When a flood threatens to destroy a family’s home, they must leave. What will they return to once the waters recede? This intense, beautiful look at a flood’s effect on a family carries a simple message of hope and recovery.

About the Author/Illustrator
Alvaro Fernandez Villa lives in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Creative from a young age, he has a degree in fine arts and produces his work in both digital and traditional art forms.
Background Information on Floods

Floods are the most common and widespread of all weather-related natural disasters. They occur when a large amount of water is released in a short amount of time, most often from thunderstorms, tropical storms, or hurricanes. When waterways are overwhelmed by heavy rainfall, they overflow onto land that is normally dry which results in flooding. For millions of years, flooding has been nature’s way of dealing with too much water. Modern settlement and development within floodplains and along shorelines interferes with this natural system, which causes human beings and their belongings to get washed away in the process.

The force of the flowing water is responsible for the worst damage in a flood. Its erosive power can pull dirt from under foundations causing buildings to crack or homes to be swept away. It can also drag soil away from trees, which, in combination with high winds, can cause them to uproot and topple over. Water itself is heavy (8.5 pounds/gallon) and can move at speeds of up to 20 miles per hour. Two feet of rushing water can float a car or a bus; six inches can knock a person over.

As floodwaters pick up speed, they also pick up strength, which makes them virtually impossible to contain. They carry silt, clay, and debris along with them spreading sediment and sludge everywhere they flow. When they eventually recede, affected areas are left covered in mounds of mud and muck.

Most floods take hours or even days to develop which gives residents time to prepare. They can anchor shutters, build protective walls out of sandbags, and in some cases, evacuate. Flash floods, however, develop quickly and give little warning, which makes them much more dangerous, harder to predict, and difficult to escape from.

Floods can move mind-boggling amounts of water in a short time and cause massive devastation. The most destructive flood in the United States was in 1927, when the Mississippi River flooded. The flood moved about 2 million cubic feet (65,000 cubic meters) of water—enough to fill about 26 Olympic-sized swimming pools—every second. The estimated cleanup costs after Hurricane Sandy were in the tens of billions of dollars in the United States. Floodwater inundated entire towns. Waters surged through gas mains and power stations, leaving residents powerless for weeks. Salt water destroyed businesses and homes.

Reading Wordless Books

The key to “reading” illustrations is to look closely at the details, perspectives, repetitions, actions, and movements within them because they all contribute to the meaning and the message. As you read with your child or student, discuss the pictures at length while staying within the parameters of the text. Model “reading” the story using expressive language and rich vocabulary. Explain action by describing what you see using as many detailed words as possible.

On the page with the clouds swirling over the house, for example, you might say: Angry dark clouds are gathering over the house. They swirl eerily in the sky, leaving the house below surrounded by shadows.

Encourage embellishment and dialogue by adding sound effects for emphasis and voices for each character. Narrate the story as if there were words or captions under the pictures and ask questions that prompt use of familiar reading strategies such as questioning, predicting, and inferring. Always ask: What does the picture tell you? How does the picture help us know what happened?
Suggestions for Reading

BEFORE READING SUGGESTIONS

• Open the book so that both the back and front covers are visible as a spread. Read the title and look at the illustration. Ask: What is going on in the picture? How does it relate to the title? If the reader doesn’t know what a flood is, elicit a response by asking what is happening to the house, and then ask what is happening to the land (covered in water, submerged).

• Discuss floods that the child may be familiar with. If he or she is struggling, ask about house (bathtub overflowing, water boiling over, a hose being left on, a glass being filled too full), and then ask what the reader thinks the story will be about (a house that is caught in a flood).

• Look at the inside front and back covers and ask what kinds of things are included in the illustrations. (things that make up a home) Discuss why the author included the array at both the beginning and the end of the book. Discuss again after reading to see if conclusions can be drawn. (The author includes the array to show us that, unlike people, things can be replaced. The items that make our houses our homes are items we can find again.)

WHILE READING SUGGESTIONS

• Begin the discussion by analyzing the first page spread. Start with details: What do you see? Establish the setting: Where is this taking place? What season do you think it is? What do you see in the picture that tells you that? Introduce the characters and the mood: What can you tell about the children? How does the picture make you feel? Initiate inference: Is there anything missing from the picture? Continue the same questioning on the next page adding actions and emotion: What are the characters doing? How do the characters feel? How do you know?

• While analyzing the next three pages, incorporate predicting skills. Ask what is happening on each page, and before turning to the next ask: Where is this picture leading us? What do you think will happen next and why?

• Linger on the page that shows the family loading the car. Focus on their faces asking: How do you think they feel? Ask what they might be taking with them, and what they’ve had to leave behind. Point out the perspective of the father looking into the house and ask: What might he be thinking? Saying to the house? How does he feel about leaving? Ask the reader what is in his hands and what he is doing. (It may take close scrutiny of the next page to see the connection between the board in his hands and the boards locking he shutters.)

• Stop at the page showing the girl waving goodbye to her home and compare it to the opening spread. Ask: How has the family’s life changed since the beginning of the book? Compare and contrast the two pictures: How do colors, details, and facial and body expressions show the changes in their lives and feelings? What’s missing from the second picture that was included in the first? (the bird)
• On the page that shows the house being flooded, let the reader observe and react before initiating conversation. Then ask: How does the picture help us know what happened? How does it make you feel? The following page shows the house being flooded from a different perspective. Turn back and forth between the two pages to compare the power and thrust of the water from both inside and outside the house.

• The following page shows the mud residue, the fallen trees, and the return of the bird. Ask: What does the change in colors tell us about the storm? (it’s over, new day is dawning) What does the bird represent? (return to home, new beginning) Why didn’t the sandbags protect the house? (flood was too powerful, house was isolated/nothing around it to weaken the force of the water)

• Final spread: How does the picture make you feel? What did the illustrator include to make you feel that way? Why is this page important to the story? What will happen next for this family? What is the author’s message?

AFTER READING SUGGESTIONS

• Reread the story asking the reader to narrate alone or alternate pages with you. Encourage dramatic expression in voice, and word choice.

• Have the reader summarize the story by identifying the sequence of events (beginning, middle, end) and by using temporal words and phrases, such as first, later, after a while, then, and the next day, to explain the progression.

• Identify the plot elements (problem, climax, resolution) and match each to the page that most clearly illustrates them. Create a timeline or another graphic organizer and record the parts of the plot. Readers can use the graphic organizer to retell the story.

Respond by Writing, Speaking and Listening

RESPOND BY WRITING

Share these ideas for response through writing:
• Create dialogue bubbles on sticky notes and attach them to the book where appropriate.
• Create captions for each picture, record them on index cards, shuffle the cards, and then recreate the story in sequence.
• Choose a favorite illustration and write a paragraph describing it (scribe for younger children). Be sure to use vivid words that appeal to all the senses.
• Research an actual flood with print or on-line resources. Identify similarities and differences between what happened in the book and what happened in real life.

• Locate the pages that show what the family did to prepare the house and themselves before evacuating. Create a guide explaining the steps they took. Be sure to include both the physical and mental preparations the family had to make. Use sequence words or numbered steps to keep the guide organized.
• Write a paragraph identifying three things you would take if you had to evacuate your home and explain why each is worth saving.

RESPOND BY SPEAKING AND LISTENING

Share these ideas for response through speaking and listening:
• Retell the story incorporating gestures and dialogue. Retellings could be geared toward younger siblings or younger students.
• Act out the story (beginning, middle, end) using dialogue, sound effects, and actions.
• Record a narration of the story and use it to read the book with a friend or with parents.
• Become a character: Give a first person account of what happened to the family. First-person accounts include words like I, me, and we. Be sure to include both events and feelings about them. Use vivid words in descriptions.

• Become a local reporter: Interview a family member or members about the flood. Remember to use questions with stems such as Who, What, When, Where, and Why?
• Become a television expert: Research floods in your part of the country and prepare a five-minute presentation about floods for a newscast.

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards (Grades K-3)

Anchor Standards for Reading Literature: 1, 2, 3 and 7
Anchor Standards for Writing: 1, 2, 3
Anchor Standards for Speaking/Listening: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6
Anchor Standards for Language: 3

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