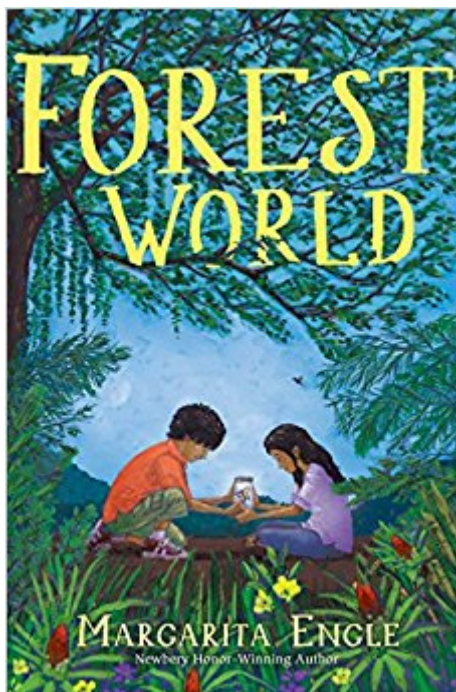


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# Forest World



## Synopsis

From award-winning author Margarita Engle comes a lively middle grade novel in verse that tells the story of a Cuban-American boy who visits his family's village in Cuba for the first time and meets a sister he didn't know he had. Edver isn't happy about being shipped off to Cuba to visit the father he barely knows. The island is a place that no one in Miami ever mentions without a sigh, but travel laws have suddenly changed, and now it's a lot easier for divided families to be reunited. Technology in Cuba hasn't caught up with the times, though, and Edver is expecting a long, boring summer. He was NOT expecting to meet a sister he didn't know he had. Luza is a year older and excited to see her little brother, until she realizes what a spoiled American he is. Looking for something anything they might have in common, the siblings sneak onto the Internet, despite it being forbidden in Cuba, and make up a fake butterfly. Maybe now their cryptozoologist mother will come to visit. But their message is intercepted by a dangerous poacher, and suddenly much more than their family is at stake. Edver and Luza have to find a way to overcome their differences to save the Cuban jungle that they both have grown to love.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 5 and up

## Customer Reviews

"The poetic journey is one of rich juxtapositions between the real and the marvelous, technology

and nature, science and art, past histories and possible futures. An addition that delicately illustrates the Cuban-American experience through a poetic and scientific lens not often seen." (Kirkus Reviews 6/15/17)\* "A beautifully written eco-adventure, this is also a thoughtful exploration of the realities faced by families separated by 90 miles and politics." (Booklist, Starred Review July 2017)\* "An evocative verse novel told in alternating voices . . . Filled with butterflies, hummingbirds, forest creatures, and fossils, Engle's affirming story is valuable both for the way the sciences inform it and for its careful attention to the relations between the Cubans who stayed and those who left the island . . . Realistically satisfying." (Publishers Weekly, Starred Review June 12, 2017)"This well-timed and accessible work of eco-fiction should readily find its way into classrooms and libraries as an opening to learning more about the familial ties between the United States and one of its nearest neighbors." (School Library Journal August 2017)"Through alternating chapters, Edver's and Luza's stories are told in Engle's signature verse style. The importance of biodiversity in Cuba, and how Cubans are trying to save their own flora and fauna from tourists, poachers, and climate change, are important themes; as are Cuban families divided by politics." (The Horn Book September/October 2017)"Engle's accessible text shimmers with affection for rural life in Cuba, its wildlife, and people, and the book offers shrewd observations about the families spread between Cuba and Miami, separated by only a few miles and a huge cultural gulf. . . . The exploration of the reclamations of endangered species and the picture of a very different life in Cuba are intriguing." (BCCB September 2017)

Margarita Engle is the national Young People's Poet Laureate, and the first Latino to receive that honor. She is the Cuban-American author of many verse novels, including *The Surrender Tree*, a Newbery Honor winner, and *The Lightning Dreamer*, a PEN Literary Award for Young Adult Literature winner. Her verse memoir, *Enchanted Air*, received the Pura Belpré Award, a Walter Dean Myers Award Honor, and was a finalist for the YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction, among others. Her picture book *Drum Dream Girl* received the Charlotte Zolotow Award. Margarita was born in Los Angeles, but developed a deep attachment to her mother's homeland during childhood summers with relatives. She continues to visit Cuba as often as she can. Visit her at [MargaritaEngle.com](http://MargaritaEngle.com).

Through lovely rhyme and verse, this tale paints a plot with feelings and emotions, allowing the beauty and depth to meld with adventure. Edver and Luza might be brother and sister, but they

come from two very different worlds. When Edver's mother suddenly sends him away from Florida to travel to Cuba, he's not sure what to make of anything. Especially when he meets Luza, the sister he didn't know that exists. Confusion reigns, but as they grow together, an adventure begins which will bond them for life. This is a story written in verse. By flip-flopping between Edver and Luza, the author allows each character's thoughts to come to life through poetry. The plot unfolds slowly through each pair of eyes, while bringing in a beautiful depth not often seen in middle grade fiction. Each poem is relatively short - usually only between one to two pages - and opens up the story in all directions through a well thought out choice of words. Edver and Luza might be siblings, but they are different in every way. And it's this strong contrast which creates the extremely vivid imagery. Two worlds collide. The children have grown up not only in different countries and cultures, but the gap between their wealth, ideologies, interests, way of life and dreams is wider than the ocean that separates them. Doubt, anger, uncertainty, curiosity, hope and expectations pour from every page. The writing flows with tons of beauty, while adding a bit of adventure in as well. The added twist of preserving endangered species makes this a delightful read. There's even a short glossary and explanation at the end to help readers gain a deeper understanding of the danger these animals are in. Although this is a beautiful, original and compelling read, most middle graders won't necessarily have the patience to dive into the woven words. The thoughts and feelings of Edver and Luza are well fitting for the age group, but the adventure comes slowly, and the characters develop with more depth than most readers of this age group are ready to swallow. But that doesn't mean that there aren't a few out there who wouldn't love to read this. A slightly older age group will possess the maturity required to digest this tale to its fullest, and adults are sure to enjoy it as well. These readers are sure to get lost in Luza and Edver's world and leave with a new appreciation for the problems people from different cultures face as well as the horrid troubles found in the animal world. I received a complimentary copy and found this book so beautiful that I wanted to leave my honest thoughts.

Edver isn't pleased to be headed to Cuba to meet his father for the first time since he was a baby. Now that the laws have changed, families can once again be reunited with people who escaped to the United States from Cuba. Edver has to leave behind the Internet and his favorite video game and cope with power outages and a lack of transportation and other technology. When he gets to Cuba, Edver discovers that he has an older sister that he's never known about. Luza had stayed with her father in Cuba, wondering why her mother left her behind. Both of their parents work to protect endangered species. Their father protects one special forest in

Cuba while their mother travels the world to find newly rediscovered species. As Luza and Edver start to become siblings, they find that a poacher has come to Cuba, drawn by an email they sent to try to get their mother to come. Now it is up to them to protect the forest they both love. Engle is a master of the verse novel, writing of difficult subjects and using the poetic format to dig deeper than prose would allow. She tells the story in alternating poems in the voices of Edver and Luza as they discover the poverty of Cuba, the wealth of America, and the fact that there are different types of wealth in life like parental attention, grandparents and a sense of home. Engle explores the world of Lazarus animals and protecting endangered species in this novel. The subject works in a lovely parallel to Cuban Americans being reunited with their families. There is a sense of delicacy and care, a feeling of finding the right habitat suddenly, and a sense of exploration and discovery heightened with surprises. Another adept verse novel from a true master, this is a book that explores home, habitat and family. Appropriate for ages 9-12.

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