

As a member of the Goucher Community, you will have many opportunities to discuss and explore your own identity, to examine the ways in which race, ethnicity, gender, religion, socio-economic status, and many other markers of identity affect levels of privilege and access to power, and to develop skills in communicating across difference in the classroom and beyond. The First Year Summer Read is your first step in what will be a four-year exploration of Race, Power, and Perspective – a central component of the Goucher Commons Curriculum and an expression of the social justice commitments of Goucher College.

Goucher College First Year Reading Assignment
Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in Forty Questions
Valeria Luiselli

INSTRUCTIONS: As you are reading, you should take detailed notes on the text. You do not need to write about section one in the essay you will submit, but you should come prepared to your discussion session with notes and examples from the text.

Your essay will be based on section two (two pages) and two questions of your choice in section three (half page each) for a total of three double-spaced pages total (12-point font, standard margins). As you write, label the sections of your essay with section and question numbers. Instructions on where to upload your essay prior to your discussion group will be forthcoming.

Section I. (Take notes and bring to your discussion session. The questions here are NOT part of your written essay.)

This short book has a point of view and in many ways is about *point of view*. As you are reading, note:

1. The author's biographical information as presented within her essays;
2. Historical information as presented by the author;
3. Second-person reporting (about someone else, as told to the author by that person) presented by the author.

Section II. (Part one of your essay, two pages)

Using a specific encounter among the characters in the text, discuss how your point of view or perspective influences your understanding of the encounter. What factors or experiences have shaped your point of view? Next, explore how someone in the text with a different point of view might explain the same encounter. Be sure you describe the factors or experiences that could give rise to their perspective about this same encounter. Finally, how might you talk about *Tell Me How It Ends* with others (e.g., friends and family) who have various points of view on issues raised in the book based on their own biographies, historical understandings, and experiences? Throughout your answer, take care to give clear evidence and examples from the text.

Section III. (Part two of your essay. Choose TWO questions and write a half page on each.)

1. There are many examples where Luiselli notes the different language choices we have to describe the same events or people, and the way those language choices frame how we think about what we are describing. Find examples of alternative language choices that are meaningful to you and explore how the language used matters. Some examples: thinking about people as war refugees or as illegal aliens; thinking about the crisis at the border of the U.S. and Mexico as an immigration crisis or as a refugee crisis; thinking about history as a country's history or as hemispheric history; thinking about a college class as a migration think tank or as a Spanish conversation class.

2. The overall frame for this collection of essays is the question/request: Tell Me How It Ends—the title of the book. This is the question, Luiselli says, her daughter often asks her about the stories of the children Luiselli interviews. Sometimes, she says, she makes up a happy ending to tell her daughter, but often she says, “I don't know how it ends yet” (p. 90). Why does Luiselli use this question to frame her collection of essays?

3. Luiselli says, “There are things that can only be understood retrospectively, when many years have passed and the story has ended. In the meantime, while the story continues, the only thing to do is tell it over and over again as it develops, bifurcates, knots around itself. And it must be told, because before anything can be understood, it has to be narrated many times, in many different words and from many different angles, by many different minds” (pp. 96-97). Do you agree with this? Why or why not?

4. If you or your family immigrated to this country, how would you answer the question “why did you come to this country”? And if you were born in this country, how would you answer the question (that you are not asked in order to stay or have citizenship), “why are you staying in this country?”

5. As a reader, do you feel hopeful when Luiselli's students at Hofstra University decide to create a political student organization? Why or why not?

6. How do you imagine the ending to the larger story of the children unaccompanied by a parent or guardian who arrive at the U.S. southern border desiring to enter the country—the children different people refer to as undocumented immigrants/war refugees/illegal aliens? What would you say if asked, “tell me how it ends”?