



How to Say Goodbye in Cuban

Daniel Miyares

EDUCATORS' GUIDE

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ABOUT THE BOOK

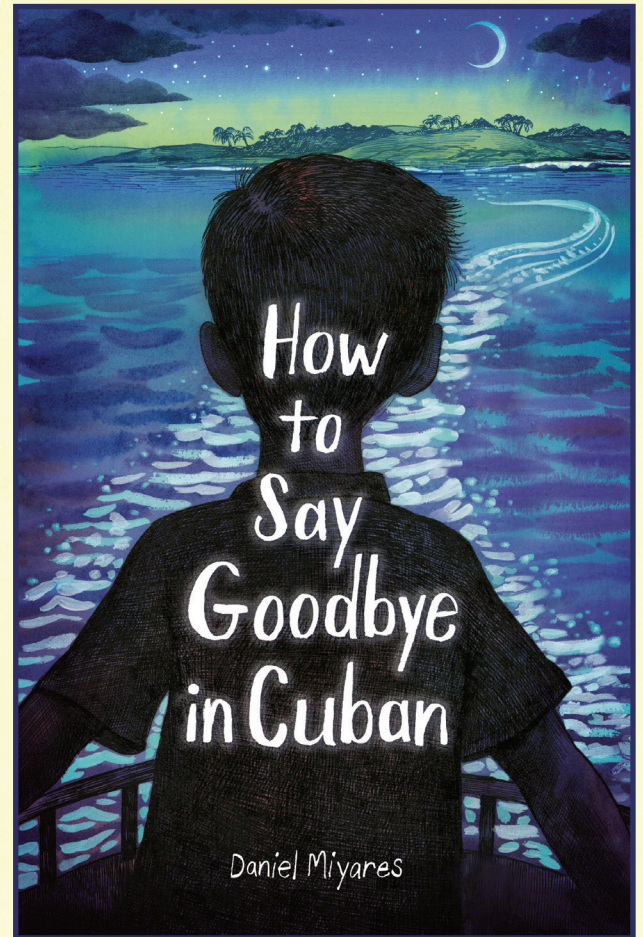
Carlos, who lives in a small town in the Cuban countryside, loves to play baseball with his best friend, Álvaro, and to shoot homemade slingshots with his abuelo.

One day, a miracle happens: Carlos's father, his papi, wins the lottery! He uses the money to launch his own furniture business and move the family to a big house in the city.

Carlos hates having to move, hates leaving Abuelo and Álvaro behind, and hates being called a country kid at his new school. But the pains of moving and middle school turn out to be the least of his problems.

When rebel leader Fidel Castro overthrows the existing Cuban president, the entire country is thrust into revolution. Then, suddenly, Papi disappears. Carlos's mother tells him that Papi has gone to America and that they will soon join him. But Carlos doesn't want to leave Cuba, the only home he's ever known. Besides, how will they get to America when Castro's soldiers are policing their every move? Will Carlos ever see his father again?

This powerful book about a boy coming of age amid massive political upheaval tells a timeless story of one family's quest for freedom and a new place to call home.



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THEMES: Biography & Autobiography,
Coming of Age, Cultural Diversity,
Family & Relationships, Growing Up



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Daniel Miyares is the critically acclaimed author-illustrator of *Night Out*, which was called a “pleasure” by *Publishers Weekly* in a starred review, and *Float*, which *The Boston Globe* called a “perfect wordless picture book.” He is also the illustrator of *Night Walk to the Sea*, written by Deborah Wiles, described as “majestic” by *The Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books*, and *That Is My Dream!*, a picture book version of Langston Hughes’s “Dream Variation,” hailed as “a must-read” by *Kirkus* in a starred review. Visit him online at danielmiyares.com or on Instagram [@danielmiyaresdoodles](https://www.instagram.com/danielmiyaresdoodles).

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Spend time looking at the cover of the novel. Then point out details you notice, and share what Carlos might be feeling in this moment. Next, make predictions about why he is leaving, where he might be going, and to whom or what he is saying goodbye.
2. The book opens up in 1956 Cuba. What do you know about Cuba? Look up the Cuban Revolution and present your findings to a classmate. Share two things that happened before the revolution and two things that happened during or after.

SITES TO HELP BUILD BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE:

- <https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/geography/countries/article/cuba>
- <https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/discover/geography/countries/cuba-facts/>
- <https://kids.britannica.com/students/article/Cuba/273873>

GEOGRAPHY PROJECT:

- <https://www.amnh.org/content/download/342228/5313791/file/cuba-an-example-of-island-evolution-biodiversity-and-conservation.pdf>

CUBAN MAP RESOURCES:

- <https://maps.uflib.ufl.edu/collections/cuba/>
- <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/juan-jose-valdes-mapping-cuba/>

3. Create a dictionary or glossary of terms found in the book that clarifies the political context of the novel. Teachers: Consider collaborating with the social studies department at your school to identify cross-disciplinary terms that are useful for students to know. For example, *dissent*, *revolution*, *communism*, *exile*, and *rationing*.
4. One of the first changes Carlos must go through is a move from the country town of Ceiba Mocha to a bigger city. Describe a time you had to adapt to something new. What were some of the challenges? What is something new you learned about yourself?
5. Look at the dedication page. The author dedicates the book to his family and thanks them for making their journey. Consider the picture on the same page. What is happening in that picture? What emotions would you attach to the picture? What inferences can you make about Carlos's life based on this picture?



QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

1. As you read, notice how the author uses some of the left-hand pages to introduce the reader to the unfolding political situation. See examples on pages 6, 20, and 28. This gives the reader knowledge that Carlos does not yet have. What is happening politically that Carlos is not aware of? Why do you think the author chose to do this?
2. Describe Carlos's life in Ceiba Mocha. Who are the people most important to him? What does his abuelo make him on page 11? What do Carlos and his best friend, Álvaro, like to do for fun? How are Carlos and Álvaro similar, and how are they different? Do you have a special routine or place you go? Write about it or draw an image.
3. What is Carlos and Papi's relationship like? What does Papi buy on page 25? What does it reveal about his dreams and goals? How do you think Carlos feels about this? What does Papi say about the political situation, and how does he feel about it? How do you know?
4. In the chapter "Saturday," Carlos is heading to the beach with Abuelo. What does Carlos really want from the beach? The trip is interrupted by a sudden news bulletin on the car radio. What does Carlos learn, and why do you think the adults in his life seem dismissive about his questions? How does Abuelo feel about the political changes?
5. What does the lottery ticket reveal about Papi's dreams? Do those dreams align with Carlos's? What do Papi and Mami end up doing with their lottery winnings (p. 53), and why do you think Carlos is so upset? On page 59, Carlos says, "I wish Papi had never won that stupid lottery." Why do you think he feels this way? If you were Carlos, what would you be upset or worried about, and what would you be looking forward to?
6. No one seems to talk to Carlos honestly about the revolution. When Carlos tries to ask Papi about it, Papi shuts him down. Things change when Carlos sees the protesters with his own eyes (p. 67.) Why do you think this is a significant moment? Look at the picture of the protest. What do you notice? Using what you have learned, what might they be protesting?
7. How is Carlos's experience in his new school in Matanzas? Compare activities you and your friends do with activities Carlos and his friends do. What is something he learns about himself, and how does he try to get Papi's attention with it?
8. What is significant about January 1, 1959? How does life change for the family—and in Cuba—after this moment?
9. On page 113, men in uniform show up to Carlos's home. Who are they? What options do they give Papi? How does this change things for Carlos and his family?
10. On page 142, Carlos and Mamá witness men in uniform taking away the Ortegas, their neighbors. Why do you think the Ortegas were targeted? Why does Mamá tell Carlos to keep walking instead of stepping in? What would you have done in this situation? Mamá says, "They have eyes and ears everywhere." What do you think this means?
11. On page 154, Carlos's home gets vandalized with the word *gusanos*, or worms. What does this mean beyond the word's literal meaning?

12. Carlos learns that people's land is being taken and reappropriated. Why do you think this was done? Do you think this is fair? How does life change for his grandparents and for Álvaro's family as a result of this?
13. On page 169, Papi returns. Carlos says, "I couldn't bring myself to go hug him. It was like my feet were nailed to the floor." Why do you think this is, and would you feel the same way? How do his feelings change shortly after, and what is a major realization he has?
14. Abuela reveals why she can't leave with the rest of the family (p. 179). How is her experience different from Carlos's? How is your experience with a place different from that of someone else in your family or community?
15. Carlos and his family eventually decide to flee Cuba. They trek through swamps before getting on a boat painted dark blue "so it would disappear onto the ocean at night" (p. 191). What are some of the dangers people might encounter on this journey or similar journeys? Describe Carlos's journey to the boat and on it. Write a diary entry from his perspective.
16. What do Carlos and Papi see on page 208? Why doesn't Carlos want to tell the others just yet? Would you have done the same? What is significant about this moment?



POST-READING QUESTIONS

1. Throughout the novel, the author includes key moments of the Cuban Revolution on pages on the left. Create a timeline of these political developments. Then pick one and research it.
2. Read the author's note at the end of the book. The author says it took him two decades to find the courage to write this book. Using what you have learned, why do you think it took courage? What is a question you have about your own family or someone you know? Is there a story in your family or community that would take courage to write?
3. Take note of all the different mediums through which Carlos learns about the revolution (the radio, elders playing dominos, classmates, witnessing protests, etc.). Where do you learn about current events or things happening in your community?
4. The novel shows how dissenting became dangerous. Some Cubans, like Carlos's family, dissented by leaving, even if it

meant being separated from other family members. What are other ways people might dissent in a society?

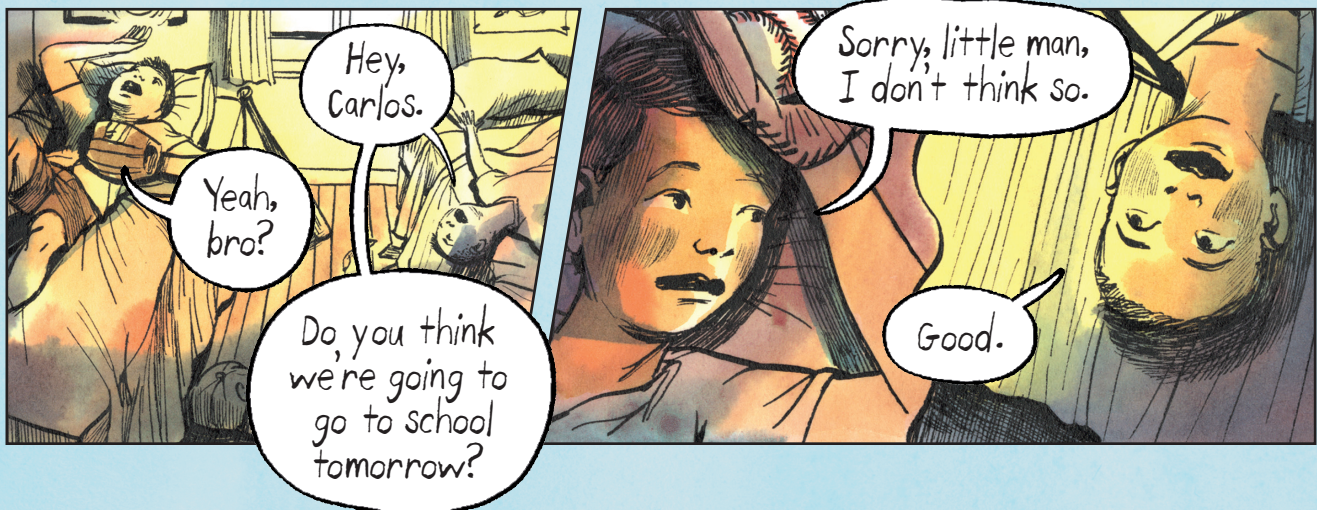
5. Create a visual glossary of the traditional Cuban food mentioned in the novel (examples can include cheese and guava, malta, lechón asado, pastelitos). How are these similar or different from what you eat in your family/community?

TOPIC FOR DISCOURSE:

- Analyze how food and mealtimes play both a comforting role in Carlos's life (such as eating cheese and guava with Abuelo) but also moments of tension (such as feeling unseen by Papi or left out of important conversations at the kitchen table).

EXTENSION:

- Look up a recipe for one of the traditional foods mentioned, and make it. Have a class celebration upon finishing the novel that includes some of these foods.



THIS GUIDE WAS WRITTEN BY ANNA LAPERA. SHE IS AN AUTHOR-EDUCATOR WHO IS PASSIONATE ABOUT MAKING SURE ALL KIDS KNOW THEY HAVE A STORY TO TELL.

PRAISE FOR

How to Say Goodbye in Cuban

★ "Heartfelt."

—*KIRKUS REVIEWS*, starred review

★ "A reverent graphic novel about one immigrant family's experience."

—*PUBLISHERS WEEKLY*, starred review

★ "Explores the struggle faced by refugees when the homes they've always known are no longer safe."

—*BOOKLIST*, starred review

