

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WALL

DISCUSSION GUIDE

I LOVE MY BROTHER WITH ALL MY HEART BUT I FEEL A KIND OF HATRED FOR HIM TOO. I DON'T EXPRESS MY FEELINGS VERY WELL. I'M CRAZY. I HATE HIM BECAUSE I KNOW THE SITUATION WE'RE IN, BUT FOR ONE DAY, JUST ONE DAY THAT HE RESTS AND SAYS, "FOR THE REST OF THE YEAR, I'M YOUR FATHER. BUT TODAY I'M YOUR BROTHER."

Rocío, in *The Other Side of the Wall*

FILM SYNOPSIS

In Director Pau Ortiz' *The Other Side of the Wall*, siblings Alejandro (18) and Rocío's (13) relationship is challenged when their mother is imprisoned under dubious charges. Initially they promise to help each other care for their young siblings and keep their family together until their mother is released. But as undocumented Honduran immigrants their right to live, work and study in Mexico was already under threat. And soon, the prison wall that keeps their mother away gives rise to other emotional barriers that prevent the brother and sister from understanding each other.



ESSENTIAL FILM QUESTIONS

What is the meaning of “family”?

What are the social, political, and economic forces that encourage people to immigrate?

What are the ways that immigration influences families?

CONSTRUCTIVE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT *THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WALL*

Every student will watch *The Other Side of the Wall* with a different lens and set of personal experiences that inform how they respond to the film. The film raises the topics of immigration, family separation, and incarceration, which may feel very personal to some students. Before screening and discussing this film, revisit or create new norms for your classroom culture [↗](#) to ensure that students don't feel singled out, pressured to reveal personal details about themselves, or attacked by the opinions of others.

LOCATING THE FILM



If students are not familiar with the geography of Central America, it may be helpful to use a map to locate Honduras, where Alejandro and Rocío came from, and San Cristóbal de las Casas, the city in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas where the film takes place.

POST-SCREENING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What wall or walls do you think the title *The Other Side of the Wall* refers to?

If you were going to tell a friend about the film, what would you say it is about?

In what ways is the relationship between Alejandro and Rocío familiar to you? In what ways is it unfamiliar?

How is the story in the film different from, or similar to, other stories you hear or have heard about immigration?



SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Explore The Meaning of Family

Pair & Share questions

- ➔ What inspired Alejandro and Rocío to work so hard to keep their family together?
- ➔ Rocío says, “*I love my brother with all my heart but I feel a kind of hatred for him too.*” What do you think she means by this?
- ➔ What strengths and strategies did you see Alejandro and Rocío use to get through the time that their mother was incarcerated?

Large Group questions

- ➔ What is the meaning of “family?”
- ➔ What did you see happen in the family as a result of their mothers’ incarceration?
- ➔ In what way do you think their circumstances as immigrants heightens their need for family?
- ➔ In what ways does the community where you live support or challenge families?

Extended Learning on The Meaning of Family

Learn about the meaning and long-term effects of childhood trauma ↗.

Watch and discuss this clip ↗ of Rocío’s speech during a screening in front of Mexico’s Senate of the Republic where she wonders how she can repair the damage that was caused while her mother was unjustly imprisoned for years.

Ask students to research ways to support people who have experienced trauma, such as resilience ↗, trauma-informed classrooms ↗, healing centered engagement ↗, or other supportive strategies.

2. Investigate Assumptions About Immigrants

As a class, discuss the ways in which their status as immigrants challenge Alejandro and Rocío’s family in the film, such as their mother’s incarceration, or Alejandro’s difficulty finding work.

Ask students to talk about how the attitudes and ideas of the surrounding community factor into what happens to the family.

Extended Learning on the Assumptions about Immigrants

Use a resource like the UN High Commissioner on Refugees’ [10 Facts About Refugees](#) ↗ to identify and break down common myths and misconceptions about immigrants.

3. Explore Why People Migrate

As a large group, discuss the factors you saw in the film that influence Alejandro and Rocío’s family to migrate from Honduras, and why Alejandro considers migrating to the US. Ask students to identify which of those are factors that push people to leave their homes, like war or poverty, and which are factors that pull people to a new place, like safety or opportunity.

Share the 2019 article, [“We Live in a Crisis in Honduras”](#) ↗ with students, and as individuals or in small groups, ask them to create a T-chart of the push and pull factors that influence the immigrants interviewed, and compare those to the experience of Alejandro and Rocío.

Extended Learning on Why People Migrate

Assign students to read the Executive Summary (page 1) of this Policy Brief on [Honduras Migration: Climate Change, Violence, & Assistance](#) ↗ to learn more specifics about the current situation in Honduras.

UPDATE ON THE FAMILY

Some years after the film was released Rocío's mother travelled with Rocío and her younger children (David and Yami) across the border of the US, where they now live.

Rocío is now 20, she has a job and lives by herself.

Yami and David are now 13 and 11 years old, they live with their mother, and go to school in the US.

Alejandro stayed in Mexico where he lives with his wife Olga and their two children.

