

# STORMY SEAS: STORIES OF YOUNG BOAT REFUGEES

by Mary Beth Leatherdale • illustrated by Eleanor Shakespeare

**Genre:** Non-Fiction

**Themes:** social studies; global studies; war; poverty; current events; immigration; geography

**Suitable for:** Grades 5–8

**Guided Reading Level:** X

**Lexile Measure:** 890L

**Common Core standards:** RH.6-8.1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10  
WHST.6-8.1,2,4,6,7,8,9,10  
L.6.3,4,4a,4d,5,5b,5c,6  
SL.6.1,1a,1b,1c,1d,2,3,4,5,6

**Story elements:** Narrative non-fiction, personal stories, oral histories, primary sources, refugee crises past and present

**Note to educators:** *Due to the sensitive material in Stormy Seas, not every activity in this guide will be suitable for every class. Educators may want to be mindful of the personal connections students might have to the topics in this book.*

## BEFORE STARTING THE BOOK

These activities build the context and introduce the topic of the book, and establish prior knowledge and interest.

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

Aryan

asylum

brandish

broker (as a verb)

burqa

civil war

colony

communism

diplomatic ties / diplomatic relationship

discrimination

economic depression

human trafficking / human trafficker

immigration detention center

incite

Kristallnacht

liaison

migrant

oppression

people smuggler

persecution

racial slur

refuge

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?

## 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.

## RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS

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:

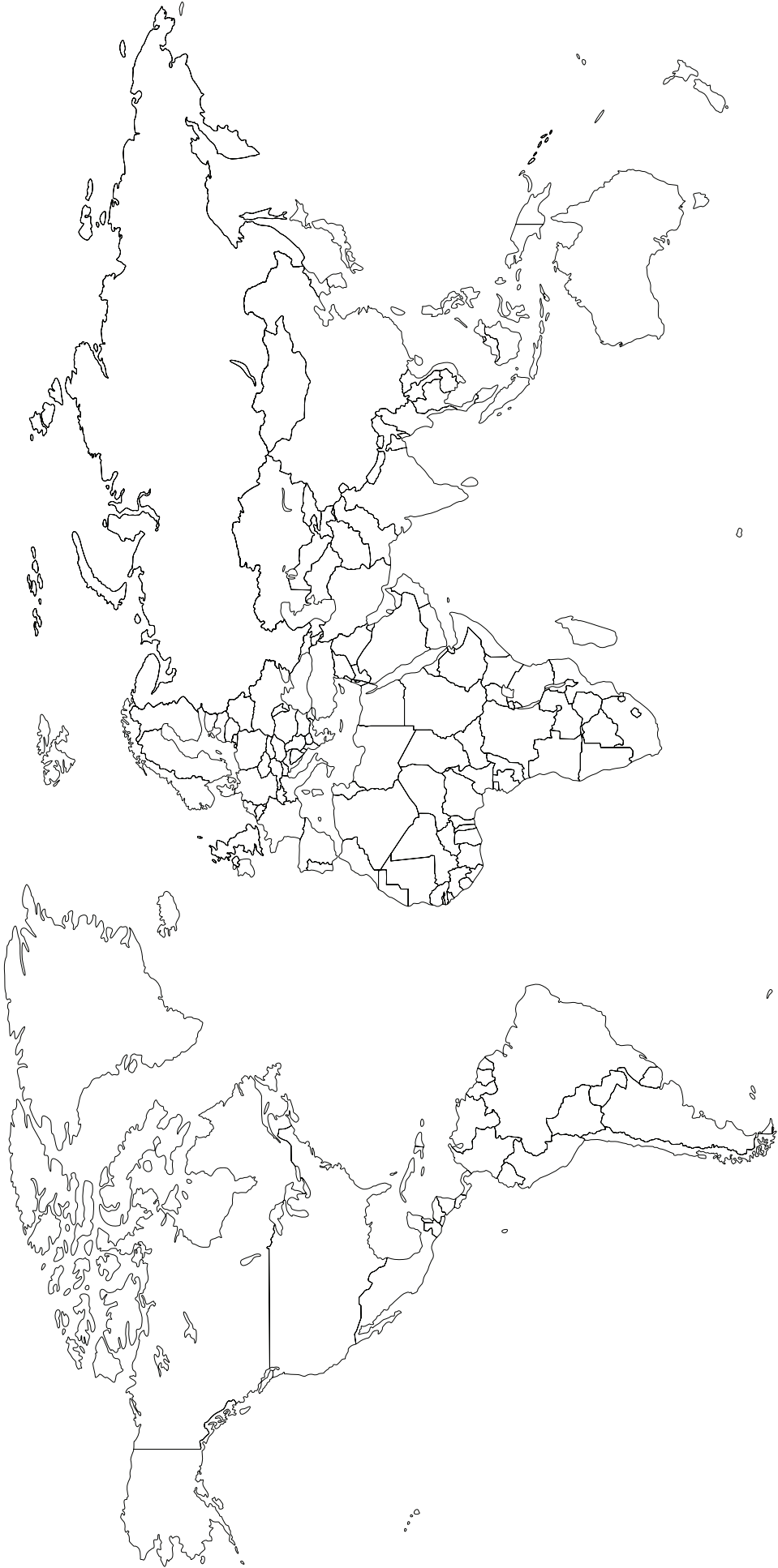
In 2015, the World Bank and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees conducted the first study that looked at the poverty and welfare levels of a refugee population:

<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**

A large rectangular box with a black border, containing six horizontal lines for writing. It is positioned below the 'Similarities' label and above the 'Differences' label.

**Differences**

Points of Interest

A comparison chart consisting of two vertical rectangular boxes, one on the left and one on the right, each containing six horizontal lines. Between the two boxes, there are six horizontal arrows pointing towards each other, one for each line. The label 'Points of Interest' is centered above these arrows. This structure is used to compare and contrast the 'Immigrant' and 'Refugee' categories.

# Comparison and Contrast, Venn diagram

Immigrant

Refugee

