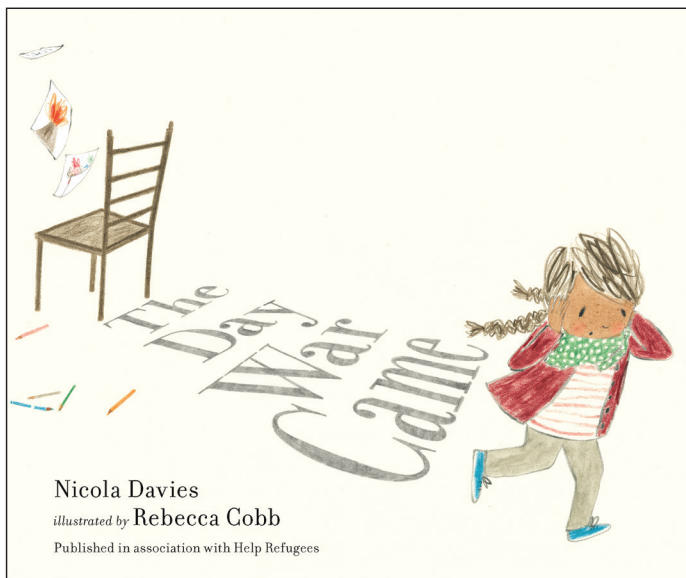


*The day war came there were flowers on the windowsill and  
my father sang my baby brother back to sleep.*

# The Day War Came

by Nicola Davies illustrated by Rebecca Cobb

Published in association with Help Refugees



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Ages 6-9



## Common Core Connections

This discussion guide, which can be used with large or small groups, will help students meet several of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts. These include the reading literature standards for key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL), as well as the speaking and listening standards for comprehension and collaboration and for presentation of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL). In addition, this guide can help students meet National Council for the Social Studies standards along the themes of People, Places, and Environments; Global Connections; Civic Ideals and Practices; and other themes. Questions can also be used in writing prompts for independent work.

## About the Book

Imagine if, on an ordinary day, after a morning of studying tadpoles and drawing birds at school, war came to your town and turned it to rubble. Imagine if you lost everything and everyone and you had to make a dangerous journey all alone. Imagine that there was no welcome at the end and no room for you to even take a seat at school. And then a child, just like you, gave you something ordinary but so very, very precious. In lyrical, deeply affecting language, Nicola Davies's text combines with Rebecca Cobb's expressive illustrations to evoke the experience of a child who sees war take away all that she knows.

## Preparing for a Discussion

Children know there is war in the world whether they have directly experienced it or not. This book and discussion may cause children to express anxiety about war or violence. Consider working as a team within your school or program community to address any big feelings that may arise. The active role children in the book play in welcoming the main character after her ordeal should help demonstrate the power of empathy and kindness to assuage anxiety and fear.

If you have war refugees in your classroom or program, it is especially important for you to be prepared for them to revisit their trauma. Grief experts caution us against asking refugees direct questions in a classroom or other public setting about their experiences.

# Discussion Questions

## Before and After War

1. Revisit the first spread of the book, with the girl's family at the breakfast table. What can you tell about the girl's life from this picture? How is her morning like your morning before a school day? How is it different?
2. Look at the second spread, where the girl talks about what she did in class that morning. Describe the girl's school day. Have you done any of the things she does in school? Are there things in the illustration that foreshadow what is about to happen?
3. Looking at the same spread, why do you think the illustrator chose to line up the children's volcano pictures along the window? How is war like a volcano? How is it different?
4. "At first, just like a spattering of hail, a voice of thunder . . . then all smoke and fire and noise that I didn't understand." As the blackness moves across the page, what is pushed back and off the page? What do you think this means?
5. Blackness fills the next page: "It came across the playground. It came into my teacher's face." Why does the girl call what is happening "It"? When do you use the word *it*?
6. Why does the girl say, "I can't say the words that tell you about the blackened hole that had been my home"? Why are words not enough? What words express how you are feeling about the pages during and after war comes? It is OK to feel scared, anxious, numb, angry, confused, or anything else right now. *Suggestion for Teachers: Take time out of the discussion for children to write or draw about their feelings.*
7. The girl says, "War took everything. War took everyone." What did the war *not* take?
8. When something terrible happens, there are always people who will help. In your community, this includes groups like firefighters and ambulance workers. In Syria, where bombs explode daily, a group called the White Helmets rushes to the sites of bombings and rescues people from the rubble. They have saved more than one hundred thousand people so far. Can you think of other examples of helpers in your community? What are some ways you can show groups like this that you care about the work they do?

## The Journey

1. The girl may have lost everyone she knows, but is she alone on her journey? Who else is with her on the road? Why do you think the illustrator drew most of them so that you can't see their faces?
2. Imagine the strength it must take the girl to run, to walk, to ride in crowded vehicles and on a leaking boat. Imagine that the girl was from Aleppo, Syria, and fled to Adana, Turkey, to Kusadasi, Turkey, and then across the Aegean Sea to Samos, Greece. Find these locations on a map and trace her route. How many miles could she have covered? Have you ever traveled that far? What would it feel like to travel alone?
3. When the girl reaches the row of huts, it seems like she has reached safety at last. "But," she says, "war had followed me. It was underneath my skin, behind my eyes." Is the war actually "underneath her skin"? Why does she choose to describe it that way?
4. Can anyone walk to a place that war does not reach? Or do the effects of war reach everywhere in the world? Could you have friends or neighbors who were affected by war?
5. When the girl walks through the town, the people there shut their doors and turn away from her. How is shutting doors and turning away like war?
6. Volunteers and aid groups often help refugees on their journeys. What help could the girl have used from volunteers and groups along her journey?



### The Arrival

1. What does the girl recognize in the schoolroom? Turn back to the picture of her school at home and compare the classrooms.
2. What reason did the teacher give for not letting the girl into the classroom? Do you think there could have been other reasons? Think about your own school. Can a kid walk in and start school without a parent or guardian? Was the teacher just following the rules? What would you have done if you were the teacher?
3. When the girl goes back to the hut, the page is very dark. Why do you think the illustrator chose to do that? What other page does this page remind you of?
4. When the boy opens the door of the hut, why does the dark color retreat? Is it just sunlight, or is the illustrator giving the light another meaning?
5. Why does the boy choose to bring a chair?
6. Why will learning, singing, and drawing “drive the war” out of the girl’s heart? Can you think of a time when you were very sad and doing something made the sadness better?
7. As the girl and boy walk along the road, why is it lined with chairs? How do they push back the war with every step? Is this what welcoming looks like?

### Refugees and Welcoming

1. The book is dedicated to “children who are lost and alone, and to those who help them.” Have you ever felt lost and alone? Who helped you? Have you ever helped someone else who felt this way?
2. What is the story of how your family came to live where you live? If your family is not native to this country, do you ever talk with them about how and when they came here? Can you make a list of reasons people might leave their home countries to live in the United States?
3. In 2016, the United Kingdom refused to welcome three thousand children who had no families—children just like the girl in the book. The United States continues to lower the number of refugees it will accept into the country. There is no war in the United Kingdom or the United States, but the girl might say the war has gotten to these places, too. Do you think so? Is it like war to not help?
4. A small percentage of the world’s refugees come to the United States. Some come directly from their home country, but many have taken journeys and lived in camps before they board planes for the United States. When refugees arrive, they need many things to begin their lives again, but they especially need your welcoming, kindness, and empathy. How can you welcome someone? Who helps refugees in your town or state? Are there ways that you can help them?

## Activities

1. This book was written in partnership with Help Refugees, a charity that supports projects aiding refugees worldwide. Why do you think their main campaign is called “Choose Love”? Write or draw what “Choose Love” means to you after reading this book. You can also ask an adult to share your idea with the world using the hashtag #ChooseLove.
2. Read the author’s note at the end of the book. Why do you think they used the number three thousand in the hashtag for the chair images? Create a picture of a chair to add to the growing collection online. You can ask an adult to share your idea with the world using the hashtag #3000chairs.



## Resources to Teach About Refugees

“Teaching About Refugees” from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
[www.unhcr.org/en-us/teaching-about-refugees.html](http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/teaching-about-refugees.html)

“Teaching About the Syrian Refugee Crisis” from IAmSyria.org  
[www.iamsyria.org/teaching-about-the-refugee-crisis-and-making-a-difference.html](http://www.iamsyria.org/teaching-about-the-refugee-crisis-and-making-a-difference.html)

## Occasions to Share the Book

Welcoming Week (September)

World Refugee Day (June 20)



### About the Author

**Nicola Davies** is a zoologist and award-winning author whose numerous books for children include *King of the Sky* and *The Promise*, both illustrated by Laura Carlin; *Many: The Diversity of Life on Earth* and *Tiny Creatures: The World of Microbes*, both illustrated by Emily Sutton; and many others. She lives in Wales.



### About the Illustrator

**Rebecca Cobb** has illustrated several picture books, including *The Paper Dolls* by Julia Donaldson. She has been short-listed for the Kate Greenaway Medal twice. She lives in England.

### About Help Refugees

**Help Refugees** is a grassroots charity that supports more than seventy projects benefitting refugees worldwide. Learn more at [www.helprefugees.org](http://www.helprefugees.org).

This guide was written by Kirsten Cappy, cofounder of I’m Your Neighbor Books, a project that encourages communities to welcome immigrants, refugees, and migrants as neighbors through the sharing of children’s literature and other stories.