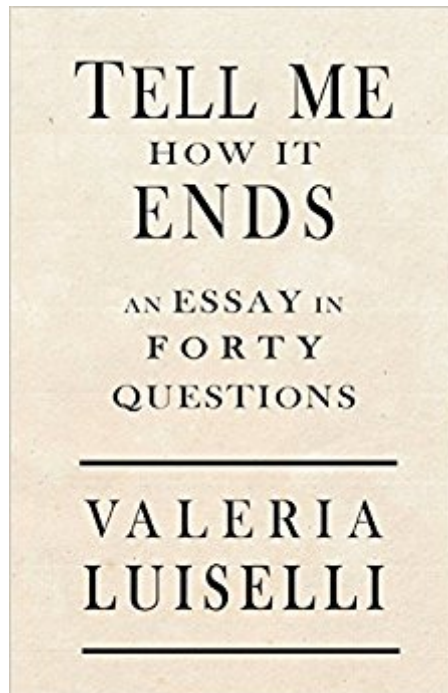




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# Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay In 40 Questions



## Synopsis

"Humane yet often horrifying, *Tell Me How It Ends* offers a compelling, intimate look at a continuing crisis and its ongoing cost in an age of increasing urgency." —Jeremy Garber, Powell's Books  
"Valeria Luiselli's extended essay on her volunteer work translating for child immigrants confronts with compassion and honesty the problem of the North American refugee crisis. It's a rare thing: a book everyone should read." —Stephen Sparks, Point Reyes Books  
"Tell Me How It Ends evokes empathy as it educates. It is a vital contribution to the body of post-Trump work being published in early 2017." —Katharine Solheim, Unabridged Bookstore  
"While this essay is brilliant for exactly what it depicts, it helps open larger questions, which we're ever more on the precipice of now, of where all of this will go, how all of this might end. Is this a story, or is this beyond a story? Valeria Luiselli is one of those brave and eloquent enough to help us see." —Rick Simonson, Elliott Bay Book Company  
"Appealing to the language of the United States' fraught immigration policy, Luiselli exposes the cracks in this foundation. Herself an immigrant, she highlights the human cost of its brokenness, as well as the hope that it (rather than walls) might be rebuilt." —Brad Johnson, Diesel Bookstore  
"The bureaucratic labyrinth of immigration, the dangers of searching for a better life, all of this and more is contained in this brief and profound work. *Tell Me How It Ends* is not just relevant, it's essential." —Mark Haber, Brazos Bookstore

## Book Information

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in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Specific Topics > Globalization

## Customer Reviews

"As in her hallucinatory and inventive fiction, Luiselli proves her skill as a storyteller while grappling with her own questions of nationalism." *•The New Yorker*, "Briefly Noted" "This is a vital document for understanding the crisis that immigrants to the U.S. are facing, and a call to action for those who find this situation appalling." *•Publisher's Weekly* "Luiselli effectively humanizes the plights of those who have been demonized or who have been reduced to faceless numbers . . . A powerful call to action and to empathy." *•Kirkus* "Luiselli's awareness of a story's ability to restrict informs the book's judicious use of these children's lives, as well as its quietly brilliant structure as a series of responses to the questionnaire, which Luiselli describes as a reflection of a colder, more cynical and brutal reality." . . . The account that emerges has no fixed origin, and the crisis, as Luiselli wisely points out, belongs not to any specific country or countries but to all of us living in this corner of the world." *•New York Times Sunday Book Review* "These days, the whole world, including our politics, is being shaped by migration. Few people explore the nuances of this reality more skillfully than Valeria Luiselli, a strikingly gifted 33-year-old Mexican writer who knows the migratory experience first-hand. . . . Luiselli takes us inside the grand dream of migration, offering the valuable reminder that exceedingly few immigrants abandon their past and brave death to come to America for dark or nasty reasons. They come as an expression of hope." *•NPR* "With anger and lucidity, Luiselli depicts the nightmares these children are forced to flee in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, as well as the destructive ignorance and bigotry that awaits them in America. . . . With a beguiling mixture of compassion and intellectual rigor, she gives her readers the chance to look." *•Chicago Tribune* "Valeria Luiselli's latest book, *Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in 40 Questions*, is unsparing in its portrayal of vulnerability and determination." *•Rolling Stone* "Tell Me How It Ends is a remarkable little work that, through its narrow lens, says more about the country than books ten times its size." *•GQ* "This moving, intimate narrative about the migration of children from Central America is based in part on the author's experience as a volunteer court translator." *•New York Times Sunday Book Review* "The tone of [Tell Me How It Ends] is one of profound and committed anger, flawlessly documented, and Luiselli makes a clear and layered case for citizen activism, weaving facts with true emotion as she shapes the narrative." *•Miami Rail*, "The Art of Protest: A Review of Valeria Luiselli's Tell Me How It Ends" "Translating language, experience, bodies across space and time, thought

and culture. Luiselli wants us to join in this work. *Tell Me How It Ends* calls for a wholesale reimagining of both the forces that have shaped contemporary immigration into the United States as well as the way many Americans, disconnected from fact, picture it. It calls, moreover, for action.

•Brooklyn Magazine "This essay, besides its aesthetic value, is a bold political statement and writing in the service of social activism."

•Latin American Literature Today "In *Tell Me How it Ends: An Essay in Forty Questions* [Luiselli] combines the skills of a journalist who has a sharp eye for significant details with a novelist's empathy."

•Times Literary Supplement "[*Tell Me How It Ends*] is written from a transnational perspective, and all the more lucid for it."

•The Intercept "A powerful indictment of American immigration policy, [*Tell Me How It Ends*] examines a system that has failed child refugees in particular."

•Financial Times "Tell Me How it Ends is the kind of reading experience that rips your heart out. . . . Luiselli has already demonstrated she's one of the most powerful young voices in fiction, and with this book she has done the same in the realm of nonfiction. Simply put, this is required reading."

•Vol. 1 Brooklyn "Tell Me How It Ends itself is also a sharp, useful narrative, a storytelling better. It can be pressed into hands, recommended, and it will open wallets and drive people into the streets to protest."

•Remezcla "Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in Forty Questions is at once a deft exposition on the injustices of immigration law, the long, bullying history of U.S.-Central American relations, and the obstacles and politics of translation."

•The Millions, "The Harrowing Translations of Valeria Luiselli" "In the age of Trump, the call to bring anger and clarity to writing refutes the idea that literature is a guilty, escapist indulgence. *Tell Me How It Ends* insists that artists take action, and its message is clear: we are all deeply implicated in the plight faced by these children."

•Paste "Tell Me How It Ends is a damning but deeply humane indictment of the narratives with which we've built America, both the stories we keep hidden and those we use to justify our cruelty. The experiences of the children Luiselli interviews demand that we complicate our own roles in the immigration crisis, its continent-wide affect; we can't rewrite what these children have been through, but we must pursue more compassionate, more just stories of our own."

•The Riveter "Luiselli masterfully blends journalism, auto/biography, and political history into a compelling and cohesive narrative. . . . Luiselli uses the personal to get political but smartly sidesteps identity politics to focus on policy instead, thus enabling a broader coalition around immigration in general. Writing clear-eyed, she guides the reader through court proceedings and

critiques the language of the law and media (the word illegal prevails over undocumented and the term immigrant over refugee), without losing sight of her subject: undocumented children. The Rumpus “This essential book humanizes these young migrants, highlights the contradictions of the American Dream, and explores the fear and racism so prevalent for the people who try to make the U.S. their home. Literary Hub “In perhaps the most important book of 2017, Luiselli tells the story of her time volunteering as an interpreter for undocumented children fleeing violence in Central and South America seeking residency in the United States. Luiselli tries to change the way we talk about immigration, especially from our Southern neighbors, by exploring our complicity in the crises that turned these people into refugees and reminding us that quite often, when we’re talking about illegal aliens, undocumented immigrants, or whatever other term someone might try to scare us with, we’re talking about children. Writer’s Bone “Tell Me How It Ends is the best first book to read about the immigration crisis; if, like Luiselli, you come to the issue with nothing but questions, there is not a better hundred pages for you to read. . . . As the interpreter struggles to bridge the gap between the law and the experiences of children too young to fully understand what has happened to them and, often, too traumatized to fully explain it she tells a story without an ending, only a question, only a hope, and only a prayer: to arrive. Bookwitty “This book serves as another wake up call, and, even more importantly, a call to action. . . . It’s another step forward in the strange struggle of our modern age, or maybe it’s any age, the humanizing of humans. The very least we can all do is hear these stories. Read this book. Proximity Magazine “This noble instinct probably feels familiar to the many writers who, since the American political crisis began with the election of Donald J. Trump, have been turning their work outward to looming racial, economic, and environmental injustices. But what Luiselli accomplishes, in her volunteer work and in Tell Me How It Ends, is quite a bit more pointed: a transformation of consciousness. Literary Hub “Luiselli’s book . . . becomes worthy of inclusion in a great American (and international) canon of writing about migration. Texas Observer “Luiselli’s prose is always lush and astute, but this long essay, which borrows its framework from questions on the cold, bureaucratic work sheets with which she became so familiar (for example, Did anything happen on your trip to the U.S. that scared or hurt you?), is teeming with urgency. . . . In this slim

volume about the spectacular failure of the American Dream, she tells the stories of the unnamed children she's encountered and their fears and desires, as well as her own family's immigration story.

•Vulture

"In Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in Forty Questions Mexican author Valeria Luiselli assumes a role not only as a resident alien or interpreter but, more importantly, as a storyteller. She relays the crisis of undocumented youth so we might examine their present struggles and link them to our own inexplicable past.

•Houston Chronicle

"[Tell Me How It Ends] fearlessly delves into the heavy-handed reality of racism that often goes unspoken both in their home country and in America.

•The Riveter Newsletter

"Tell Me How It Ends is a book that turns numbers back into people.

•In Order of Importance

"Thorough, vulnerable, and compassionate, Tell Me How It Ends offers deep inspection on what may be perceived as a long-resolved issue.

•Luiselli writes to keep our eyes open.

•Ploughshares

"It is time for the rest of us to ask our own set of questions about what we expect from our government when it comes to protecting the welfare of vulnerable children. With the help of Tell Me How It Ends, we have more insight than ever into what those questions should be.

•Signature

"Language, and the political weight it carries, is at the heart of this book.

•Bookwitty

"This book shoves aside over-intellectualization of border and immigration policy and reminds us of the damn hard and harrowing realities of the children who come into the US from Central America and Mexico every day, what they faced in the cities they left and what they face when they get here. Luiselli is a sharp, searing writer. She packs a lot of power. Be prepared to cry. Read it, read it, read it and then share it.

•Texas Book Festival

"In this world of unending crisis, Luiselli's book is an important testament to the people and children buried within the numbers and histories and politics, and through her compassionate observations she reminds us of their unassailable humanity.

•Drunken Boat

"Books like Tell Me How It Ends are like dew on a spiderweb, revealing the often forgotten and sometimes ignored threads of humanity that connect us all.

•Josh Cook, Porter Square Books

"In the warrens of New York City's federal immigration court, an adolescent boy from Honduras confronts a thoroughly confused immigration bureaucracy with the help of his translator, who is the author of this book. He is just one of thousands of immigrant children longing for permanence in this country, but we get to see him up close. With Valeria Luiselli as our guide, we navigate the corridors of a system that tries and fails to reconcile America's long-standing welcome of the poor, the

terrorized, and the adventurous with its current fear and mistrust of immigrants. In the frightening year of 2017 this is a most necessary book, and a unique one, from a writer whose clear-eyed intelligence and marvelous literary imagination make every one of her narratives a compelling read.

—Alma Guillermoprieto—  
“Compelling and urgent, *Tell Me How It Ends* gives a face and a name to the hundreds of thousands who have committed the innocent crime of geography: being born in a certain time and place. The bureaucratic labyrinth of immigration, the dangers of searching for a better life, all of this and more is contained in this brief and profound work. *Tell Me How It Ends* is not just relevant, it’s essential.”

—Mark Haber, Brazos Bookstore—  
“In the hours Valeria Luiselli spends at the immigration courts in NYC, her duty is to listen to children tell her stories about their scars and how they got them. Like a morbid game show, the children’s answers determine their fate. The grand prize? Permanent citizenship, if all goes well. The alternative? Deportation. Bonus: due to the volume of cases, the standard intake form forgives only those who have the most gruesome traumas, wounds that they can show—and of course, the language to speak about them. Part treatise, part memoir, part call-to-action, *Tell Me How It Ends* inspires not through a stiff stance of authority, but with the curiosity and humility Luiselli has long since established. It may not cure your panic, but it sure as hell won’t feed it.”

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“Valeria Luiselli’s *Tell Me How It Ends* is an important reminder that words matter. The questions we ask of others are built upon a foundation of assumptions about the past and expectations for the future. Appealing to the language of the United States’ fraught immigration policy, Luiselli exposes the cracks in this foundation. Herself an immigrant, she highlights the human cost of its brokenness, as well as the hope that it (rather than walls) might be rebuilt.”

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ends, the young daughter says to the mother. Valeria Luiselli uses this query, said of the heartbreaking, infuriating situation involving undocumented Central American children and the legal system they encounter here that she movingly chronicles in this powerful essay. She helps call to question where we as people, as a people, are with innocent children, who or what is alien, even the business of who is American, given that she casts this as a connective scenario, with what happens in Tegucigalpa being related to what happens in Hempstead, New York. In this we are all Americans, finally. Imagine being put into court systems without the language to speak, much less the adult language of law. And while this essay is brilliant for exactly what it depicts, it helps open larger questions, which we're ever more on the precipice of now, of where all of this will go, how all of this might end. Is this a story, or is this beyond a story? Valeria Luiselli is one of those brave and eloquent enough to help us see.

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"Valeria Luiselli's Tell Me How It Ends helped me see the crisis undocumented immigrants, especially children coming from Mexico and Central America, are facing in our country in much the same way Michelle Alexander's The New Jim Crow helped me see how slavery's legacy is being perpetuated in the mass incarceration of black Americans. As someone who has read every one of Luiselli's books, I expected her writing here to be erudite and elegant, and it is, of course it is, but what I did not expect was for her writing to be this immediate and this personal. I did not expect to be hit this hard emotionally, to feel every fear and every longing in the deepest part of who I am. I can't remember the last time I read something and had this kind of physical reaction. I felt this book in the tug behind my eyes, in these hands shaking, in this heart beating too quickly. This is a work I will share with everyone I know. This is something every American needs to face, and to feel.

•Kenneth Coble, King's Books

"In an essay as bracing as it is searing, the incomparable Valeria Luiselli explores the 2014 immigration crisis. Luiselli writes with a clarity that underscores the nightmarish conditions and nonsensical bureaucracy undocumented children face on their passage to America and toward U.S. citizenship. Tell Me How It Ends evokes empathy as it educates. It is a vital contribution to the body of post-Trump work being published in early 2017.

•Katharine Solheim, Unabridged Books

"This is a vital document for understanding the crisis that immigrants to the U.S. are facing, and a call to action for those who find this situation appalling.

•Publishers Weekly

"Luiselli effectively humanizes the plights of those who have been demonized or who have been reduced to faceless numbers| A powerful call to action and to empathy.

•Kirkus

"These days, the whole world, including our politics, is



being shaped by migration. Few people explore the nuances of this reality more skillfully than Valeria Luiselli, a strikingly gifted 33-year-old Mexican writer who knows the migratory experience first-hand.

Luiselli takes us inside the grand dream of migration, offering the valuable reminder that exceedingly few immigrants abandon their past and brave death to come to America for dark or nasty reasons. They come as an expression of hope.

NPR, Fresh Air

"With anger and lucidity, Luiselli depicts the nightmares these children are forced to flee in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, as well as the destructive ignorance and bigotry that awaits them in America.

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"Valeria Luiselli's latest book, *Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in 40 Questions*, is unsparing in its portrayal of vulnerability and determination.

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GQ

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•Vol. 1 Brooklyn

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“This book shoves aside over-intellectualization of border and immigration policy and reminds us of the damn hard and harrowing realities of the children who come into the US from Central America and Mexico every day, what they faced in the cities they left and what they face when they get here. Luiselli is a sharp, searing writer. She packs a lot of power. Be prepared to cry. Read it, read it, read it and then share it.

•Texas Book Festival

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Guillermo Prieto “Compelling and urgent, *Tell Me How It Ends* gives a face and a name to the hundreds of thousands who have committed the innocent crime of geography: being born in a certain time and place. The bureaucratic labyrinth of immigration, the dangers of searching for a better life, all of this and more is contained in this brief and profound work. *Tell Me How It Ends* is not just relevant, it’s essential.”

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Jeremy Garber, Powell’s Books “This is a timely take on one of the most pressing humanitarian crises of the 21st century. Without a doubt the most essential read of the year, this slight book can do some real good in the world. Luiselli is a badass.”

Brazos Bookstore, “Buyer’s Corner: Best of 2017 So Far” “Valeria Luiselli’s extended essay on her volunteer work translating for child immigrants confronts with compassion and honesty the problem of the North American refugee crisis. It’s a rare thing: a book everyone should read.”

Stephen Sparks, Point Reyes Books ““Tell me how it

ends, the young daughter says to the mother. Valeria Luiselli uses this query, said of the heartbreaking, infuriating situation involving undocumented Central American children and the legal system they encounter here that she movingly chronicles in this powerful essay. She helps call to question where we as people, as a people, are with innocent children, who or what is alien, even the business of who is American, given that she casts this as a connective scenario, with what happens in Tegucigalpa being related to what happens in Hempstead, New York. In this we are all Americans, finally. Imagine being put into court systems without the language to speak, much less the adult language of law. And while this essay is brilliant for exactly what it depicts, it helps open larger questions, which we're ever more on the precipice of now, of where all of this will go, how all of this might end. Is this a story, or is this beyond a story? Valeria Luiselli is one of those brave and eloquent enough to help us see.

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•Katharine Solheim, Unabridged Books

Valeria Luiselli was born Mexico City and 1983 and grew up in South Africa. A award-winning novelist (*The Story of My Teeth* and *Faces in the Crowd*) and essayist (*Sidewalks*), her work has been translated into many languages and has appeared in publications including the New York

Times, the New Yorker, Granta, and McSweeney's.

An amazing essay that succinctly paints portraits of the Latin American REFUGEE crisis we continue to ignore. Valeria shares her experiences as Mexican mother and wife who tries to understand and express the plight of thousands of youth who are seeking refuge from their war torn neighborhoods and countries. She works as a translator, asking children 40 questions regarding their presence in the United States. The narration is carried by these questions and the various answers she has received and endured. This short read makes you stop and appreciate your position in this great country but also makes you consider what exactly can we do to alleviate this crisis and anyone who suffers through it.

An outstanding book which gives one a sense of the complex and difficult situation of our present immigration problem. It gives a real picture of why young people leave their homes in Central America, and what they find here in the US, when/if they "arrive". It's not a pretty picture, but a very human picture, one which calls out to us to help change this situation.

I read this book with great care and interest because I am hoping my former high school will use it for their essay contest. I am fascinated by Laura Luiselli's book. The stark contrast between the children's lives and the system that are deciding whether they should stay or return home to a world of violence and poverty. The last half of the book becomes emotional as the writer focuses on one young person and his struggles to flee from gang violence in his home country and find "sanctuary" in the United States. The last half of the book becomes emotional as the writer focuses on one young person and his struggles to flee from gang violence in his home country and find "sanctuary" in the United States. My only wish is that the story was longer. It is a must read for those interested in social justice or interested in a rising young Mexican writer. Read the book, and I believe you will come to appreciate the writer and her story.

A fascinating and well-documented look at the flow of child immigrants from Central America, through Mexico, and into the U.S. A small book, and a quick read due to the fascinating subject. Well done by Valeria Luisella. She writes in English excellently well.

This is not a long book, but it tells a very powerful story of the LONG journey that children are making from south of the border into the United States. We don't need a wall. We need better

transportation options, and a more humane attitude toward the people who do the work Americans won't do.

Thought-provoking, powerful read. Eye-opening insight into the immigration process and the violence, heartache, and fear within it. Everyone, from all of the political spectrum, should read.

Anyone interested or studying the current immigration debate must read this book. Beautiful writing on a heartbreaking subject.

An eye opener. Strange how we all live in our 'USA' with less awareness of the experiences of others.

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