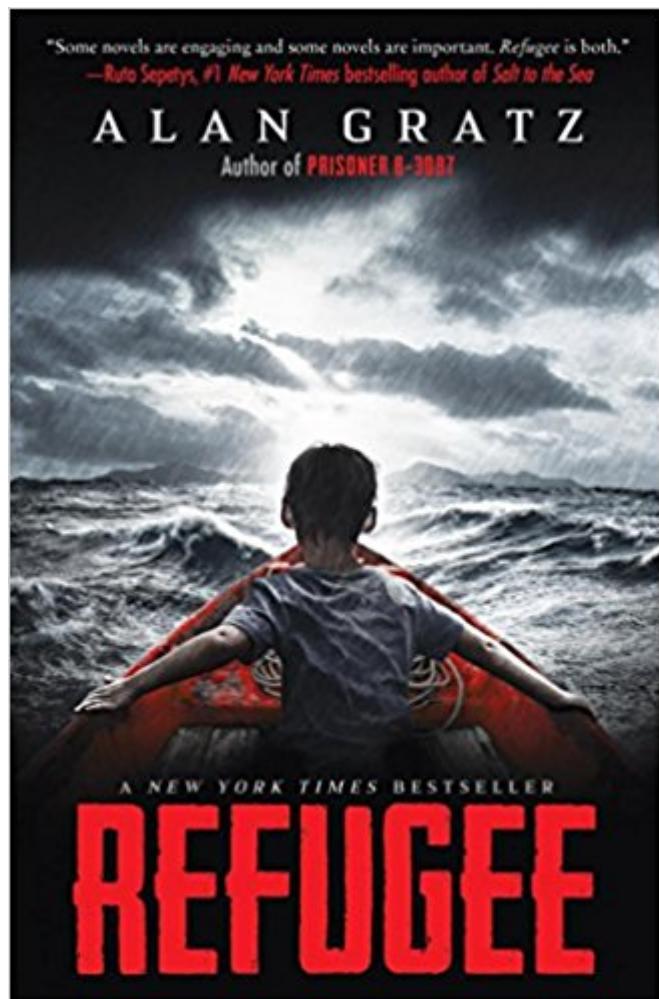


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# Refugee



## **Synopsis**

JOSEF is a Jewish boy living in 1930s Nazi Germany. With the threat of concentration camps looming, he and his family board a ship bound for the other side of the world . . . ISABEL is a Cuban girl in 1994. With riots and unrest plaguing her country, she and her family set out on a raft, hoping to find safety in America . . . MAHMOUD is a Syrian boy in 2015. With his homeland torn apart by violence and destruction, he and his family begin a long trek toward Europe . . . All three kids go on harrowing journeys in search of refuge. All will face unimaginable dangers -- from drownings to bombings to betrayals. But there is always the hope of tomorrow. And although Josef, Isabel, and Mahmoud are separated by continents and decades, shocking connections will tie their stories together in the end. This action-packed novel tackles topics both timely and timeless: courage, survival, and the quest for home.

## **Book Information**

Hardcover: 352 pages

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Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 37 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #727 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #3 in Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > Military & Wars #7 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Fiction #47 in Books > Children's Books > Action & Adventure

Age Range: 9 - 12 years

Grade Level: 4 - 7

## **Customer Reviews**

Praise for Refugee: "Gratz accomplishes a feat that is nothing short of brilliant, offering a skillfully wrought narrative laced with global and intergenerational reverberations that signal hope for the future. . . . Poignant, respectful, and historically accurate while pulsating with emotional turmoil, adventure, and suspense." -- Kirkus Reviews, starred review "[A] hard-hitting novel. . . . Filled with both tragic loss and ample evidence of resilience, these memorable and tightly plotted stories contextualize and give voice to current refugee crises, underscoring that these journeys are born

out of a desperate need for security and safety." -- Publishers Weekly, starred review "Gratz, who is known for well-written and well-researched historical fiction, doesn't disappoint. His latest is timely and moving. . . . This compelling novel will help young people make sense of today's refugee crisis. Meant to be read, discussed, and shared widely." -- School Library Journal "Some novels are engaging and some novels are important. Refugee is both." -- #1 New York Times bestselling author Ruta Sepetys "This heart-stopping novel is not only compelling -- it is necessary." -- Judy Blundell, National Book Award winning author of *What I Saw and How I Lied* "An incredibly important, heartrending, edge-of-the-seat read, bringing light to the plight of immigrants who search for safety and freedom." -- Pam Muñoz Ryan, author of the New York Times bestseller and Newbery Honor Book *Echo* "With urgent, clear-eyed storytelling, Gratz's *Refugee* compellingly explores the desperation and strength that unites those struggling for a place to call home." -- Eliot Schrefer, New York Times bestselling author and two-time National Book Award finalist of *Rescued* and *Endangered* "Full of struggle, heroism, and non-stop adventure, *Refugee* is not only an important book, it's a terrific story." -- Kimberly Brubaker Bradley, author of the New York Times bestseller and Newbery Honor Book *The War That Saved My Life* "Powerful and compelling. *Refugee* is a story about what unites us all." -- Christina Diaz Gonzalez, award-winning author of *Moving Target* Praise for *Projekt 1065*:\* "While the book is replete with fascinating historical insight, Gratz has also crafted a suspenseful mystery that will keep readers on the edge of their seats. With short, action-packed chapters, it is a great choice for reluctant readers as well... A winning combination of action, suspense, and historical setting." -- School Library Journal, starred review\* "A rare insider's glimpse into the Hitler Youth: animated, well-researched, and thought-provoking." -- Kirkus Reviews, starred review "[A] high-action spy thriller." -- Booklist Praise for *Prisoner B-3087*: A Junior Library Guild Selection Golden Sower Award, 2014-2015 Winner Nebraskalinglass Teen Read Award, 2014-2015 Winner New Hampshire Pennsylvania Young Readers' Choice Award, 2014-2015 Winner Pennsylvania Junior Book Award, 2015-2016 Winner South Carolina Grand Canyon Reader Award, 2015-2016 Winner Arizona Truman Readers Award, 2015-2016 Winner Missouri Readers Choice Awards, Winner 2015-2016 Virginia Volunteer State Book Award Winner, 2015-2016 Tennessee "A powerful story, well told." -- School Library Journal "A bone-chilling tale not to be ignored." -- Kirkus Reviews "[A] remarkable survival story." -- Booklist "Gratz ably conveys . . . fatalism, yearning, and determination in the face of the unimaginable." -- Publishers Weekly "Heartbreaking, gripping, raw, and emotional . . . storytelling at its finest." -- VOYA Praise for *Code of Honor*: "Readers will be swept up by both the intrigue and the rapid pacing... Kamran is a smart and sympathetic narrator, and readers will be happy to spend time with him in this

action-packed thriller." -- Kirkus Reviews "Exciting, at times ripped from the headlines, and scary, this cinematic work has layers of intrigue and danger in each scene... will appeal to a variety of readers and will raise questions about patriotism, loyalty, and trust... A winner." -- School Library Journal "Vivid characters and timely topics, such as posttraumatic stress disorder, contribute to making *Code of Honor* a first-rate novel." -- VOYA

Alan Gratz is the acclaimed author of several books for young readers, including *Refugee*; *Projekt 1065*, a Kirkus Reviews Best Book of 2016; *Prisoner B-3087*, a Junior Library Guild selection that was named to YALSA's 2014 Best Fiction for Young Adults list; *Code of Honor*, a YALSA 2016 Quick Pick; and *The Brooklyn Nine*, which was among Booklist's Top Ten Historical Books. Alan lives in North Carolina with his wife and daughter. Look for him online at [alangratz.com](http://alangratz.com).

Based on real stories, real characters in history and of today, Alan Gratz alternates telling the tragic tales of three times in history when refugees were in frantic need of escaping their homes. There is JOSEF, a Jewish boy living in 1930s Nazi Germany. Hitler has given the ultimatum to Jews that they must leave Germany or be taken to concentration camps. They have fourteen days. He and his family board a ship named the St. Louis, bound for Cuba. And there is ISABEL a Cuban girl in 1994. In the midst of riots and her father heading for arrest, Castro has said that those who leave will not be arrested. She and her family set out on a cobbled together boat, hoping to find safety in America. Finally, there is MAHMOUD, a Syrian boy in 2015. With his homeland torn apart by violence and destruction, he and his family begin a long trek toward Europe. All of us have heard parts of these stories, but when written from the viewpoints of early adolescents, sadness almost overwhelms me. How can others find the cruelty to treat children this way? How can it be that children must endure such terrible experiences in their young lives? Alan respects the children's feelings in his storytelling, but shows how they learn to take charge, how they learn they must take charge to help. They give up their childhood to help save their families. There is hope in every part; even in the darkest passages, small kindnesses appear. Learning of children's lives in all parts of our world is something that will help readers gain sympathy for those who need help. Alan Gratz wrote a long afterword about his research for each time period, and ways we can help today.

Great stories that bring to life real struggles , making one realize how lucky we are to be born into safety.

From the perspective of reading difficulty, "Refugee" is an easy-to-read book. However from a human perspective, Alan Gratz' latest novel is a difficult, heart-breaking volume. Focusing on three children, each separated from the preceding individual by decades and from different parts of the world, this book depicts the horror of war and its effects on the lives of innocent children. Josef, a German Jew, experiences the brutality of Hitler's madness when his father is imprisoned and then released, a broken man. Seeking to escape Germany and find refuge in another country, Josef's family begins their journey on the St. Louis, a ship bound for Cuba. Fifty-six years years later, Isabel and her family begin their own desperate sea journey to escape the brutality of Castro's regime; her father has also been imprisoned and released. Only 21-years later, Mahmoud and his family seek sanctuary in Germany as they flee the Syrian war and Assad's dictatorship. Formatted using chapters that move from Josef to Isabel to Mahmoud and then repeating the sequence, "Refugee" emphasizes the similarities and the effects of war and dictators on the lives of children. Despite their different cultures and countries, each child's story connects to the others. Alan Gratz gives each child and each family member distinct personalities and roles in "Refugee". Each character represents some aspect of the effect of war and oppression on individuals; each one brings a different dimension to the story. Further, the interconnection between individuals and their actions throughout the span of the book's narrative provides some surprising revelations. "Refugee" is an important book for young readers - and for their parents. While the book speaks of horrific events and actions, it never becomes graphic or inappropriate. The emotional impact of "Refugee" is immense. Targeted at ages 9 to 12 years old, the book may be read by children a bit younger as long as a parent is comfortable with having the child read about the events being depicted.

Every once and while a book comes along and you just know that this is one everyone should read. The author has created a compelling look at refugees throughout history and done it in a way that young readers will find compelling. Not an easy feat! As an adult reader, I was thoroughly blown away by the similarities between the three stories the author features. Given the current political climate, this book resonated with me in a totally unexpected way. Each young person's story is delivered in a way that is guaranteed to keep readers on the edge of their seats as each child faces death not only for themselves but also their family members. Their experiences are disturbing and the author's storytelling so vivid that it really shows the horror of war and the power of political oppression through the eyes of a child. The author deftly weaves the stories together, periodically switching between the three in a way that seems totally natural. The narrative flows well and the

suspense runs high. The publisher marks this book for the 9-12 age group. It is written in the appropriate style for this group, however I would be cautious about giving this to students at the younger end of this range simply due to the subject matter. The violence is real and the peril is vivid. This is an excellent read that every young person should experience. It is sure to prompt discussion and is an enthusiastic recommend.

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