

TEACHABLE BOOKS

Global Issues: Refugee Experiences

By Kate Johnson-McGregor

GRADE LEVEL: Middle (7-10)

THEME: Global Issues

SUB-THEMES: Refugee Experiences

LEARNING FOCUS

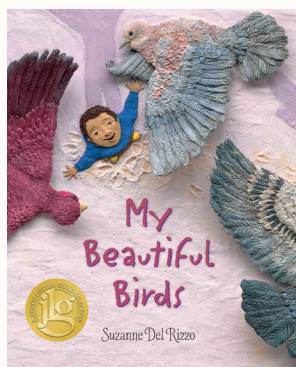
Students will use fiction and non-fiction texts to:

- Identify and describe the significance of voice in text as it relates to the refugee experience
- Recognize and understand refugees as a global issue

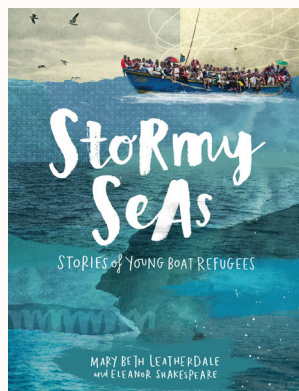
Students will demonstrate an understanding of:

- The wide range of emotions and experiences of people who move to a new and unfamiliar place
- The reasons people travel; relaxation, adventure or work, and forced travel to seek safety or escape disaster
- The significance of voice in storytelling
- The importance of text forms in shaping meaning

FEATURED BOOKS



My Beautiful Birds by Suzanne Del Rizzo (Pajama Press, 2017)



Stormy Seas: Stories of Young Boat Refugees by Mary Beth Leatherdale, illustrated by Eleanor Shakespeare (Annick Press, 2017)



Baggage by Wendy Phillips (Coteau Books, 2019)



Ghost's Journey: A Refugee Story by Robin Stevenson (Rebel Mountain Press, 2019)

LEARNING EXPERIENCE

MINDS ON PROVOCATION

Teacher will present to the class images of airports—baggage carousels, check-in desks, porters with luggage, travellers, lounges, etc. with a focus on diversity of representation.

- What do you notice? What do you wonder?
- What does this make you think of?
- How do these images make you feel?
- Why do people travel? What are some reasons?
- Why might people leave their homelands?
- What are some difficulties or challenges someone might face?
- What are some emotions or feelings that people may feel from those challenges?

Generate and share the list of answers using word cloud generating software like [Mentimeter](#), construct a [Jamboard](#), Google Sheet, or use large paper and markers.

Distribute the first page of text from “Baggage”—Ms Nelson (3)—and read it together as a class.

- What do you notice? What do you wonder?
- How does the author telling the story in poetry influence our understanding? (Word choice, imagery, word arrangement, font, white space on the page, etc.)

Using trauma-informed practice, share images or book/magazine covers depicting families in migratory circumstances; refugee camps, boats arriving on beaches, etc.

READ, PLAN, AND PRACTICE

Beginning with picture books, discuss with students how we read a picture book, focusing on the importance of images and discussing form/text features.

Working individually or in pairs or small groups, students will read the picture books and do a one-minute rapid writing response on voice for each one: Who is telling this story? How might the story be different if there were a different narrator/perspective?

Have students share their books/ideas/perspectives with the class in a jigsaw situation.

Generate some common understandings of the idea of voice and power: Who is heard? Whose voice is missing from these stories?

Share the article [Pandemic intensifies silent sorrow of Canada’s asylum seekers](#) (Capital Current), or a similar article that includes personal accounts of social, physical and mental challenges faced by refugees.



MAKE, TINKER, AND MODIFY

Individually or in partners, have students re-frame the storybooks from a different perspective.

Retell a part of one of the storybooks using a different medium: art, music, photography, poetry.

Share products in an online learning platform, gallery walk or jigsaw activity in class.

REFLECT AND CONNECT

Students create a blog/diary/journal/sketchbook/podcast to share their own voice and reflect on the experience of retelling the stories.

Use the chosen medium to document/reflect as a reading journal throughout the novel study.

ADDITIONAL CANADIAN BOOKS AND BOOK LISTS TO SUPPORT THIS SUB-THEME

- [Books About Refugee Experiences](#) (49th Shelf)
- [I Read Canadian: Six books about the refugee experience](#) (UNHCR Canada)
- [Resource Links Highlights: Refugees and Immigrants](#) (Canadian School Libraries Journal)
- [7 Canadian books to read on World Refugee Day](#) (CBC Books)

ADAPTATIONS FOR THIS LESSON FOR SECONDARY (11-12)

This lesson could be extended to address human trafficking.

Suggested resources:

- “The True Story of Canadian Human Trafficking” by Paul H. Boge (Castle Quay Books, 2018)
- “Responding to Human Trafficking: Dispossession, Colonial Violence, and Resistance among Indigenous and Racialized Women” by Julie Kaye (University of Toronto Press, 2017)
- [Books, Videos, and Additional Online Resources for Human Trafficking](#) (Government of British Columbia)
- [National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking](#) (Government of Canada)

MORE RESOURCES

- [WritingWendy](#) – a blog by author Wendy Phillips
- [Helping Kids Cope with Media Coverage of War and Traumatic Events](#) – a teaching resource from MediaSmarts
- [United Nations Refugee Agency](#) – also known as UNHCR, this agency helps people displaced by violence, persecution and conflict
- [The danger of a single story](#) – TEDTalk with writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
- [My Beautiful Birds](#) book review
- [Stormy Seas: Stories of Young Boat Refugees](#) book review
- [Baggage](#) book review
- [Ghost’s Journey: A Refugee Story](#) book review

