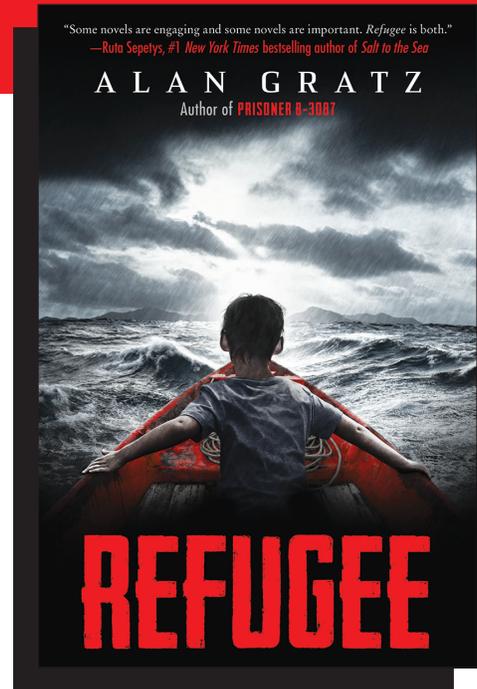


Booktalk!

Refugee Script

For this Book Talk you will need

- 3 actors (Josef, Isabel, Mahmoud)
- Josef: dress pants & dress shirt, sign with “Berlin, Germany – 1938” written on it
- Isabel: tank top, shorts, sign with “Havana, Cuba – 1994” written on it
- Mahmoud: jeans, t-shirt, dark-coloured hoodie (with hood pulled up), sign with “Aleppo, Syria – 2015” written on it
- Additional props: 3 stools, copy of *Refugee*



Josef: Josef Laundau, 12 years old. (*holding up sign that reads Berlin, Germany – 1938*)

Isabel: Isabel Fernandez, 11 years old. (*holding up sign that reads Havana, Cuba – 1994*)

Mahmoud: Mahmoud Bishara, 12 years old. (*holding up sign that reads Aleppo, Syria – 2015*)

Josef: I'll never forget that night. The night Hitler's Brownshirts broke into our flat. (*pausing*) They destroyed our home, broke our furniture & lamps, flung our clothes everywhere, tore down our pictures. (*pausing*) They dragged me out of bed, slapped my sister across the face to get her to stop crying, and threw my mother on the floor. Worst of all, Papa was arrested for being a lawyer... (*pausing*) at a time when being Jewish meant all our rights were being taken away from us. (*pausing*)

Isabel: Life in my home country of Cuba, was beyond terrible...and getting worse every day. (*pausing*) Our sugarcane fields had dried up, sugar refineries had closed down, and people had lost their jobs. (*pausing*) Without the extra food, Cubans were starving. (*pausing*) Fidel Castro, Cuba's president and prime minister, made it impossible for people to leave the country, especially those who wanted to go to the United States – el norte, as we call it. Anyone caught trying to leave for el norte by boat, was thrown in jail. My own papi was arrested the last time he tried to sail to Florida. (*pausing*)

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Booktalk!

- Mahmoud:** To most people I'm invisible...but that's exactly what I want. Being invisible is how I have survived. We all do what we have to, to survive in Aleppo. But it wasn't always like this. Just four years ago, Aleppo was the biggest, brightest, most modern city in all of Syria. But, as life under Bashar al-Assad's command became increasingly unbearable, people felt more and more oppressed. And then the Arab Spring came to Syria. Protesting in the streets was dangerous. Little-by-little Syrians started to rebel. Soon tens of thousands of people poured into the streets, demanding the release of political prisoners and more freedom for everyone. But, within a month, Assad had turned his tanks, soldiers and bombers on the protestors – on his own people – and ever since then, all anyone knew was war.
- Josef:** Mama spent weeks going from one government office to another, trying to find where Papa was and how to get him back. Nobody would tell her anything. I was certain we would never see him again. *(pausing)* But then, six months after Papa had been taken away, we got a telegram from him! The Nazis were releasing him from Dachau...but only on condition that he leave the country within fourteen days.
- Isabel:** And then there was that day on the Malecón – what used to be my favourite place in the whole city... *(pausing)* I remember hearing a woman scream and a pistol firing...and then the world went crazy. *(pausing)* People rushed out of the side streets – hundreds of them – and began yelling and chanting. They threw rocks and bottles. An alarm rang down the street. Smoke was pouring out from behind an apartment building. Havana was rioting, and my father and grandfather were somewhere right in the middle of it. *(pausing)* When I finally found my papi, a policeman was beating him with his nightstick. He raised it to hit my father again so I jumped in between them – anything to make him stop.
- Mahmoud:** And then there was that afternoon... My brother, Waleed, and I had just finished praying and rolling up our mats. Suddenly a roar, like a hot wind rising, grew from a breeze to a tornado: a missile was coming our way. Within seconds, the wall of our apartment had exploded, blasting broken bits of concrete and glass everywhere. There was a storm of bricks and shards of dishes, table legs and heat. I was slammed into a cabinet. Once the noise stopped, I dug my way through debris and wreckage. When I looked around, I realized that the entire outside wall of our apartment was gone.

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Booktalk!

- Josef:** I didn't want to leave. Germany was my home. Where would we go? How would we live? *(pausing)* But this was the second time Nazis had told us to get out of Germany...and our family wasn't going to wait around to see what the Nazis would do next...
- Isabel:** Thankfully Luis, the other policeman – who is the older brother of my friend, Iván – stopped the officer from hitting me with his stick. Papi was lucky...this time. But who knew what the next time would be like? It was in that moment that Papi decided we had no other choice: we had to leave Cuba that night.
- Mahmoud:** My mother came running into the room and, together with my brother and sister, we ran down the back stairs of our building and into the street. Moments later, my father was tearing down the street calling our names. When he got to us, he wrapped us in a huge hug and told us we were going to do what we should have done a long time ago: we were leaving Aleppo. Right away.
- Josef, Isabel & Mahmoud:** *(speaking in unison)* Our lives were about to change forever...
- Josef:** What became of my family?
- Isabel:** Or mine?
- Mahmoud:** Or mine?
- Josef, Isabel & Mahmoud:** *(Isabel holding up copy of Refugee)* Look for *Refugee* at your Scholastic Book Fair – and find out for yourself.