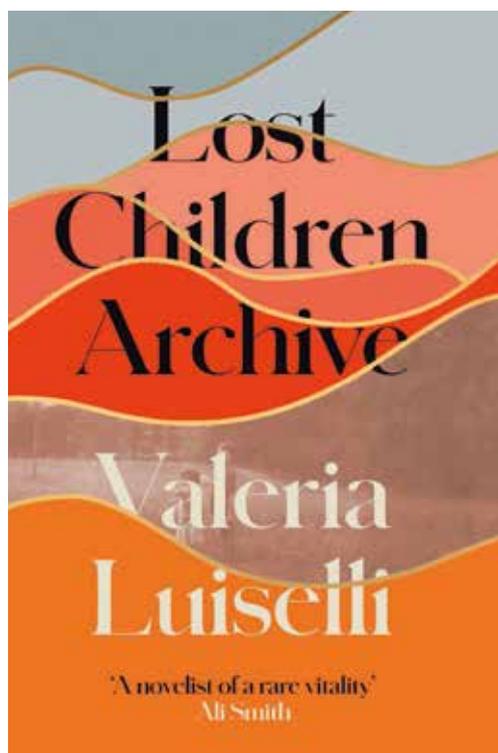




# Readers' Guide



## Lost Children Archive

**Valeria Luiselli**

4th Estate

Other novels by Valeria Luiselli

*Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in 40 Questions* (2017)

*The Story of My Teeth* (2015)

*Sidewalks* (2013)

*Faces in the Crowd* (2012)

[thebookerprizes.com](http://thebookerprizes.com)

## About the author

Valeria Luiselli was born in Mexico City on 16 August 1983. She is the author of the novels *Faces in the Crowd* and *The Story of My Teeth*, which won the 2016 *LA Times*' Art Seidenbaum Prize for First Fiction; the essay collection *Sidewalks*; and *Tell Me How It Ends*, an essay about the situation faced by children arriving at the US-Mexico border without papers. *Lost Children Archive* is her first novel written in English. Her previous novels were translated into English from Spanish. She lives in New York.

## About the book

A family in New York packs the car and sets out on a road trip. A mother, a father, a boy and a girl, they head south west, to the Apacheria, the regions of the US which used to be Mexico. They drive for hours through desert and mountains. They stop at diners when they're hungry and sleep in motels when it gets dark.

Meanwhile, thousands of children are journeying north, travelling to the US border from Central America and Mexico. Not all of them will make it to the border.

In a breathtaking feat of literary virtuosity, *Lost Children Archive* intertwines these two journeys to create a masterful novel full of echoes and reflections – a moving, powerful, urgent story about what it is to be human in an inhuman world.

## What the judges thought

"In this intriguing and innovative novel, a recently assembled family of two adults and two children pack up their belongings and drive from New York City towards Arizona. The adults' relationship is clearly fraying and the children are soon bored in the back seat so they run away and get lost. Meanwhile a group of Mexican children are trying to cross the border into the US. Wildly imaginative, bold and mysterious, this novel of painful truths is also full of compassion, humour and love."

## Discussion points

At one point, the narrator debates on whether she "can or should make art with someone else's suffering." What do you think about a novel that describes the true experiences of migrants crossing into the US?

What do the boxes reveal about each family member, and what do these add to the narrative?

How does the author balance the story of the characters' marriage with the reality of the migrant children?

What impact does changing the narrative perspective from mother to child have?

The novel is a twist on the great American road trip, that forms the story of many other novels. Have you read any books like this, and if so, how does *Lost Children Archive* compare?

## Themed reading

Jack Kerouac *On the Road*

Javier Zamora *Unaccompanied*

Francisco Cantú *The Line Becomes a River*

Alfredo Corchado *Midnight in Mexico*

Cristina Henríquez *The Book of Unknown Americans*

Valeria Luiselli *Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in Forty Questions*

## Useful links

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/mar/03/lost-children-archive-valeria-luiselli-review>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/11/books/review-lost-children-archive-valeria-luiselli.html>

<http://www.thewhiterreview.org/reviews/valeria-luisellis-lost-children-archive/>

<https://www.npr.org/2019/02/12/693595614/real-life-informs-a-tense-trip-in-lost-children-archive>

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/an-author-delivers-a-powerful-plea-for-migrant-children/2019/02/12/04588fbc-2a54-11e9-b2fc-721718903bfc\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.a420c1e639a5](https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/an-author-delivers-a-powerful-plea-for-migrant-children/2019/02/12/04588fbc-2a54-11e9-b2fc-721718903bfc_story.html?utm_term=.a420c1e639a5)

<https://www.nts.live/shows/literaryfriction/episodes/literary-friction-25th-march-2019>

<https://mrbsemporium.com/podcasts/2019/04/writing-as-witnessing-a-conversation-with-valeria-luiselli/>

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/books/what-to-read/author-valeria-luiselli-mexican-borders-lost-children-haunting/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/mar/08/valeria-luiselli-interview-lost-children-archive>

<https://www.guernicamag.com/miscellaneous-files-interview-valeria-luiselli/>