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# My name is not Refugee



## TEACHERS' TOOLKIT

Using My name is not Refugee by Kate Milner  
in the Classroom



The award-winning picture book **My name is not Refugee** by Kate Milner follows one little boy's journey with his mother from their home in an unspecified war-torn country to a safe haven far away. It tackles the uncertainty, worry, exhaustion and boredom of life for refugee children and celebrates the bond between parent and child. Many spreads include direct questions for the reader, encouraging empathy and reflection – what would you do if this happened to you?

This resource is designed to build on the questions in the book and to provide inspiration for work around the text and its themes in the classroom. It is designed for KS1 or lower KS2 children.

We hope you enjoy exploring this powerful and thought-provoking book with your pupils.



# My name is not Refugee



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# My name is not Refugee

## PART 1: BACKGROUND

In 2016 the number of people displaced by war and other causes exceeded 50 million for the first time since the Second World War. The issue is firmly in the international spotlight and images of refugees, the dangers they face and the worsening conditions many experience are prevalent in the media.

The Syrian crisis is the fastest-growing refugee crisis in the world at present. Some have termed the displacement of Syrians a 'children's crisis'. Over a million Syrian children had been displaced as of 2016; almost three quarters of these were under 11 years old and significant numbers unaccompanied. Images of refugee children in distress are common and may be particularly frightening or distressing to children.

The refugee crisis threatens to outstrip humanitarian responses and political response has been extremely varied. These factors mean that children may be exposed to highly prejudicial portrayals of refugees and are likely to continue to see fellow human beings in crisis for the foreseeable future.

In this context it is important to explain the refugee crisis to your class or group. These resources aim to help you do so in a structured and positive way, with opportunities to engage even the youngest pupils in action to help.



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## PART 2: USING MY NAME IS NOT REFUGEE TO EXPLORE REFUGE AND ASYLUM

Read the book aloud to your group and share the pictures.

Where there is a question, pause and give the group a chance to answer. Take one or two answers per question and reassure other children who wish to contribute that they will have the chance to do so later.

### DISCUSSION

#### WHAT HAS HAPPENED?

Look at the first spread.

*We have to leave this town, my mother told me, it's not safe for us, she said.*

Why might it be unsafe for a family to stay in their home?

Work together to brainstorm reasons and record these on the board, post-its or similar.

*(Some ideas – war, famine, natural disaster, religious or political oppression.)*

Now look at the spread that says

*We'll say goodbye to our town.  
It will be a bit sad but quite exciting too.*



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Are there any clues on this spread as to what has happened? What do the children think has happened?

*(Some ideas – the smashed windows and doors suggest bombs or other violence and probably war.)*

Look at this sentence again

*It will be a bit sad but quite exciting too.*

Do the group agree that this is how it would feel to leave their own homes? Is the boy's mother telling the truth? If not, why not?

*(Some ideas – the mother may have mixed feelings of sadness at leaving but relief at perhaps going to a safe place instead, the mother may wish to encourage the child to stay positive.)*

Now look at the spread that says

*We'll say have to say goodbye to old friends.  
You can pack your own bag, but remember, only take what you can carry.*

Look at the picture on the left. Is there more than one 'old friend'? Who might the woman be?

Now look at the picture on the right. Is there a 'friend' – or 'friends' here too? What or who is in the picture?

It seems likely that the woman with curly hair is the boy's grandmother or another older family member. Why might an older person not make the journey? How would the group feel if they had to leave older family members behind without being sure they would ever see them again?

Does the group think the boy and his mother could take their cat? How would they feel if they had to leave a pet behind?



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## ACTIVITY

### WHAT WOULD YOU TAKE?

Split children into pairs and give out copies of the sheet **What Would You Take? The Essentials** (p7) to complete. Support and scaffold – for example, if you take a phone, what else do you need to make it work?

When children have finished, bring the whole group together again. Have the following items on a desk:

- a pair of clean children's socks
- a pair of clean children's pants
- a pair of clean children's trousers
- a child's warm coat
- a scarf
- a small towel
- a toothbrush
- toothpaste
- a bar of soap
- sun cream
- a baseball cap
- plasters and a small bottle of antiseptic solution
- a medicine bottle (can be empty)
- a mobile phone
- a charger
- a purse with a few coins
- a refillable water bottle
- some hard sweets

Did the group identify all of these objects as essentials?

Discuss each one and why it is important.

Now pack the items into a small backpack together and let everyone try lifting it. Is it heavy? Is there much space left for non-essential items?

Give everyone their own copy of **What Would You Take? To Remember Home** (p8) to complete.

# WHAT WOULD YOU TAKE?

## THE ESSENTIALS

Draw pictures and write labels



What would you need to keep your body and teeth clean?

--	--

What would you need to keep your skin from burning in hot places?

--	--

--	--

What would you need for fuel as you walk?

--	--

What would you need to buy food and other things?

--

What would you need if you got a blister or a cut or if you got sick?

--	--	--

What would you need to keep in touch with people at home?

--	--

What would you need to keep warm and dry if it rained or snowed?

--	--



# WHAT WOULD YOU TAKE? TO REMEMBER HOME



*Draw pictures of up to three items and write a sentence to explain why you have chosen each item.*

A large, empty rectangular box with a light blue scalloped border, intended for drawing a picture of an item to take home.A large, empty rectangular box with a light blue scalloped border, intended for drawing a picture of an item to take home.A large, empty rectangular box with a light blue scalloped border, intended for drawing pictures of up to three items to take home.



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## ACTIVITY

### MORE QUESTIONS

Split children into pairs or small groups and distribute the sheets (p10–15) which replicate the other questions in **My name is not Refugee**. Children should discuss their answers and record these in word and/or picture.

Support and scaffold, e.g. by asking if they think they could live somewhere with no water in the taps, if so what would they drink? How far have they really ever walked in one go?



Do you think you could live in a place where there is no water in the taps and no one to pick up the rubbish?



How far could you walk?



What games can you think of?



Do you always hold on to an adult's hand  
when you should?



Where would you brush your teeth  
or change your pants?



What's the weirdest food you have ever eaten?





# My name is not Refugee

## DISCUSSION

### REFUGEE IS NOT YOUR NAME

Look at the last spread together.

How do the group understand the text

*You'll be called Refugee,  
but remember  
Refugee is not your name.*

Can they imagine any situations in which a refugee child might be called 'Refugee' negatively? Can they see that a refugee child might lose his or her identity among children with whom he or she can't yet communicate properly?

Share with the group the fact that Article 7 in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is:

**You have the right to have a name and a nationality.**

## ACTIVITY

### CREATE POSTERS WITH THE SLOGAN "TELL ME YOUR NAME SO I CAN WELCOME YOU"

Discuss images of welcome the posters might use, such as outstretched hands, open doors, handshakes, people hugging, smiling faces.

Display the posters together and share on social media if your school has the facility.



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## EXTENSION ACTIVITY 1: CARRYING A REFUGEE'S BURDEN FOR A DAY

Make a rota for children to bring in their three non-essential items on individual days. Each one could pack their items into the rucksack and wear the rucksack for a whole day. Does the rucksack seem to get heavier the longer they wear it?

Use their What Would You Take to Remember Home? sheets, a photo of their items and a photo of each child wearing the backpack to create a display. Include short pieces of writing about what children have learned about refugees' experience.

## EXTENSION ACTIVITY 2: WELCOME TO OUR TOWN

Find a charity that helps refugees in the UK, either nationally or in your local area. Hold a school appeal to gather items for refugee children and donate these. Most charities issue guidance on useful and less useful items.

## EXTENSION ACTIVITY 3: REFUGEE CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUR LIFE

Gather together books by children's authors and illustrators who were refugees and share these. Create displays about the creators' life histories and the books you have read.



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### PART 3: USING MY NAME IS NOT REFUGEE TO DEVELOP EMPATHY

Also uses *Wolfman* by Michael Rosen and Chris Mould

Read **My name is not Refugee** aloud to your group and share the pictures. Omit the questions in the blue boxes for this reading to focus attention on the little boy.

## DISCUSSION

### FIND THE FEELINGS

Ask the group to think how they might feel on a long, long journey like this one. Ensure that they understand that many refugees make journeys over many weeks or months, and even years in some cases.

Make a note of the feelings they suggest on the board. Support them to think deeply and to think of strong descriptions of feelings – tired is good, and so is exhausted, which means very, very tired indeed.

Now look through the book again and find pictures in which the group thinks the little boy is feeling the feelings they have suggested.

*(Some ideas for feelings to include – bored, excited, interested, nervous, afraid, hopeful, confused, unhappy, tired, exhausted.)*



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## ACTIVITY

### IT WILL BE ALL RIGHT, LITTLE ONE

Choose one of the pictures in which the boy is bored or unhappy.

What would the group say to encourage him? If you like, you can use our speech bubble template (p11-16 in this resource) to record the group's ideas.

## DISCUSSION

### FEAR OR DISLIKE OF DIFFERENCE

Open the book at the last spread. Look at the pictures and read the text,

*And soon those strange words  
will start to make sense.*

*You'll be called Refugee  
but remember  
Refugee is not your name.*

The little girl appears to be befriending the boy.

How do the group think the other children are responding to the boy? Are they being friendly? Unfriendly? Something else?



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How do the group think this group of children may make the boy feel?

Discuss how the image relates to this section of the text

*You'll be called Refugee  
but remember  
Refugee is not your name.*

Could the children be using the word 'refugee' in a negative way?

Discuss the fact that some people fear people who are different, or treat them badly because they are different. What does the group think of this?

Share **Wolfman** by Michael Rosen and Chris Mould with the group. Before you begin tell them that you want them to be on the lookout for a message that people fear those who are different, in most cases with little or no reason.

Can the group find evidence that Wolfman is not so dangerous as the people of the town think?

## DISCUSSION

### CAN STORIES MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE?

Ask the group to reflect again on the fact that some refugees may suffer bad treatment. Some may not be able to access help. This may be because of fear, or prejudice, or a lack of understanding about the situation they are in.

Does the fact the group has read **My name is not Refugee** help them understand why refugees leave their homes and what refugees go through?

Does this help the group decide whether stories can make the world a better place?



## PART 4: DEVELOPING VISUAL LITERACY WITH MY NAME IS NOT REFUGEE

If you can, give each child the chance to look at **My name is not Refugee** alone before you share it with the group.

No matter the age of your pupils, read the book aloud to the group and share the pictures.

Before you read, explain that the text includes questions. Ask the group to think about the questions quietly and not to answer out loud or put up their hands.

Give an uninterrupted read without making comments.

### FIRST LOOK, FIRST RESPONSE

Ask the group to comment on the style of the artwork in general.

Chat in the group about whether pupils enjoyed **My name is not Refugee**. What did they like and dislike, and why?

Some picture books are made for very young children – board books and counting books, for example. Some can be read by people of any age. What age(s) does the group think **My name is not Refugee** is suitable for, and why?

Record the group's responses.



## LOOK AGAIN, LOOK IN DEPTH

Return to the book to explore it more closely, working together or in smaller groups where multiple copies are available. Try these discussion ideas.

- The story is told in words and pictures. The background is plain. What does the plain background add to the book?

*(Some ideas – the background could be said to focus attention on the figures and therefore the human drama, the background could be said to remove the book from any firm context e.g. of the Middle East, thereby making it more universal.)*

- Each double page in a picture book is called a ‘spread’. In some spreads in **My name is not Refugee** the white background dominates. Some have less background visible because there is more detail shown of the setting. What is the effect of the different approaches?

*(Some ideas – the spreads with more detail are ‘busier’ and communicate a crowded or noisy setting, the white space is used to convey boredom, in the spread in which the mother and child finally find safety the white background is replaced by a blue colour which might be called a ‘blanket’.)*

- Look at the way colour is used in the book. Is it full-colour, or limited palette (i.e. uses a smaller set of colours)? Does the group like this approach?
- Look closely at the artwork. Can the group tell how it was created? Kate Milner draws in pencil, then scans the artwork into the computer and colours it digitally. Can the children see the pencil lines, and how ‘flat’ the colour is?
- The mother and the boy’s skin is not coloured in. The boy’s clothes look very like the clothes a child in the UK might wear. Mum’s clothes look like she might be from the Middle East, or from the UK. Kate Milner made these choices on purpose. Can the group think of any message that this gives?

*(An idea – does Kate Milner wish to suggest that anyone could become a refugee, not just people outside the UK?)*



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## ART ACTIVITY

Try using Kate Milner's techniques. Scan pencil portraits into an art programme on a computer. Add areas of flat colour and change the colour of some of the lines.





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### PART 5: ABOUT KATE MILNER

Kate Milner studied illustration at Central St Martin's School of Art and her work was published in magazines and shown in London galleries and national touring exhibitions. After a number of years raising her family and working as a librarian, Kate returned to illustration through a place on the MA at Cambridge School of Art at Anglia Ruskin University. **My name is not Refugee** began as a self-driven personal project while in the last year of her degree.

**My name is not Refugee** was inspired by Kate's daughter beginning a career as a teacher and by Kate's own experience as a political campaigner. The brief she set herself was to address all the complexities of the European migrant crisis for a young but inquisitive audience.

The book won a V&A Illustration Award in 2016. The judges said, 'Despite its grave subject matter, it is illustrated with a cheerful anarchic quality that shows Milner's indebtedness to the great illustrators of the past including Gerald Scarfe, Ralph Steadman and Ronald Searle.' The judges praised Kate's pencil and ink sketch-work with post-editing and colouring in Photoshop, her 'expressive characters' and her 'most delicate use of line, shape and colour palette'.

Recently Kate established the Twitter account @ABagForKatie, inspired by the film *I, Daniel Blake*. The account is a campaign to provide sanitary products for women using food banks.

Find out more about Kate and the events she can offer in schools at [www.katemilner.com](http://www.katemilner.com).



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# PART 6

CHILDREN'S AUTHORS AND ILLUSTRATORS  
WHO WERE REFUGEES



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## FACTSHEET: JUDITH KERR

**Judith Kerr** is an author and illustrator. She is the creator of *The Tiger Who Came to Tea*, the Mog stories and many more picture books.

Judith was born in Berlin in Germany. In 1933 the Nazis came to power and Judith's father heard that his passport was about to be taken away because he had been critical of the Nazis and Hitler. He left right away and Judith, her mother and her brother followed soon after. First they went to Switzerland and then to the UK.

Judith's novel *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* is based on the things that happened to her as her family fled Germany.

Books to explore:

*The Tiger Who Came to Tea* by Judith Kerr

*Mog the Forgetful Cat* by Judith Kerr



## FACTSHEET: VICTOR AMBRUS

**Victor Ambrus** is an illustrator who has worked on a great many books. He has won the Kate Greenaway Medal twice. This is the UK's major prize for children's book illustrators. Victor also appeared on the TV series *Time Team*, where he visited archaeological digs and drew the sites as they might have looked long ago.

Victor was born in Budapest in Hungary. In 1956 the Soviets invaded Hungary. Victor was at art school at the time and he and other art students tried to defend the building from the invading army. A number of pupils lost their lives. Victor fled the country and came to the UK.

Books to explore:

*Henry Pond the Poet* by Dick King-Smith, illustrated by Victor Ambrus

*The Rats of Meadowsweet Farm* by Dick King-Smith, illustrated by Victor Ambrus



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## FACTSHEET: EVA IBBOTSON

**Eva Ibbotson** wrote over 20 books for children and young adults. She won the Nestle Smarties Book Prize in 2001.

Eva was born in 1925 in Vienna in Austria. Her family was Jewish although they were not religious.

When Eva was 7 the family left Vienna for the UK. Soon after Germany invaded Austria and a great many Jews lost their homes and possessions or died under Nazi rule.

Eva's son said that Eva was very affected by events in Austria. She and her family escaped before the Nazis but they knew many people who suffered under Nazi rule.

Books to explore:

*One Dog and His Boy* by Eva Ibbotson  
(most of Ibbotson's other books are for older children)