

# **A Ruff Day on the Road:**

**How Relocation Affects Children Pre-k Through Third  
Grade and How a Picture Book Can Help**

**Bryant Miller**

**Dr. Colleen Boff, Dr. Marlise Lonn, Joe Prince, Dr. Jodi Devine**



# Research Questions

How does relocation affect children ages pre-k through third grade?

How can this transition during relocation be eased?

Research questions that came up later in the process:

- What children's literature already focuses on this topic and what are the gaps that need to be addressed?
- What are some impactful characteristics of children's literature?
- How does one write a children's book?

# Methodology: Project Overview

- Research and studies relocation and its effect on children under the age of 18
- “relocation” “stress, psychology” “children” “residential mobility”
- Interviews with family members
- HNRS courses on children’s literature awards and storytelling to lead to bibliotherapy
- Bibliotherapy led to my decision to create a children’s book

# Methodology: Project Overview

## *(cont.)*

- Read over thirty picture books
- Found gaps and important characteristics throughout children's literature
- Research transitioned to how to write a children's book
- Picture book vs early reader
- Read children's book and books about how to write books
- *Dear Ally How Do You Write a Book?* (Carter, 2019).
- My research then transitioned into researching my characters and how to write them in my own book.

# Methodology: Justification

In order to smooth the transition for children moving, bibliotherapy was researched. Bibliotherapy is the theory that literature can teach, guide, and comfort the reader or listener.

Because of what I learned when researching, Bibliotherapy led to my decision to write a children's book. It also taught me the importance of including a parent and teacher guide as well as an author's note.

# Methodology: Justification (*cont.*)

- Active journal to take notes on settings, my characters, and conversations about the project.
- Steps taken to formally write the book.
- *Milo Imagines the World* de la Pena (2021)
- Wrote my own manuscript, parent and teacher guide, and author's note to complete the project.



# Methodology: Interdisciplinarity

- Combined academic journals with bibliotherapy and children's literature.
- Intersections of discipline include psychology, children's literature, bibliotherapy, childhood development, and the craft and art of making a picture book.
- Advisors

# Conclusions

Relocation has a large, mainly negative, impact on children. These impacts range from academic to social to physical. However, it is not practical to tell people to stop moving.

In order to help ease the transition, there must be an intervention put in place. I concluded that bibliotherapy was the best way for me to help ease this transition for children. I also included a parent and teacher guide for intervention, as open conversation and discussion goes hand in hand with bibliotherapy.



# Conclusions (*cont.*)

## Author's Note

I wrote this book to reflect on how I and how research has supported many other children have felt when they have had to move to a new home. At times, I was nervous, but excited about the move, just as Leo was. Other times, I was extremely upset and angry that I was moving, more like Pip. I wanted to reflect on both of these feelings and how emotions can fluctuate throughout the moving process. I made Leo and Pip animals because I want every child to be able to see themselves in the characters. If I made the children humans that were very descriptive and looked a certain way, I think it would be harder for children to see themselves in them. This way, Leo and Pip, who are my actual pets and both acted similarly to their characters during the move from California to Maine, are a relatable sibling duo that many children can relate to. Mom and Dad were based on my parents and their emotions are very similar to how they react in real life to change. I wanted Dad and Leo and Mom and Pip to reflect on each other in their emotions and reactions to the drive and move. I also have not seen many books focused on big change show how the parents have felt throughout the process. Parents are normally portrayed as just strong characters that have already made up their minds and are confident in their decision. I wanted to make this more realistic, where the parents are also nervous and act how parents actually would when experiencing a big change just as Leo and Pip are. I also did not inform the reader that they were moving until a little more than halfway through the book because the focus of the book isn't about the act of moving itself, but rather the emotions that a family goes through when moving and how they deal with these emotions. I believe the act of moving isn't the main cause of anxiety, but rather everything that surrounds the move: a new home, a new school, finding friends, new traditions, and finding light in the situation, especially if the move isn't especially voluntary. The goal of this book is to start a conversation amongst families and students on how to deal with the emotions that come along with moving and how to be more open about the entire process. Through my research, I've found that open dialogue and discussions, especially through literature can create an easier transition for everyone. This is why I have also included a discussion guide to talk to your children or students about moving or other big changes in their life. Though it may be hard to have these open discussions, it is worth it to be honest about your feelings towards a big change and help children find healthy ways of expressing themselves as well.

## Discussion guide

1. The family moved all the way across the country from California to Maine. What is your dream place to move to? Would you drive, fly, or bike there?
2. Dad, Mom, Leo, and Pip were all nervous about different things when they were moving. Have you ever been nervous about a big change? What were you nervous about?
3. Every member of the family dealt with the move in a different way. What character did you think reflected how you react to a big change?
4. Leo made sure that he always had his favorite blue pillow with him throughout the drive and at the new house. This was Leo's comfort item because it made him feel better throughout the drive. Do you have a comfort item like Leo? What would you bring with you to make you feel better throughout the drive?
5. Even though it was different and it took time, everyone finally felt that their new house was home. What makes your house home? Is it the people in it, the color of your room, your pets, how the house smells, or anything else?

## For Families:

1. Mom and Dad made sure to talk to Leo and Pip before, during, and after the move. What questions do you have about moving homes? What do you want us as your family to talk to you about before a big change?
2. Leo and Pip were there when packing up their old home and got to choose their favorite spots in their new home. How do you want to be involved in this change?

## Some Practical Tips!

1. Bring a map, or the end pages, to use throughout the discussion! This will help children visualize where they are going and allow them to be along with the choice of how they are getting to their new home.
2. Be open to questions! The more questions they have, the better. The best thing is to be open and honest when answering.
3. Allow them to have a say! This could be big or small. Maybe what cities they stop at on the way to their destination, the music they will listen to, helping pack. This small involvement can have a big impact on the transition from home to home.

## Conclusions (*cont.*)

Current children's literature that surrounds moving has many gaps. Multiple books that are categorized as moving books, only barely mention moving, and rather focus on life after. In order to intervene, a book should include the positives and negatives that occur before, during, and after moving.

Children's literature has multiple different aspects that create impactful stories, which I utilized in my own. Three books created a balance between the good and bad in a situation, whether that be one after the other or starting bad and ending good. *The Blue House* (Wahl, 2020) allowed the parent to be vulnerable and open with the reader and their child.



# Project Strengths

- Current children's literature that surrounds moving has many gaps that my book fills.
- Characters can be applied to any reader.
- Main characters express feelings without words.

# Project Limitations

The biggest limitation in this project was the lack of research available. Mollborn et al (2018) discussed that the lack of data and research available has a significant impact. They concluded their study by discussing how discovering the factors that cause stress during the relocation process could be a key part of educational and housing decisions. Due to the surprising lack of data on a universal experience, I feel I was limited in explaining with solid evidence how a child feels and is impacted because they are relocated. This project started from personal experiences and I would have liked to have even more solid scientific data to support this.

# Additional Information

I learned so much about research and producing solutions to issues within education that I decided to change my major and career path. My honors project, in the best way possible, greatly impacted my life. I learned that I have a huge passion for research and for solving problems in education that do not have as large of a focus. This made me change my major from inclusive early childhood education to individualized studies in education. I now am basing my classes around going to graduate school for school psychology so that I can start my career in research while still remaining in education.

# Bibliography/Works Cited

Carter, A. (2019). *Dear Ally, how do you write a book?* (First ed.). Scholastic Press, an imprint of Scholastic Inc.

de la Peña, M., & Robinson, C. (2021). *Milo imagines the world*. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

Mollborn, S., Lawrence, E., & Root, E. D. (2018). Residential mobility across early childhood and children's kindergarten readiness. *Demography*, 55(2), 485-510.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13524-018-0652-0>

Wahl, P. (2020). *The Blue House*. Alfred A. Knopf.