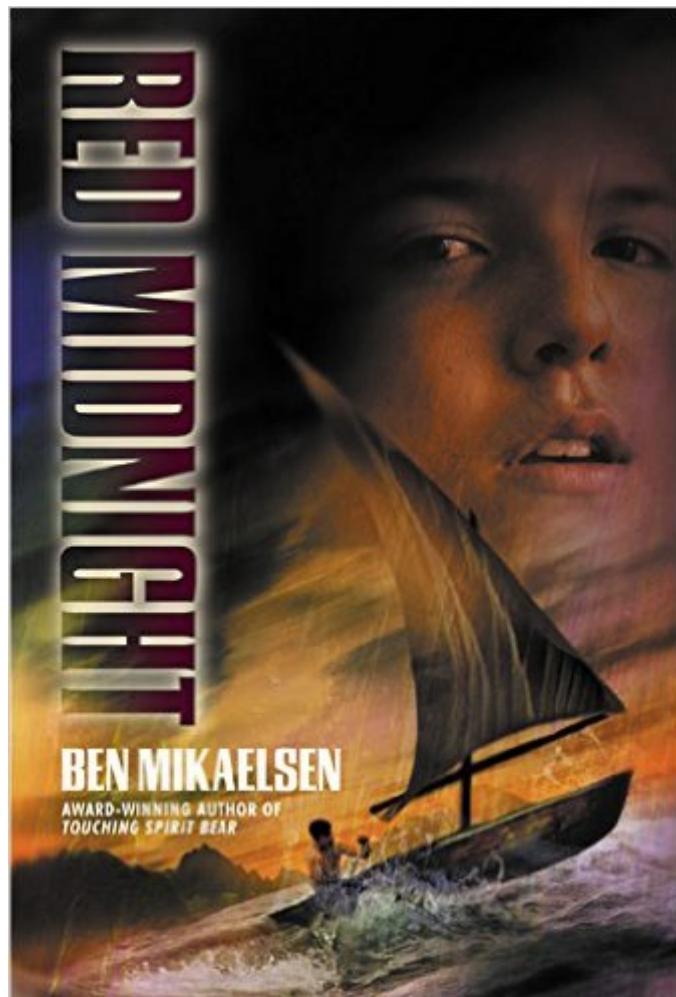


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# Red Midnight



## **Synopsis**

When guerrilla soldiers strike Santiago's village, they destroy everything in their path -- including his home and family. Santiago and his four-year-old sister escape, running for their lives. But the only way they can be truly safe is to leave Guatemala behind forever. So Santiago and Angelina set sail in a sea kayak their Uncle Ramos built while dreaming of his own escape. Sailing through narrow channels guarded by soldiers, shark-infested waters, and days of painful heat and raging storms, Santiago and Angelina face an almost impossible voyage hundreds of miles across the open ocean, heading for the hope of a new life in the United States.

## **Book Information**

Lexile Measure: 690 (What's this?)

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Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 starsÂ  See all reviewsÂ (31 customer reviews)

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 and up

## **Customer Reviews**

This book is engaging and should hold the attention of young teens. Set in rural Guatemala in the 1980s, the first chapter opens with the massacre of an entire village of indigenous people. Our main character/narrator and his 4-year-old sister are the only survivors. While it is realistic to have them escape, I'm not sure how realistic it is to think a 12-year-old and his 4-year-old sister could then sail from Guatemala to Florida. In the author's defense, he uses some flashback scenes to explain the uniqueness of the boat. (The 12-year-old has at least some experience on the boat, and it was actually designed for long-distance ocean sailing, even though it was small.) And as the story

unfolds, the author also includes an adult who travels with them for the first day and coaches the 12-year-old in more sailing skills. Still, it's quite a reach to think this would actually happen. It is difficult to find stories of war refugees that are appropriate for young adolescents. Most attempts either whitewash the suffering (probably to keep it less graphic) or they tell far too many details (probably to be true to actual events). I find both extremes to be problematic. For my classroom, I feel this book has a good balance of the two. Twenty-seven years ago, I was working with Guatemalan and Salvadoran refugees. I guarantee the author is sparing us from major horrific details in describing the event. In my opinion, the author presents sufficient information about the massacre to help students understand the severity of the situation without the unnecessary sensational details. And while the massacre was by Guatemalan soldiers, there is certainly no glorification of the rebels whose earlier visit to the village probably led to the massacre.

In the book I read Red Midnight by Ben Mikaelson, a young boy and a young girl's whole life is destroyed right before their eyes. They must flee on a kayak across the Gulf of Mexico to the United States or they would most certainly lose their lives too. At the ages of 4 and 12 will they die crossing the gulf? Or maybe they'll starve. You'll have to read this book to find out what happens to these two unfortunate young children. Ben Mikaelson uses an exciting plot with extraordinary descriptions and characterizations that lets the reader get to know the characters better than most stories. I enjoyed the exhilarating plot, real life characterizations, and detailed descriptions of Red Midnight. One example of why I enjoyed this book was the edge-of-your-seat plot. As soon as I opened the book and read just the first few lines I knew this book would be hard to set down. Right away the book starts with an onslaught of soldiers maliciously terrorizing and murdering the entire town. Yet a little boy and a little girl escape barely holding onto their lives. Then, in a mere kayak, they set out into the Gulf of Mexico and sail towards America. Facing incredible odds they have no idea if they will make it to America alive. Every storm was brought into play as a threat to the young children's life. Their lives were in the untrusting hand of luck. This is just a brief summary! The plot was so exciting I honestly had to force myself to put the book away or I would never get any sleep! Another reason I enjoyed the book was the life-like characterizations. I loved the perky little sister that seemed to think her whole entire life revolved around a game. I know a couple of people that are exactly like this, and it just amuses me when an author makes the characters have life-like personalities.

My class and I went to the library to get books. I think I got the best book. The name of the book is Red Midnight. It was written by Ben Mikaelson. The book is about a twelve year old boy, named

Santiago. Santiago lived in a small village in Guatamala, with his family. One night soldiers burned his village. Santiago woke up to the sounds of his mothers crys. "go, take your sister and run. Go as far as you can, and tell the story of what you have seen tonight!" Santiago took his sister and ran. He spotted his uncle (who had come for a visit), already shot and dying. His uncle tells him to take the cayuco( a kayak ) and sail to the United States os America. Yet, the cayuco is at his Uncle's house. Santiago has about a ten hour journey. He has to be fast and keep out of site. Once Santiago and his sister reach the cayuco, they face a long journeayout on the open sea. Many things can go wrong. Santiago knows that one mistake could kill him and his sister. Santiago learns that the sea does not forgive. Red Midnight is the kind of book were you always want to know what will happen next. I liked Red Midnight because you couldn't guess what was going to happen next in the book. Everything comes as a complete surprise0. When I looked at the cover of the book I thought that Red Midnight was going to be about sailing a kayak during a storm. Well I guess It's true, you can't judge a book by it's cover. This was the best adventure book! santiago and his little sister are always at the verge of dying. this is what makes this book exciting. Santiago and his sister through many obstacles while on their journey to the United States of America. One failed obstacles could mess up everything. The book was written in the perspective of Santiago. Santiago tells a story about his past.

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