

**Race, Authorship, and American Dirt: Who Owns Migrant Narratives?**  
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The author of *American Dirt* seems to have had good intentions - she wanted to humanize the experience of forced migrations for her readers. But do her intentions matter when assessing her actions? What if her book has the intended effect - it exposes more people to the problem. Would this lessen the harm critics say it caused?

What kind of obligations might fiction writers have to understand and portray the social and political context of their stories? Does it matter whether the book is set in the real world, or whether the story itself is fictional?

Imagine that you are writing a story in which you take the perspective of someone from another country with a very different life experience than your own. (If possible, try to come up with a detailed character for this exercise - where are they from? What is their class, race, etc.?) How might your perspective influence how you portray this character? In what ways might you be incapable of doing the character justice?

If someone were to try to write a book from your perspective, what (if anything) are they likely to get wrong or fail to adequately capture?