



EDUCATOR GUIDE

STORMY SEAS **Stories of Young Boat Refugees**

by Mary Beth Leatherdale

illustrated by Eleanor Shakespeare

GENRE: Middle grade non-fiction

THEMES: social studies; global studies; war; poverty; current events; immigration; geography

STORY ELEMENTS Narrative non-fiction, personal stories, oral histories, primary sources, refugee crises past and present

SUITABLE FOR: Grades 5–8, Ages 10–13

GUIDED READING LEVEL: Fountas and Pinnell X

LEXILE: 890L

COMMON CORE STANDARDS: RH.6-8.1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10 L.6.3,4,4a,4d,5,5b,5c,6
WHST.6-8.1,2,4,6,7,8,9,10 SL.6.1,1a,1b,1c,1d,2,3,4,5,6

SUMMARY:

A treacherous voyage across the open seas is the last hope for safety and freedom for five young people from around the world.

The phenomenon of desperate refugees risking their lives to reach safety is not new. For hundreds of years, people have left behind family, friends, and all they know in hope of a better life. This book presents five true stories about young people who lived through the harrowing experience of setting sail in search of asylum: Ruth and her family board the St. Louis to escape Nazism; Phu sets out alone from war-torn Vietnam; José tries to reach the U.S. from Cuba; Najeeba flees Afghanistan and the Taliban; Mohamed, an orphan, runs from his village on the Ivory Coast. Aimed at middle grade students, *Stormy Seas* combines a contemporary collage-based design, sidebars, fact boxes, timeline and further reading to produce a book that is ideal for both reading and research. Readers will gain new insights into a situation that has constantly been making the headlines.

Please remember that the suggested questions and activities within this educator guide are meant to serve as a starting point. Educators are encouraged to select items from each part of the guided inquiry process that work best for their style of teaching and will help them meet their goals when covering the topics in this book. Activities and prompts should be tweaked and/or reformatted to best fit your students, context, and community to ensure equity and inclusion.

BEFORE READING THE BOOK

These activities introduce the topic of the book, establish prior knowledge and interest, and make predictions about the text.

1. Before reading *Stormy Seas*, ask your students to look carefully at the book's cover. If possible, open it up so that students can see both the front and back cover.

Ask the students:

- What does the cover tell you about the book?
- What do you notice about the style of the artwork? What do you notice about the boat? The hand?

2. Ask your students to think about what they already know about refugees:

- Have you seen or heard stories of refugees (online, television, radio, newspapers)?
- Do you know anyone who was a refugee? If so, where did they come from?

If any of your students were refugees themselves, you may have to treat this discussion with additional sensitivity. They might find it difficult to talk about their own experiences. Some may want to tell their story, but for some, it might still be too raw.

3. Is there an organization in your community that helps refugees? If so, ask your students if they have been involved in any way, or if they know what kind of work the organization does.
4. Finally, preview the following vocabulary words that might be new to students. (Some of these are defined in the book.):

anti-Semitism / anti-Semitic	diplomatic ties / diplomatic	Kristallnacht
Aryan	relationship	liaison
asylum	discrimination	migrant
brandish	economic depression	oppression
broker (as a verb)	human trafficking / human	people smuggler
burqa	trafficker	persecution
civil war	immigration detention cen-	racial slur
colony	ter	refuge
communism	incite	visa

WHILE READING THE BOOK

These activities check on comprehension, stimulate interest, involve readers in reflection as they read, and encourage consideration of other readers' reactions.

Questions for the Class:

POINT OF VIEW

1. Each chapter is written from two different points of view. The opening and closing (“What Happened. . .”) sections and the sidebars are written in third person point of view. The middle sections are written in first person point of view. Why do you think the author chose to include these two points of view? Re-read one chapter and pay close attention to how you react to the different points of view. Write a sentence or two about the impact of the different points of view.
2. Think about a journey that you have taken that was either scary or didn't go as planned. It could be a long or short trip, overseas or across town. Write a journal entry about what happened. First write the story from the first-person point of view. Then write the same story from the third-person point of view, as if you were a newspaper reporter who had interviewed yourself.

NARRATIVE NON-FICTION AND PERSONAL STORIES

3. Ask students to interview a classmate or relative about the story of their life and to record their oral history. To prepare, students can write down some questions in advance. Emphasize the use of open-ended questions rather than leading questions. For example, instead of asking “Were you scared?” ask “How did that make you feel?”

After the interview, ask students to write down the story as it was told to them. They can then present the interview to a different partner, the class, or a larger group. Presentations could be oral, PowerPoint, or online.

4. In each chapter, there are examples of both cruel and kind people. Make a list of the people who helped Ruth, Phu, José, Najeeba or Mohamed. How did these actions change the direction of the story?

SOCIAL STUDIES

5. Using the map diagram at the end of this guide, chart the routes taken by Ruth, Phu, José, Najeeba and Mohamed, starting from their original homes to their final destinations. Use a different color for each journey and include a map legend for each route.

[Note to educators: This is a good time to point out various map features that are appropriate to your grade such as cardinal directions, legend, how land and water are marked, how font is used differently for cities, towns and countries, etc.]

GLOBAL STUDIES

6. Discuss the reasons why Ruth, Phu, José, Najeeba and Mohamed left their homes. Are these the same reasons why people immigrate? Using the chart or the Venn diagram at the end of this guide, list the differences between the experience of an immigrant and a refugee. How are they similar? How are they different? What challenges do immigrants face? How are these the same or different from the challenges faced by refugees?

WAR

7. Research one of the conflicts or incidents described in the book: the 1939 voyage of the St Louis; the journeys of Vietnamese boat people; the 1980 Mariel Boatlift; the Afghan Civil War (1996–2001); or the First Ivorian Civil War (2002–2004). Discuss how these events or conflicts affected the lives of Ruth, Phu, José, Najeeba and Mohamed. Write an online presentation, a PowerPoint presentation or a short report that discusses how war or political conflict affects civilians, even when they are not actively involved in fighting. Share this report with a partner, the class, school and/or wider community.

POVERTY

8. Marcelle Aleid's My One Thing Project features videos of refugees discussing a meaningful object they took with them when they left their homes. Take a look at a few of the videos created for the project: <https://youtu.be/ZPONh31E2VM>. Now, imagine you have to leave your home quickly, like many people who become refugees. If you could only take one thing with you, what would you take? Explain to a partner (or the class) why you have chosen this thing. How would your life change if you only owned the clothes you're wearing today and your one thing?

“A lot of people DON'T UNDERSTAND what it means to SUFFER HARDSHIP because they've never experienced it. When you MIGRATE, it's a SCHOOL OF LIFE.”



AFTER READING THE BOOK

These activities inspire continued reflection and response to the text, bring conclusion to the experience of reading this particular text, and stimulate further extensions.

ROLE PLAY

1. For the following activity, pick one of the people profiled in *Stormy Seas*. Pretend you are that person. Find a partner in class who is acting as one of the other characters. Imagine you two are meeting for the first time. Maybe you meet in a hallway or while eating lunch. Tell your partner your story. What parts of your story would you include? What would you leave out?

PUT YOURSELF IN THEIR SHOES

2. Imagine you have just arrived as a refugee in your community. What steps would you take to make your home here? What challenges might you face in this new place? Research the settlement process in your country/region/city/town. What services are available to refugees? How might your family find shelter, work, childcare, language lessons and basic essentials like food, clothing and toiletries? Present your research to a partner, group, or the entire class. Presentations could be oral, PowerPoint, or online.

TEACHER RESOURCES

Teachers' Toolkit developed by the United Nations Refugee Agency:

<http://www.unhcr.org/teaching-about-refugees.html>

For more information on the connection between refugees and poverty:

In 2015, the World Bank and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees conducted the first study that looked at the poverty and welfare levels of a refugee population:

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2015/12/16/welfare-syrian-refugees-evidence-from-jordan-lebanon>

For teachers interested in the Syrian refugee crisis, there are many resources available on the

I Am Syria website:

<http://www.iamsyria.org>



Chart the route taken by Ruth, Phu, José, Najeeba and Mohamed



Comparison and Contrast, chart

Immigrant

Refugee

Similarities

Differences

Points of Interest

	←	→	
	←	→	
	←	→	
	←	→	
	←	→	
	←	→	
	←	→	

Comparison and Contrast, Venn diagram

Immigrant

Refugee

