

Libertad by Alma Fullerton

My name is Libertad which means Freedom. Five years ago, one cold evening, my Papi told us he was leaving to work in America. After he left soldiers came to our village. My Mami and I, along with my younger brother Julio, left for Guatemala City. When Papi returned he could not find us in our village. He would have to try and find us in this huge city. We have lived 5 long years in poverty waiting for him. I still have memories of village life before the dump. My brother Julio who is 7 does not. Julio is so smart! He already knows how to separate the garbage into different piles. He belongs in school but my Mami tells me there is no money. She says, "We need him working so we can have enough money to eat." She says that Julio can go to school in America when Papi comes for us. But Papi is taking too long, and it will be too late for Julio. Maybe I can save enough money and show Mami that Julio can go to school now. I will just have to work even harder at the dump. We spend every day in the dump searching for cardboard and other things we can sell. This money is then used to buy food. We are very lucky to have a tin roof shack just outside the dump. The dump is a dangerous place. Gangs of men and teenagers lurk around the dump ready to jump on us like vultures and steal from us. We try to avoid them by going the long way home. Then one day the unthinkable happens.

Read pages 50, 51, 52 and then to the end of 53.

Mami is dead. I decide that Julio and I must go to America to find my Papi. (Showing the map at the beginning of the book on an overhead would give your audience an idea of how long this trip would be.) We face a dangerous journey and we will have to steal to survive. There are many unscrupulous people who can harm us or even kill us. We will have to be smart and very careful. We have heard many stories of those who have tried to cross the Mexican border and have died. Many of the decisions I have to make to survive are very difficult. We arrive in Mexico City.

Read pages 136-139

Should we join Pedro's gang? I am so tired. Maybe we should just sniff the solvent like the other children and forget. Forget that my Mami is dead, and our father has abandoned us. I am not sure I can go any further.

Will Libertad and Julio make it to America? Will they be able to find their father? To find out what happens read Libertad by Alma Fullerton. This book is written in free verse and is a very fast read.