

**Teachers' Notes**  
by  
**Leonie Manners**

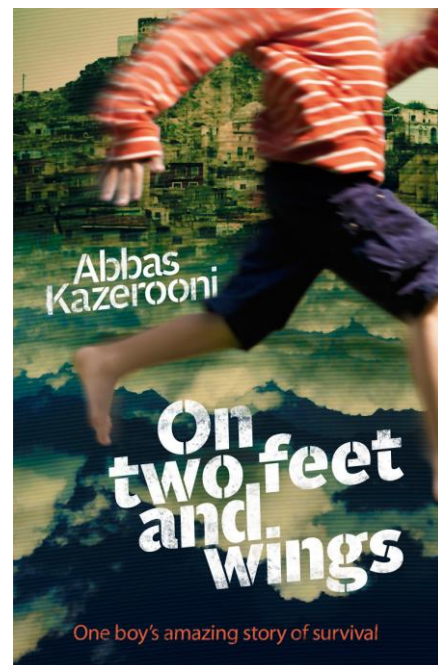
**On Two Feet and Wings**  
by  
**Abbas Kazerooni**

ISBN 9781743311059

Recommended for ages 11-14 yrs

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## INTRODUCTION

This is the amazing true story of a nine-year-old boy who flees Tehran for Istanbul alone during the Iran-Iraq War. His quest to seek refugee status in England is a moving and timely memoir, a poignant adjunct to discussions of refugee issues.

## PLOT SYNOPSIS

Abbas is a nine year-old boy growing up in Tehran during the Iran-Iraq War. His parents were once extremely wealthy under the Shah but have had their property and possessions confiscated under the regime of Ayatollah Khomeini. When children are drafted into the army to fight against the Iraqis, Abbas's father decides his wife and son must leave the country to seek refugee status in Britain via Istanbul, hoping that one day they will all be reunited.

However, Abbas's mother is refused an exit visa at the airport so Abbas must journey alone to Istanbul. He faces homelessness, violence, poverty and crime in Istanbul, but with his inimitable positive outlook, entrepreneurial spirit and impish humour, he survives, against the odds, and finally reaches Britain where, again, an uncertain future awaits ...

### Reviews

*This is – all at once – history, Iran, Tehran and the view from the boyhood bedroom, the ancient formula of happiness when all else is past ...Kazerooni's prose is elegant and his narrative tightly woven ... It is a story that is deeply moving, its piquancy enhanced by the sombre thought that all the episodes of survival against the odds are based on the truth.*

*Telegraph, Calcutta, India*

*I thought the story itself was fascinating...The best thing is by far the story and its authenticity. It is just as gripping as any fiction book and is more believable and entrancing. I think the current political setting also adds to the appeal of the book despite the fact that it was set around twenty years ago. I also think that the story is very uplifting, despite – perhaps because of – the grim setting.*

14-year-old reviewer

## USE IN THE CURRICULUM

### Themes

This novel would be an excellent choice for study for upper primary school and secondary students. It covers the following themes which tie into national and state English Curriculum areas:

- Belonging
- Journeys and Migration
- Memory
- Change
- War and Conflict
- Culture and Identity
- Self and Society

### **Values**

The novel is underpinned by a core set of values which emphasise the importance of:

- Empathy
- Resilience in the face of adversity
- Respect for difference
- Understanding of culture and tradition
- Trust and honesty
- Family and friendship
- Education
- Humour

### **Outcomes**

Students can achieve outcomes in the following areas:

- Understanding of text for different purposes
- Understanding of context
- Critical awareness
- Research into history, geography, cultures and language
- Personal reflection
- Class discussion
- Creative writing
- Speaking and listening
- Visual literacy

*On Two Feet and Wings* is a memoir. It is based on the author's own experience. One or two episodes of violence in the book may be distressing to younger readers, but they depict the real life experience of the author. In the same way as *The Power of One* by Bryce Courtney, also a memoir, both shocks and sensitively deals with issues in context, so *On Two Feet and Wings* traverses the range of human emotion. It is suitable as a class text that will expand and enrich students' understanding of the world around them. It will lead to rewarding discussions about the plight of refugees; the difficulties involved in migration; poverty; war and conflict; children's rights; exploitation; and Middle Eastern politics, history and religion. However, against the backdrop of the tragic circumstances, it's power lies in the story of Abbas, his character as well as his experiences. The latter part of these notes concentrate on the universal human values and behaviours that this story exemplifies.

## **POLITICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

While a basic contextual understanding is sufficient for students to gain an appreciation of this novel, deeper insights will emerge from a more detailed analysis, especially with more advanced students. Teaching this novel will also be more rewarding with this background knowledge.

Iran was formerly known as Persia. In 1935, the leader Reza Shah Pahlavi asked the international community to call Persia 'Iran' which means 'Land of Aryans' recognizing the Indo-European origins of the country. It is believed that Reza Shah Pahlavi came under the influence of Germany and its promotion of the Aryan race. Many Iranians, however, continued to call Iran 'Persia'.

The history of Persia or Iran is dominated by a clash of cultures and interventions—the Persian or Farsi culture, Indo-European in origin, came to be politically dominated by the Arab or Islamic culture in 641 CE but still retained its own unique language, arts and literature. Nationalism and the intellectual life flourished and this was personified by writer, philosopher, mathematician and astronomer, Ummar al-Khayyam (1038-1131) who wrote *The Rubaiyat*.

In the early twentieth century, British interests began to exploit the rich oil fields and both Russia and Britain occupied Persia during World War 1. This military occupation led to the 1921 Revolution. (On p.5, Abbas reflects: 'When the British had invaded Persia at the turn of the twentieth century, the government would not fight them. But my great-grandfather had funded guerillas to put up an opposition!') The commander of the National Guard, Reza Shah was installed as the country's new leader.

Reza Shah advocated neutrality and cancelled oil concessions that favoured the British. In 1941 British and Soviet forces invaded and Reza Shah was sent into exile after abdicating in favour of his son, the pro-European, pro-Western Muhammad Reza Pahlavi.

During the 1970s, the rapid rise in American investment in the oil wealth of the nation led to crippling inflation and new taxes which impacted on the jobs, security and wages of the poorer classes of Iranian society. Powerful commercial and industrial elites and Islamicist groups also resented the growing power of foreign interests.

In 1979, mass demonstrations and protests came to a head. The pro-Western Iranian monarch Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was forced to flee the country after being overthrown by supporters of the Islamic leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who had incited ferment from exile in Paris.

After the Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini returned as leader to institute a strict Shia Islamic republic. Many pro-American and wealthy families who were supporters of the Shah suddenly found themselves dispossessed of property and goods ('Due to my father's connections with the previous regime—the Shah's rule—the ayatollahs confiscated most of my family's property and assets.' p.5). They were also subject to censorship and surveillance. Throughout society, women became increasingly marginalised.

The Iran-Iraq War 1980-1988 heightened the unease and hardships of all Iranians, but in particular the supporters of the former Shah who were subject to campaigns of torture and terror. Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was fearful that a Khomeini-supported revolution could break out in his own country. Both countries became involved in a protracted military conflict sparked by a territorial dispute over Shatt al Arab, a waterway that empties into the Persian Gulf and forms the boundary between Iran and Iraq.

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein began a land and air invasion of western Iran in September 1980. Iranian leader Khomeini used children to fight as part of a 'human wave' to cross vast stretches of no man's land, often seeded with land mines by the opposing forces. Lightly equipped and poorly trained, many of these child soldiers died, or were captured or wounded.

The following is an excerpt of a child soldier's experience during this operation recorded in Ian Brown's, *Khomeini's Forgotten Sons: The Story of Iran's Boy Soldiers* (Grey Seal, 1990):

*After only a month's training at a camp near Khorramshahr, I was sent to the front. When we arrived we all assembled in a field where there must have been a thousand of us, some younger than me, and old men as well. The commander told us we were going to attack an Iraqi position north-east of Basra which guarded the road to Qurna, to try to capture the road. The following morning we set off at 4:00 A.M. in army trucks, and I had been given a gun and two hand grenades. The trucks stopped at the Iranian front and they told everyone to get out. The sun was beginning to come up as we started walking towards the Iraqi lines, and boy, was I scared! We'd been told the position was three kilometers away. As we got nearer, we could hear shells exploding, and I think it was us shelling them. When we got to the top of a hill, we started running down the other side towards the enemy position. I wasn't afraid any more. We all shouted, "Allah akbar" (God is great) as we ran, and I could see soldiers in front of us - a line of helmets - then they started firing. People dropped all around me, but I kept running and shouting while many were being killed. By the time I reached the trenches, I'd thrown my grenades and somehow had lost my gun, but I don't remember how. Then I was hit in the leg and fell over and lay for a long time right in front of the front lines. Other Iranians passed me but they all fell. I wanted to get up and help them but couldn't move. My leg felt like it was burning. Finally, the attack stopped in the afternoon, but I was asleep when the Iraqis came out of the trenches to look at the bodies. They were kicking them and when they kicked me, I screamed out in pain. But they picked me up and tossed me into the back of a lorry. For me the war was over.*

The political and historical context of the novel will stimulate class discussion. The following questions can be explored after reading the novel:

1. Should children go to war? Staggeringly, it is estimated that 250,000 children are actively involved in conflicts in more than 20 countries around the world (UNHCR and War Child statistics). Some zones of conflict where students have been recruited and/or coerced into joining the army are:

- Uganda -- Invisible Children's viral video campaign Kony 2012 on YouTube brought this issue to global attention
- Democratic Republic of Congo – In a landmark 2012 case, the International Criminal Court (ICC) convicted Thomas Lubanga Dyilo of the FPLC for, among other war crimes, enlisting and conscripting children under the age of 15
- Sudan – The 'Lost Boys of Sudan' was made into an award-winning documentary film. For classroom teaching ideas on this film go to: [www.lostboysfilm.com](http://www.lostboysfilm.com)
- Afghanistan
- Sierra Leone.

2. Discuss Article 38 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: 'The right, if below 15 years of age, not to be recruited into armed forces nor to engage in direct hostilities.' Ask students to find out about the other 'Rights' listed in the Convention and discuss them. Ask students to make a poster or frieze for the classroom outlining and illustrating some of these rights.

## SET THE SCENE

### COVER

Look at the cover of the book. What do students think the book may be about? Discuss the composition of the cover:

- The placement, action and depiction of the boy--why has the designer chosen not to show the boy's head?
- The paradoxical inverted juxtaposition of the background--the gritty realism of the buildings superimposed above the dreamscape of clouds
- The framing of the title by the boy's legs and the use of font.

### TITLE

Discuss the title. Does this give any clues? What do students think about the juxtaposition of 'feet' and 'wings'? What do both suggest? Brainstorm words linked to both e.g.:

#### Feet

- Ground (also metaphorically: 'grounded' as in 'feet on the ground')
- Earth
- Running

#### Wings

- Bird
- Air
- Flying (also metaphorically: freedom, creativity, escape)

Discuss the subtitle: 'One boy's amazing story of survival'. Introduce the term *memoir* to students—what word is it like? A memoir is a memory (French: *memoire*=memory), a written record of a life or event, or an autobiographical sketch. How does a memoir differ from fiction?

### DESIGN

Flick through the pages of the book to discover the 'dinkus' – a visual element that breaks up text. It is a picture of dice.

- What significance might the dinkus have in this story?

Look at the aerial photos that accompany the sections 'Tehran', 'Istanbul' and 'London'. What do students make of these?

## OPENING SENTENCE

'It was typically hot in Tehran the day my life turned upside down.' (p.3)

From this first line, what does the reader find out about the setting of this novel? Is this novel being narrated in first, second or third person? Discuss how this sets up the identification between author/narrator and reader. The narrator's direct and straightforward speech also heightens the sense of urgency and has the effect of making the extraordinary events seem more shocking, set as they are amidst the ordinary thoughts and feelings of a nine-year-old. We also have the sense of the adult narrator – Abbas as a grown-up – reflecting and commenting on his past experiences, his childhood, and how, originally, he was a passive recipient of the change that is foreshadowed.

## CHAPTER ONE

The first chapter is important for establishing the characters, their motivations, the action, the tone and the historical context.

The following activities and questions will get students imagining, visualising and thinking:

- Paint or draw the view from Abbas's bed looking out through the window to the back garden and orchard with orange, apple, cherry and pomegranate trees.
- Discuss how the abundance of the garden contrasts with the emptiness and sparse furnishings of his house.
- What was Abbas's house like before the Iran-Iraq War? What is it like now? What has happened to the family and why?
- What activities does Abbas do that Australian students also do?
- Abbas describes the portraits in the living room of his father, grandfather and great-grandfather. Do students have family portraits hanging in their house? Ask students to compile a family tree for as far back as they can go.
- Write a diary entry recording Abbas's thoughts and feelings as he overhears his mother and father's conversation. 'You know they won't give me a passport, don't you?' (p.7) What is the significance of this?
- Abbas is both excited and fearful. Ask students to remember their life at nine and to recount an occasion when they were both excited and nervous or scared.
- Discuss how the following sentences set up an opposition between what Abbas's family believes and the official Islamic belief: 'They've reduced the recruitment age to eight, Marzieh. You saw Meenoo yourself the other day. Her son was brought back in a coffin, and for what?' (p.9) and 'At school we were told we would go to paradise if we died in the war. My father always begged me not to listen ...' (p.9).
- A family member has already suffered torture by the authorities. 'We lived in a totalitarian state where the dictatorship stood for no resistance or insubordination.' (p.9). Using dictionaries, ask students to define these terms and then explain this statement in their own words.

- What would it be like to live in a country which represses freedom of thought, speech and movement? Unfortunately, many people of the world are still living in repressive states where human rights are regularly violated. Set students a research task to report on a country such as this in the news. Ask students to compile a Human Rights Watch-style report outlining the issues and what can be done:

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Name of country:      |  |
| Political situation:  |  |
| Human rights abuses:  |  |
| International action: |  |

Students will find the United Nations, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch websites useful: [www.un.org/en](http://www.un.org/en), [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org), [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org).

- Amnesty International uses a symbol of a candle surrounded by barbed wire to depict its mission of protecting human rights around the world. Ask students to design their own symbol to show support for human rights.
- After Abbas is taken out of school and finds out his father must sell the family's precious possessions to buy tickets for him to escape, he says: 'I stared straight into the peachy-orange ball of the sun on the horizon above the pine trees at the back of the garden. It was a beautiful morning, but somehow everything looked ugly and threatening.' (p.16). Ask students to describe Abbas's mixed emotions by trying to imagine themselves in the same position.
- When looking through photographs with Abbas, Abbas's mother has a flashback to her previous life under the Shah, dancing with her husband at a ball for three hundred people in their living room. (pp.26-28) This vignette is ideal for drama. Divide the class into pairs and ask them to rehearse this scene. Ask student pairs to perform for the rest of the class. The only prop that is needed is a photograph. Music, particularly Iranian music, could be played in the background.
- Discuss the role memory plays in our life. Ask students to bring in a photograph from home and share a memory based on it, in the form of a piece of creative writing.

## OTHER CULTURES

### IRAN

This novel introduces readers to a culture that, depending on the background of your students, may be totally new and different. Ask students to find out the meaning of the following words, some of which are explained in the context of the novel: tasbih (p.13), lavash, panir, (p.19), chador (p.31)

Mamanjoon, Abbas's grandmother, exhorts Abbas's mother to obey her husband in his plan of fleeing Iran. Discuss the family dynamics of Abbas's family and compare the roles of his mother, father and grandmother. Who seems to be the most



powerful? Who is the least powerful? Discuss the differences in the mother's, father's and grandmother's response to the plan for Abbas's departure.

Abbas's mother checks her headscarf at the airport to make sure her hair isn't showing. 'At home she never bothered with the scarf, but in public it was compulsory.' (p.37). The covering of women was re-introduced to Iran under Khomeini's Sharia Law. Discuss tradition and how this may impact on individuals. What are the positives and negatives of traditions? What 'cultural traditions' are enshrined in Australian law? (e.g. Public holidays for Christian events but not for other religions; each sitting of Parliament opens with the members reciting The Lord's Prayer.....)

## **TURKEY**

'I was alone in a foreign land at the age of nine, and I did not speak the language. I was, quite simply, terrified.' (p.44). Discuss the repetition of the 'I' and the short, staccato sentences in the paragraph preceding it. How does this repetition and sentence structure emphasise Abbas's aloneness? Ask students to discuss a time when they felt alone.

- Ask students to find Turkey and Istanbul on a map of the world. Ask students to plot Abbas's flight path from Tehran to Istanbul.
- How would Abbas have fared if he had not encountered people who spoke a little Farsi?
- What are the positives and negatives, when refugees arrive in a new country, of living and interacting mainly with others of their home culture?

## **ENGLAND**

- Ask students to find England on a map of the world. Ask students to plot Abbas's flight path from Istanbul to London.
- Compare the Iranians Abbas meets in England, and their situations, to those he met in Turkey. Can students account for similarities and differences in these two 'sub-cultures'.
- Abbas arrives in England with only a basic knowledge of English. What is it like to go to another country and not be able to speak the language? You may have students in your class whose families were migrants or refugees in this situation. Invite a family or community member in to talk to students about the migrant and/or refugee experience. Discuss the situation of migrants or refugees to another country and how they can be helped to re-establish their lives in a new country.
- How does Abbas feel about boarding school, and why?

## **CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT**

In this section of the memoir, the reader really sees Abbas take on a huge number of challenges for a nine-year-old—arriving in a new city, catching a taxi, finding a hotel, exchanging money on the black market, dealing with violence, finding a job, making enough money to eat, surviving a beating, negotiating his visa with the British Embassy.

Ask students to compare Abbas's character at the beginning of this section ('I didn't know what to do—I was scared, and I didn't trust anyone.' p.47) to different points throughout his time in Istanbul. How has Abbas changed and grown? Ask students to describe how Abbas feels when he hears he has been granted his visa.

Create a Character Profile of Abbas—what are his positive qualities and what are his negative? As this is a memoir, the author/narrator is recalling episodes from his life that happened and does not gloss over his mistakes and failings. Ask students to nominate one episode from Abbas's time in Istanbul where he does something that may be considered wrong. (Discuss with students Abbas's misgivings (p.147) about acting as a parcel courier.)

## VALUES

### TRUST

Abbas does not trust anyone initially. However, he discovers that people of whom he is initially suspicious, such as the taxi driver, Murat the hotel owner, and the embassy official want to help him in the midst of desperate situations. He makes friends with unlikely people in unlikely places and the author seems to emphasise the value of friendship as a mitigating factor which allows Abbas to survive, even triumph, in his overall grim situation.

Discuss with students these two values—trust and friendship. In what ways is trust an important feature of friendship? Ask students to give an example of trust in their own friendships. The following games and activities will demonstrate trust in action:

- Match up pairs of students of similar size and weight. In pairs, ask students to face each other and hold each other's arms and hands outstretched and legs planted together. Leaning back, students must slowly balance each other without letting the other partner fall. Conduct the same exercise, once trust has been built up, in the opposite direction, not facing each other.
- In a sitting circle, pass an egg or a cup filled with water from person to person gently without letting the egg or water fall.
- In a standing circle, students stand shoulder to shoulder. One student elects to stand in the middle and leans forward to be caught by another and passed around the group until s/he returns to the original position. Each child should get a turn in the centre.

Ask students to think of a friend who means a lot to them. What qualities does that friend possess? How has the friend helped them? How important is the friendship of Murat to Abbas? Ask students to cite a couple of examples of this friendship from the novel.

Abbas displays amazing resilience, a quality that seems to carry him through many of his ordeals, including the beating he suffers. What is resilience? A leading psychologist has defined it as the ability to be able to bungy jump through the pitfalls of life, a quality that Abbas has in spades. Lead with the following activities which will help build resilience by teaching children to realise and develop strong connections, manage strong emotions and break down problems into manageable steps:

- Encourage team-building – students in groups are given a task to build a mini model bridge out of paper and cardboard and tape that will hold a

weight of one kilogram. The first assignation in this task is for students to break down the steps in building a bridge.

- In pairs, ask students to model and role play a controlled response to disappointing news such as not being selected in the school sports team e.g. coach breaking news to student. Make sure each student gets a chance to be both coach and student.
- Discuss support networks and make students aware of them. With each child at the centre, ask students to draw a circle showing their support networks: family, friends, school friends, sports friends, community friends.
- Model support networks in the classroom by creating a dance routine on this theme that involves all students participating equally.
- Discuss the role of humour in helping Abbas bounce back from his trials. Abbas has an ability to laugh at himself as well as others. Discuss with students how humour can help to dispel tense moments and situations and maintain a sense of perspective.

## **SELF-RELIANCE**

It may seem ironic that self-reliance is as important as trust to Abbas's survival. But consider the traditional Australian ideal of mateship. In fact, the best mate is someone who can take care of himself in difficult situations (such as pioneer times, war etc). It's hard to put your trust in someone who can't even look after themselves! Self-reliance breeds the mutual respect that can lead to friendship and trust.

The author has said:

The essence of *On Two Feet and Wings* is that a person who only has positive thoughts, has tenacity and thinks well of people can achieve anything. The beauty of Abbas's situation was that his biggest weakness was also his biggest strength – his age and his naivety. He never considered the option of failure, of not obtaining his visa. He only did things that were positive for a person in his situation – why? Because he was not sophisticated enough to understand the real gravity of his situation. Once Abbas got over his loneliness, he was set to win – not because he was extraordinary, but because he always thought and acted positively. He gave himself routine/s, he gave himself chores, he got himself jobs, he genuinely believed he was going to achieve his goals. He did not have the same level of cynicism about people that adults do; and that care and love that he showed to people ultimately worked for him. There is something to be said about this type of attitude as that is something that I carry with me today. The only difference is that now I try and do it consciously; back then it was unconscious

- Discuss the value of always being positive. Are there any downsides to adopting this attitude?

## **BELONGING**

- Why do students think Abbas has this response to England: 'I already felt a sense of belonging to a country I had not set foot on'? (p.219)? Discuss the concept of belonging as a human need.

## SELF-INTEREST AND COMPASSION

- How does Abbas feel on meeting his cousin Mehdi? Why might Mehdi resent Abbas's arrival? Compare Mehdi's response to Kate's.
- Compare the behaviour and motivations of the Istanbul taxi driver, Ahmed, and the hotel manager, Murat.

## THE VALUE OF SHARING STORIES

Read the Afterword and discuss the author's motivation for writing his story, including: 'I wanted to commemorate all those Iranians who lost and endured so much during those troubled years in the early 1980s. I am honoured each time someone reads this book, because it means they will learn of the hardships so many were forced to face, particularly those who dared to oppose the new regime. Because there were many stories like mine, and by no means was my tale the hardest or the most tragic.'

- Why is it valuable to hear other people's stories?
- Despite this tale of hardship, does this memoir end on a positive note?

## RESOURCES AND FURTHER READING

### WEBSITES

- United Nations: [www.un.org/en](http://www.un.org/en)
- United Nations Refugee Agency: [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)
- Amnesty International: [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)
- Human Rights Watch: [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org)
- War Child: [www.warchild.org.au](http://www.warchild.org.au)
- Refugee Council of Australia: [www.refugeecouncil.org.au](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au)
- Save the Children: [www.savethechildren.org](http://www.savethechildren.org)
- Oxfam: [www.oxfam.org.au](http://www.oxfam.org.au)

### NOVELS ABOUT WAR, MIGRATION AND REFUGEES

NB: Some of these novels are for older readers and contain mature content and/or references. It is recommended that they be read first for contextual understanding, before being used in the classroom or adopted as classroom texts.

Books by Deborah Ellis:

The Parvana trilogy--set in Afghanistan:

*Parvana* (Allen & Unwin)

*Parvana's Journey* (Allen & Unwin)

*Shauzia* (Allen & Unwin)

*Children of War*--true stories of Iraqi children (Allen & Unwin)

*No Safe Place*--from Iraq to England (Allen & Unwin)

*Diego's Pride*--set in Bolivia (Allen & Unwin)

*Diego! Run*--set in Bolivia (Allen & Unwin)  
*The Best Day of My Life*--set in India (Allen & Unwin)  
*The Heaven Shop*--set in Malawi (Allen & Unwin)  
*Three Wishes*--the voices of Palestinian and Israeli children (Allen & Unwin)

*Mahtab's Journey* by Libby Gleeson--set in Afghanistan (Allen & Unwin)  
*Jameela* by Rukhsana Khan--set in Afghanistan (Allen & Unwin)  
*Shadow* by Michael Morpurgo--set in Afghanistan and England (HarperCollins)  
*Boy Overboard* by Morris Gleitzman--set in Afghanistan and Australia (Penguin)  
*Girl Underground* by Morris Gleitzman--set in Afghanistan and Australia (Penguin)  
*Walk in My Shoes* by Alwyn Evans--set in Afghanistan and Australia (Penguin)  
*The Ink Bridge* by Neil Grant--set in Afghanistan and Australia (Allen & Unwin)  
*The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini--set in Afghanistan (Allen & Unwin)  
*Under the Persimmon Tree* by Suzanne Fisher Staples--set in Afghanistan and Pakistan (Walker Books)  
*Daughter of the Wind* by Suzanne Fisher Staples--set in Pakistan (Walker Books)  
*Kiss the Dust* by Elizabeth Laird--set in Iraq (Pan Macmillan)  
*A Little Piece of Ground* by Elizabeth Laird--set in Palestine (Pan Macmillan)  
*A Long Walk to Water* by Linda Sue Park--set in Sudan, based on the true story of the 'Lost Boys' (UQP)  
*No Gun for Asmir* by Christobel Mattingley--set in Sarajevo (Penguin)  
*The Weight of Water* by Sarah Crossan--a Polish girl's verse novel about migration to England (Bloomsbury)  
*Once, Then and Now* by Morris Gleitzman--set in Nazi Germany (Penguin)  
*The Book Thief* by Marcus Zusak--set in Nazi Germany (Pan Macmillan)  
*The Arrival* by Shaun Tan (Hachette)

## VISUAL TEXTS

Photographs are visual narratives--a picture 'is worth a thousand words'. With high school students, you may wish to source the following images from the Internet and then discuss the image, the frame, the text and the context of these three internationally famous, award-winning images from photojournalism. NB: Some students will find these images confronting.

- Huynh Cong Ut also known as Nick Ut, 'Burning Alive' image of Kim Phuc, Trang Bang, Vietnam, 1972
- Annie Leibovitz, 'Bloody Bicycle', Sarajevo, 1993
- Carolyn Cole, 'War Underfoot', Monrovia, Liberia, 2005

Discuss with students--Is what is outside the frame just as important as what is in the frame?

## **ABOUT THE WRITERS**

### **ABBAS KAZEROONI**

Abbas Kazerooni is now a grown man and a lawyer in California, USA, who is also a professional actor, writer and producer. *On Two Feets and Wings* is his first book.

Abbas was born in Tehran, Iran, on March 21, 1978, just after the Iranian Revolution. He was the only child of his father's fifth marriage. His father was far older than his mother. Abbas lived in Tehran in a lower-middle-class family. His family had been part of the super-rich upper class prior to the revolution; a lifestyle he never experienced. Due to political and unforeseen circumstances, Abbas was sent away from Iran, without his parents, at the age of seven.

Abbas ultimately grew up in the United Kingdom. Abbas attended King's School Worcester, a prestigious boarding school. He later attended the University of Plymouth, where he studied English Literature with Theatre and Performance. After university, Abbas studied classical acting at the London Academy of Performing Arts. He performed as a professional actor in theatre, television and film in the UK and in the US. His credits include leads in *The Land of Green Ginger* for BBC Radio 4 and *Sleuth* at Greenwich Theatre, and a supporting role on HBO's *The Hamburg Cell*.

Later Abbas attended California Western School of Law in San Diego, CA. He then was one of the founding partners of Kazerouni Law Group, APC, where Abbas practices in the area of consumer rights and class actions. Abbas mainly represents consumers in suing banks, credit card companies and debt collectors.

In his spare time Abbas loves to write both novels and screenplays.

### **LEONIE MANNERS**

Leonie Manners has an English and History teaching background and worked in the area of upper primary and lower secondary children's literature for many years with Scholastic Book Clubs. She has now returned to teaching, where she passes on her passion for reading.