in Denver. The messages get heavy at times about the meaning of democracy, at odds with the political and the camp power games. But this is a seldom-told refugee story that will move readers with the first-person, present-tense rescue narrative, filled with betrayal, kindness, and waiting for what may never come. Grades 5-8. --Hazel Rochman

Review

“Flores-Galbis ably portrays the harsh realities these young Cuban immigrants faced: little hope of reunification with family members, dwindling resources, and insufficient government support, while also conveying their resilience in the face of emotional upheaval.” *?Publishers Weekly*

“Inspired by Flores-Galbis' experiences as a Pedro Pan refugee, the fast-moving story should easily hook both historical-fiction and adventure readers.” *?Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*

“It's hard to imagine any child putting this book down.” *?School Library Journal*

“It will introduce readers to a not-so-distant period whose echoes are still felt today and inspire admiration for young people who had to be brave despite frightening and lonely odds.” *?Kirkus Reviews*

“Drawing on his own experience as a child refugee from Cuba, Flores-Galbis offers a gripping historical novel about children who were evacuated from Cuba to the U.S. during Operation Pedro Pan in 1961. . . . This is a seldom-told refugee story that will move readers with the first-person, present-tense rescue narrative, filled with betrayal, kindness, and waiting for what may never come.” *?Booklist*

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