

Dreamers: Living Undocumented in Contemporary Young Adult Fiction

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This article analyzes characteristics of living with undocumented legal status in the United States and examines how the young adult novels *The Secret Side of Empty* (2014) by Maria E. Andreu, *Illegal* (2011) by Bettina Restrepo, and *Sanctuary Somewhere* (2019) by Brenna Dimmig depict significant aspects of unauthorized residents, such as resilience, vulnerability, educational striving, family relationships, disclosure, financial and occupational limits, and uncertain futures. Critical content analysis of the books' narrative elements and writing styles leads to evaluation of the literary texts. The authors aim to build understanding of "Dreamers" through these books although there are limitations in how the works of fiction convey the complex and diverse experiences of being undocumented. [Article copies available for a fee from The Transformative Studies Institute. E-mail address: journal@transformativestudies.org Website: <http://www.transformativestudies.org> ©2020 by The Transformative Studies Institute. All rights reserved.]

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As a significant topic within contemporary young adult literature, the portrayal of young people residing in the United States without legal authorization contributes to public dialogue about the legal and socioeconomic situations of undocumented Americans. The publication of books for young readers about undocumented youth rose in the new millennium, particularly the last decade. Elevated awareness coincides with concerns about refugees and asylum-seekers, increased migration needs, and ongoing activism about immigration reform and enforcement

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