



# Windows into Illustration: Francesca Sanna

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[Francesca Sanna](#) [1]

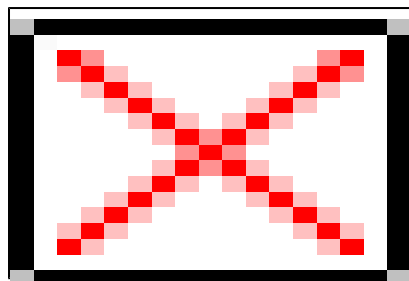
[226](#) [2]

Article Category:

Windows into Illustration

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**Francesca Sanna** winner of the **2017 Klaus Flugge Prize**

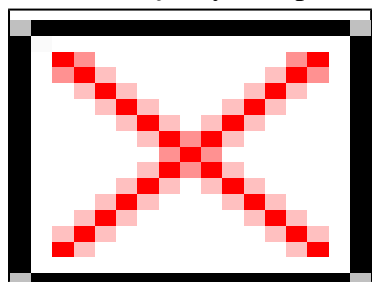


Francesca Sanna has been named as the winner of the second [Klaus Flugge Prize](#) [3],

awarded to the most promising and exciting newcomer to children's picture book illustration, for her book [The Journey](#) [4]. Describing the book as 'the most inventive and original of all the entries to the prize', judge Axel Scheffler said: 'The fear the family experiences is strongly expressed in the graphic language of the book which is beautifully designed. The stylish drawings are varied and yet consistent.'

**The Journey** tells the story of a mother and her two children fleeing war at home to find a new life in another country and Sanna was inspired to create the book after meeting two young girls in a refugee centre in Italy. Here she describes her approach to creating the book.

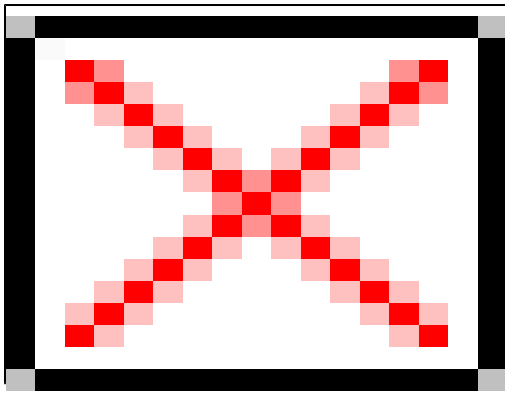
**The Journey**, my first picture book, is the story of a family and of the journey they undertake when they realise their home is



not a safe place anymore. As I briefly tried to explain in a note at the end of the book, it was inspired by many stories of many people I spoke with, from many different countries and backgrounds. A part of the research was even focused on historical documents about immigration in the early 1900.

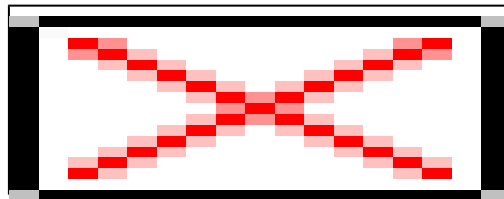
I didn't want **The Journey** to be a specific story, I wanted it to convey the idea that everyone has the right to have a safe place to live. For this reason, in the book I try to give as little information as possible about where, or when, the story is set.

At the same time I wanted the main characters of the story to be strong, to have an active role in their journey. In this sense there is one character in particular that I thought of as 'superhero' of this story, and it is the character of the mother. With her children she overcomes the obstacles of the journey and she always protects them: she is very brave, even when she is scared.



My process is very unstructured and it changes for every project, but there are some steps I always try to follow. I start with very small and roughly made thumbnail sketches and I play with them and their sequence until I find a story structure that works.

I also usually plan my colour palette from the beginning, and try to assign to the main characters a specific colour or feature. In **The Journey** the character of the mother for example has very thick black hair that protects and embraces her children and this represents her super power?.



I usually make rough hand-drawn sketches for every illustration, then I work on them digitally. There are here in the final illustrations some traces of the texture of the paper or of other tools I use to draw but what ends up in the pages of the book is mostly digitally painted.

My favourite part of the process is to plan the layout of every page. I love to use the space of the book and its limits, and move the characters and the elements of the pictures around the page. I think that the layout of a book can tell a lot about its story too. In **The Journey** I used a horizontal format because it gave more space to the characters to travel through the spreads.

The idea behind my choices for the colours, the layout, the elements of the story, and its structure in **The Journey** was to think about the topic of immigration in a more emphatic way, with a focus on the personal story and the human dimension rather than on numbers and statistics. With the last page of this book, where the end is quite open and there isn't the arrival to a new home, I wanted to leave the readers with an implicit question: how would you end this story?

**The Journey** is published by **Flying Eye Books**, 978-1- 9092-6399- 4, £12.99 hbk

Page Number:

6

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[2] <http://pop.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/226>

[3] <http://www.andersenpress.co.uk/KlausFluggePrize/>

[4] <http://pop.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/218/childrens-books/reviews/the-journey>