

Community Picnic Welcoming Refugees  
Castlemaine Botanical Gardens 21 March 2020 from 11.30 onwards.  
Everyone is invited!

# Talking about Refugees

## Conversation Starters

**Story time:** refugee experience through literature (2 suggestions)

For juniors:

**Irena Kobald & Freya Blackwood *My Two Blankets***

Winner of the Australian Children's Book of the Year Awards, the story is written from the point of view of Cartwheel, a child migrant who "came to Australia to be safe" and who is befriended by a local girl who "brought some words" helping her to learn English and to settle into her new home. Highly recommended for any school library, but if you don't have a copy there are numerous readings of this book on YouTube (Careful the quality varies!) Here is one example

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LaXHbW7y8a4>

(PS: For those of you interested in introducing ideas of symbolism, metaphor and simile in writing, this book is rich in these.)

For 9-11 year olds:

**Onjali Q. Rauf *The Boy At the Back of the Class***

Nine year old Ahmet is a refugee "who's run away from a War. A real one. With bombs and fires and bullies that hurt people." This is a book about how small deeds can make a difference. The emphasis on kindness and a happy ending makes it classroom friendly.

### Building empathy

- **Words of welcome**

Have the children design posters, postcards, decorate boxes or invent logos with words of welcome for newcomers from other lands. Design a poster for the Community Picnic Welcoming Refugees on from 11.30 Saturday, 21 March 2020 in the Castlemaine Botanic Gardens

These could be displayed at your school, in the community or at our **Picnic Welcoming Refugees and Asylum Seekers** on Saturday, 21 March 2020 in the Castlemaine Botanic Gardens. Contact Gail Reynolds ([greyndrop@gmail.com](mailto:greyndrop@gmail.com)) for display at the picnic.

Last Welcome Picnic many children coloured in and decorated the word welcome in many languages and this is another way of opening conversations. I will attach the images with this email. This activity is suitable for Prep to 6.

---

Prepared in support of the Community Picnic Welcoming Refugees (21 March 2020). A project of the Harcourt Uniting Church, supported by Rural Australians for Refugees Castlemaine, Chewton Phoenix CWA and Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services. We gratefully acknowledge funding from Maldon & District Community Bank and Mount Alexander Shire.  
Schools contact: Gail Reynolds [greyndrop@gmail.com](mailto:greyndrop@gmail.com)

## Community Picnic Welcoming Refugees

Castlemaine Botanical Gardens 21 March 2020 from 11.30 onwards.

Everyone is invited!

- **Cooking**

A quick search on the Internet will produce many recipes which originate from countries like Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia (etc.) which are suitable for school children to make. Discussions about the similarities between their own food and what they have cooked, focus on how we are alike rather than how we are different.

- **The Virtual Suitcase (For older children)**

Have the children draw or construct a (virtual) suitcase and list or illustrate the things they would put in one case if they were forced to leave home in a hurry as so many of our refugees have had to do.

Discuss the choices children will have made (expect them to have included their preferred toys, phones, computers or Tablets and other non-essential material possessions).

Now get them to prepare another suitcase which focuses on survival. Ask them to work in groups to develop a new list of inclusions. Emphasise that they will have to be able to carry the case themselves for long distances. Get them to think about survival without ready access to electricity. (Please be sensitive to any child who may have been forced to flee at any point.)

- **Mapping Journeys (Seniors)**

Students could investigate the journeys refugees have made and mark them onto a world map. Many of these journeys would be from homelands to refugee camp/s to settlement in various countries, and perhaps later to family reunions.

Students may also look at the conditions in refugee camps and develop poems or other pieces of writing, posters or their own short graphic novel around this theme.

**Warning: There are many stories of refugee journeys on the Internet, some are horrific and may not be suitable for Primary students.**

- **A refugee's journey: A Writing Exercise**

Once students have completed some research they could write either an imaginative or an expository recount of the journey of a refugee (in full or in part). E.g. What was it like to flee for your life? How was it to walk across a desert with limited food and water? How did you feel crowded into a leaky boat? What did you see/feel/experience? (These could also be expressed as an answer to "How did your character...")

You as teachers will of course have your own ideas. Please feel free to change or adapt any of my activity suggestions. It is our hope that you will open the conversation with your students so we can build the welcome for people seeking asylum and for refugees.

*Gail Reynolds*