



Migrant Health Graphic Medicine Discussion Guide:

The Most Costly Journey: Stories of Migrant Farmworkers in Vermont Drawn by New England Cartoonists

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“This non-fiction comics anthology presents stories of survival and healing told by Latin American migrant farmworkers in Vermont, and drawn by New England cartoonists as part of the El Viaje Más Caro Project...aimed at addressing the overlooked mental health needs of these vulnerable immigrants...this collected edition brings the lives and voices—as well as the challenges and hardships—of these workers to an English-language audience, granting insight into the experiences and lives of the people vital to producing the food we eat.”

Why a Graphic Novel?

- Research suggests that we are better at understanding and absorbing information presented in visual forms, such as comics.
- Stories are more engaging than factual information alone. How much easier is it to remember and empathize with something a friend experienced versus hard statistics alone?
- Coined by Ian Williams, a physician in the UK, Graphic Medicine “is the intersection of the medium of comics and the discourse of healthcare.”
 - Graphic medicine, then, combines visual storytelling and medicine, creating a unique opportunity for readers to experience and learn about healthcare experiences through comics.

To Learn More...

- www.graphicmedicine.org – The home base for all things graphic medicine.
- *The Graphic Medicine Manifesto* by MK Czerwiec et al. Available from Penn State University Press.
- <https://opendoormidd.org/most-costly-journey/> - Learn more about the project that produced this book



Created by Sarah Levin-Lederer as part of the NNLM Region 7 Graphic Medicine Initiative.

Questions for Discussion

1. Did you appreciate the visual aspects of this book? Do you think the format of a graphic novel is more or less effective for a memoir than for a fictional account? How is it different than a memoir written in prose?
2. This collection of stories presents the individual stories of 19 people. They were originally distributed as individual pamphlets. What is the impact of collecting them together in a volume? *
 - a. Each of the storytellers talked about different aspects of their lives before and after coming to Vermont and their hopes and struggles. What stood out as differences between stories? Did you notice any similarities or themes between stories?
3. The illustrations in *The Most Costly Journey* are all black and white to make printing the original pamphlets easier. Do you think that color would have changed the stories? In what ways?
 - a. “Algo Adentro/Something Inside” (pg. 61-84) is about an artist and includes grayscale reproductions of the storyteller’s artwork. Color versions of the art are included in the online version (<https://opendoormidd.org/something-inside/>). How does this change the story?
4. Can you point to specific stories/passages/panels that struck you personally? Why?
5. The original audience for these stories was the farmworker community itself, as a means for providing connection and more open dialogue about mental health concerns. One of the interview topics was health coping mechanisms that could be shared with other farmworkers through the comics medium. Do you think this is effective? *
6. In the Introduction, Stephen Bisette notes that this book “strives to make the invisible visible – but visible on their own terms” due to the collaborative process used to create the stories. Why is this important? *
7. Have you read other memoirs or stories about migrants? How does *The Most Costly Journey* compare to them?
8. Would you share *The Most Costly Journey* with people in your life? Why or why not?

Remember: These are just suggested questions and there could be many, many more. Don’t feel tethered to these – let the conversation flow naturally and use these questions as starting points when conversation stalls.

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