

★ **Illegal****Eoin Colfer****Andrew Donkin****Giovanni Rigano, Illustrator**

Sourcebooks Jabberwocky (Aug 7, 2018)

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The outstanding graphic novel *Illegal* tells the story of Ebo, a young boy from Ghana, and his long, dangerous, and unauthorized effort to immigrate to Europe.

The book jumps right into the drama, opening with Ebo and a few others far out at sea on a small raft that's in danger of sinking. After a few pages, the narrative flashes back to nineteen months earlier and the beginning of Ebo's journey, setting the pattern for the rest of the book: alternating chapters tell of Ebo's passage on land—from Ghana to Niger, across the Sahara to Tripoli—and of his hazardous sea travels via a small raft and then an overcrowded ship. Swept along in the human tide of smuggling, trafficking, and profit, Ebo uses every resource available to him—friends, family, and his own singing ability and intelligence—to survive a seemingly never-ending series of life-or-death situations.

Though told through a child's eyes, *Illegal* is realistic and complex. Ebo's brother Kwame left on a bus in search of a better life, but Ebo's own motivation to leave home coalesces as he talks to friends and his uncle about Kwame's departure. More than any glorious dream of golden shores in Europe, Ebo mostly fears being left behind.

Colfer and Donkin's script propels the story through its pages with the intensity and immediacy it demands, and Rigano's art is a flawless blend of necessary details and pure emotive simplicity. Moving and informative, *Illegal* puts an unforgettable human face to the issue of immigration; it is recommended for all readers of middle school level or higher.

PETER DABBENE (July/August 2018)

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