

Welcoming

Words

STORIES OF SANCTUARY & COMMUNITY

Celebrate Refugee Week 2025 with a booklist curated
by the National Centre for Writing

June brings two significant opportunities to celebrate the contributions and resilience of those seeking sanctuary: A Day of Welcome (13 June) and Refugee Week (16–22 June). These events provide an ideal moment to spotlight the stories of refugees and asylum seekers for young people, while fostering a spirit of welcome within our communities.



To support this important awareness, the National Centre for Writing has created a list of recommended books for both young people and adults. These powerful reads explore the experiences of individuals fleeing violence and persecution and consider this year's Refugee Week theme: 'Community as a Superpower'.

KEY



Reflects this year's Refugee Week theme: 'Community as a Superpower.'



Recommended by the Day of Welcome team

PRIMARY

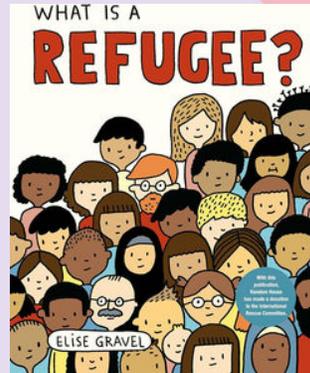
AGES 5–7



THE MOOMINS AND THE GREAT FLOOD

TOVE JANSSON

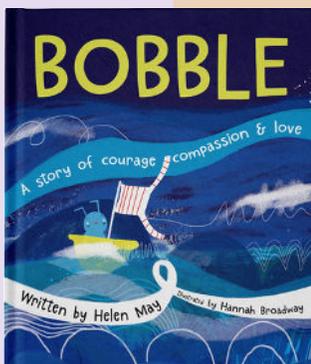
Celebrating its 80th anniversary this year, this story speaks to our troubled times and the experiences of displacement faced by thousands of families every year.



WHAT IS A REFUGEE?

ELISE GRAVEL

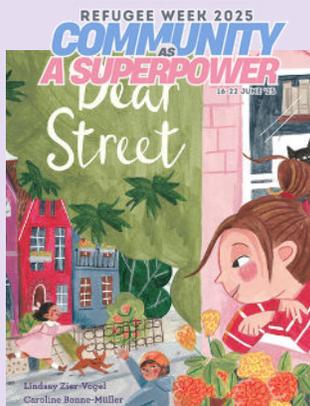
This accessible picture book explains the term 'refugee' and the experiences of displacement to young children.



BOBBLE

WRITTEN BY HELEN MAY,
ILLUSTRATED BY HANNAH
BROADWAY

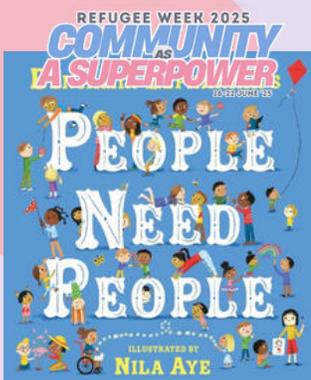
This beautifully illustrated fable gently opens up big conversations about migration, helping readers understand the experiences and needs of those facing displacement.



DEAR STREET

WRITTEN BY LINDSAY ZIER-
VOGEL, ILLUSTRATED BY
CAROLINE BONNE MÜLLER

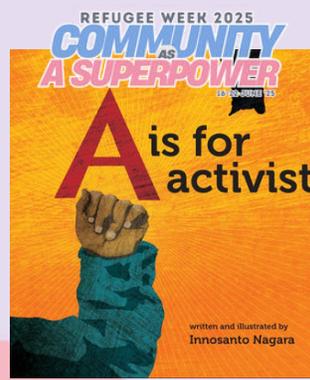
A delightful picture book which tells the story of how one person's small acts can impact a whole community.



PEOPLE NEED PEOPLE

WRITTEN BY BENJAMIN
ZEPHANIAH, ILLUSTRATED BY
NILA AYE

This powerful verse from one of Britain's best-loved poets explores our universal need for connection and love in all its forms. Beautifully illustrated, it celebrates people from around the world.



A IS FOR ACTIVIST

INNOSANTO NAGARA

An indispensable guide for anyone wanting to teach their children social responsibility and good citizenship. It shows the value of taking a stand around environmental justice, civil rights, social issues and poverty.

THE MOOMINS FIND A HOME

ELENA SELENA, ORIGINAL STORY BY TOVE JANSSON

This stunning pop-up book brings the adventure of the first Moomin story to life like never before. Celebrating 80 years since its first publication, it's the perfect gift for Moomin fans, and is sure to be treasured for years.

KIND

WRITTEN BY ALISON GREEN, ILLUSTRATED BY AXEL SCHEFFLER

This story focuses on building and welcoming communities and showing how children can bring kindness into the world. Profits from book sales go to the Three Peas charity supporting displaced people.

ERROL'S GARDEN

GILLIAN HIBBS

A heartwarming tale of a community united by a shared love of gardening and plants. Errol dreams of having an outdoor space of his own but soon discovers the power of collaboration, bringing together a diverse and inspiring group of people to work on a fulfilling, collective project.

COUNTING ON COMMUNITY

INNOSANTO NAGARA

As the title suggests, 'Counting on Community' highlights the power of community organizing, the value of the individual within a larger network, and the role of community in driving progressive social change.

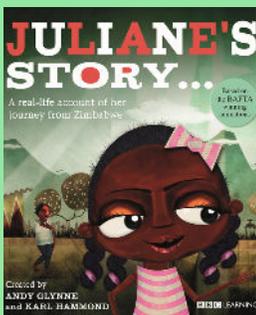
THE BOY WHO GREW A TREE

WRITTEN BY POLLY HO-YEN, ILLUSTRATED BY SOJUNG KIM-MCCARTHY

A charming early reader, this book follows nature-loving Timi as he takes on the task of caring for a tree growing in his local library. But there's something magical about the tree—it's growing fast... and the library is about to close. Can Timi save both the library and his tree, while bringing his community closer together in the process?



AGES 7–11



THE SEEKING REFUGE SERIES

WRITTEN BY ANDY GLYNNNE,
ILLUSTRATED BY KARL HAMMOND

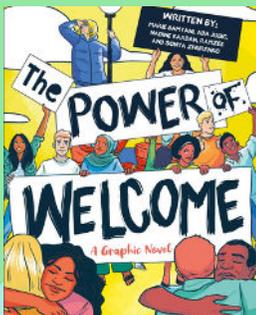
This important series deploys the voices and words of refugee children to offer new perspectives on the experience of displacement.



THE WAITING PLACE

WRITTEN BY DINA NAYERI, ILLUSTRATED
BY ANNA BOSCH MIRALPEIX

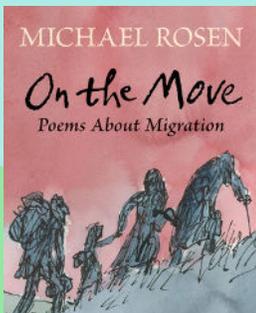
Through photographs and reflections, Dina Nayeri tells the stories of ten young refugees in Greece's Katsikas camp, capturing their resilience and their dreams while urging a shift in how we understand community, home and safety.



THE POWER OF WELCOME

ADA JUSIC, MARIE BAMYANI, RAMZEE,
SONYA ZHURENKO & NADINE KAADAN

This graphic novel features true stories of displacement from people across the world, including Ukraine, Syria and Afghanistan. The accessible format offers a wide-ranging perspective on a truly global phenomenon.



ON THE MOVE: POEMS ABOUT MIGRATION

MICHAEL ROSEN

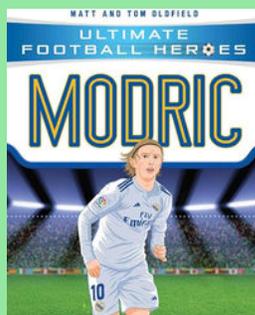
This poetry collection combines charm and heartbreak as it explores migration and displacement through poems about Rosen's childhood, the Holocaust, war, and global migration.



IT'S OUR BUSINESS TO MAKE A BETTER WORLD

WRITTEN BY REBECCA HUI,
ILLUSTRATED BY ANNELI BRAY

Written with kids, for kids, this non-fiction picture book offers an inspiring guide to making a difference and taking steps toward a better world.



MODRIC

MATT & TOM OLDFIELD

An inspirational story full of hope about how Luka Modrić, a refugee who fled his home during the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s, overcame adversity to play for some of the top clubs in the world and eventually won the FIFA Best Men's Player award.



FRONT DESK SERIES

KELLY YANG

Brilliant—and crucially, entertaining—stories that help children understand the unique challenges of being an immigrant, while fostering empathy for those who have moved and must build a new life in a foreign country.

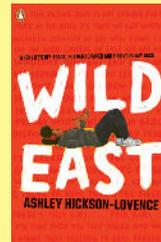
SECONDARY

AGES 11–14

WILD EAST

ASHLEY HICKSON-LOVENCE

A lyrical journey of self-discovery and resilience, this debut YA novel confronts the experience of being black in a predominantly white city whilst exploring social issues around class, race and deprivation.



INSIDE OUT AND BACK AGAIN

THANHHÀ LAI

This moving coming-of-age story details the story of one girl's year of change, dreams, grief, and healing when the Vietnam War reaches her home.



YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT WAR IS: THE DIARY OF A YOUNG GIRL FROM UKRAINE

YEVA SKALIETSKA

The gripping and poignant diary of young Ukrainian refugee Yeva Skalietska, as she shares her personal experiences of conflict during the war in Ukraine.



EVERYDAY ACTION, EVERYDAY CHANGE

NATALIE & NAOMI EVANS

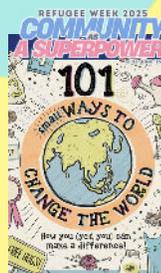
From racism and sexism to homophobia and ableism, this handbook provides young people with the information they need to understand and navigate the issues they encounter every day.



101 SMALL WAYS TO CHANGE THE WORLD

AUBRE ANDRUS

A practical, fun, and creative book designed to inspire you at home, school, and in your local community—and beyond! It provides simple tools to help you make a difference every day.



FIGHT BACK

A. M. DASSU

An empowering story about discovering your identity and the courage to stand up for it. An essential read that encourages empathy, challenges stereotypes, and explores issues of prejudice, racism, and positive action.

WHO ARE REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS?

MICHAEL ROSEN & ANNEMARIE YOUNG

Why do refugees leave their homes and seek safety elsewhere? This book explores the history of refugees and migration across the globe, examining the impact of ongoing war and conflict on those forced to flee.

AGES 14–16

MY BEAUTIFUL SISTERS

KHALIDA POPAL

A gripping memoir about courage, the power of teamwork against all odds, and the existence of hope in dark times in the age of the Taliban.

HOPE NOT FEAR

HASSAN AKKAD

A powerful memoir about Hassan's experience as a refugee and activist. His advocacy aims to bridge divides, and his story offers hope in challenging times.

YOU THINK YOU KNOW ME

AYAAN MOHAMUD

A stunning debut about finding the strength to speak up against hate and fear. It's time for Hanan to stop being the quiet, good girl. It's time for her to stand up and shout.

ASYLUM SPEAKERS

JAZ O'HARA

Based on the popular podcast, 'Asylum Speakers' is a collection of 31 stories of migration, from those leaving everything they know behind them, to those working alongside them.

PERSEPOLIS

MARIJANE SATRAPI

Wise, often humorous, and at times heart-wrenching, 'Persepolis' tells the story of Marjane Satrapi's life in Tehran as she grows up during the Iranian Revolution.

THE CROSSING

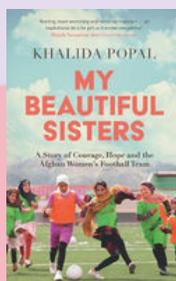
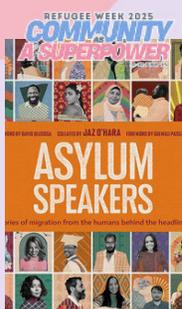
MANJEET MANN

Told in verse form, this harrowing book intertwines the lives of two teenagers from opposite worlds. Told through beautiful and powerful language, it explores the reality of forced migration.

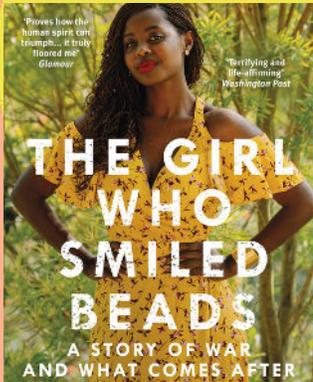
THE JUNGLE

POOJA PURI

This story encapsulates the heady and unpredictable world of a refugee camp, through a child's eyes. The hardships faced in the jungle emphasise the struggles of those seeking a better life and demonstrate that fleeing hardship is not a choice.



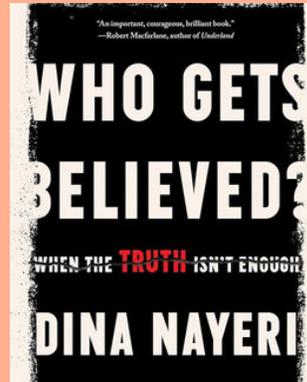
ADULTS



THE GIRL WHO SMILED BEADS

CLEMANTINE WAMARIYA & ELIZABETH WEIL

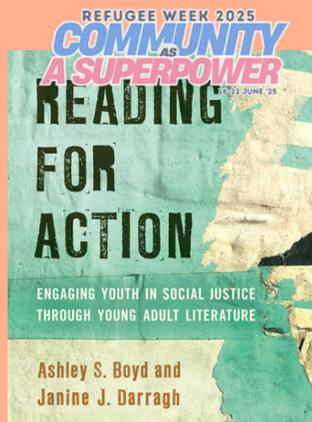
This compelling memoir tells the story of Clementine and Claire, and their mixed experiences of kindness and sisterhood as they are forced to flee their home during the Rwandan Civil War.



WHO GETS BELIEVED?

DINA NAYERI

Dina Nayeri explores why asylum seekers can be dismissed as liars, using examples drawn from real life and her own experiences to examine our perceptions of truth and believability.



READING FOR ACTION

ASHLEY S. BOYD & JANINE J. DARRAGH

This book is designed for teachers and serves as a practical guide to help young people engage with themes of social justice, including the impacts of key issues such as climate change and climate action.

‘We can begin the process of making community wherever we are. We can begin by sharing a smile, a warm greeting, a bit of conversation; by doing a kind deed or by acknowledging kindness offered to us.’

— bell hooks

PODCASTS

RECOMMENDED BY JAZ O'HARA, FOUNDER OF ASYLUM SPEAKERS

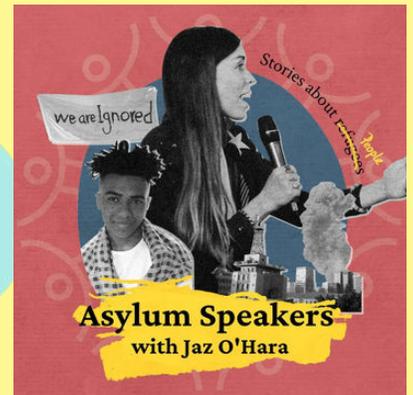
Asylum Speakers is a media platform that exists to amplify voices, educate, inspire and debunk some of the common myths and misconceptions around migration today.

ASYLUM SPEAKERS

The Asylum Speakers podcast will take you on a journey across the world, without you having to go anywhere. This podcast exists to amplify voices, educate, inspire and debunk some of the common myths and misconceptions around migration today.

The new series will be released in June and follows the journey of Fatmata and Abu Bakar, childhood sweethearts from Sierra Leone, as they embark on the dangerous journey to Europe. It's a heartbreaking story with many twists and turns, and one you will never forget.

The Asylum Speakers Podcast is part of the Asylum Speakers mission to change the current narrative about migration and displacement through education in host countries. They do this through their popular podcast, books, social media platforms and delivering talks in schools, universities, events and corporate settings.



WE ARE VOICES

We are VOICES is an award-winning podcast co-produced by the VOICES Network, featuring 12 refugees and asylum seekers sharing their stories. Through workshops, they learned storytelling and sound design to control their own narratives. The series calls for a more compassionate approach to refugees in the UK, offering firsthand insights into the asylum process.

FORCED TO FLEE

Persecution. Violence. War... Forced To Flee is a podcast by UNHCR that shares powerful stories of people who survived major global crises over the past 70 years. It highlights personal journeys of escape, survival, and hope, from fleeing Vietnam to the Rwanda genocide. The series also examines the global response to forced displacement and looks ahead to the future of refugees.

REFUGEE RADIO

Refugee Radio is a podcast platform sharing the stories and experiences of refugees and displaced individuals. It covers topics like asylum, human rights, and community integration, using interviews, music, and creative storytelling to raise awareness and foster empathy.

TALES FROM THE BORDER

Tales from the Border is a podcast by InfoMigrants that shares the struggles of migrants attempting to reach Europe. Through personal stories and interviews with humanitarian groups, it covers dangerous journeys, including pushbacks, drowning risks, and freezing conditions, from locations like Senegal, the Mediterranean, and the Serbian-Hungarian border.

A DAY OF WELCOME

Friday 13 June 2025 (EYFS-KS4)

A Day of Welcome is an annual day of solidarity and learning in schools that aims to build a culture of welcome and understanding for people seeking sanctuary.

Celebrated by more than 550 schools in 2024, it supports teachers to kickstart Refugee Week (16–22 June 2025) by providing free live events, resources and activities for pupils of all ages.

Register here: <https://schools.cityofsanctuary.org/resources/a-day-of-welcome>

REFUGEE WEEK

Monday 16–Friday 22 June 2025

Refugee Week is the world's largest arts and culture festival, celebrating the contributions, creativity, and resilience of refugees and people seeking sanctuary.

This year's theme, 'Community as a Superpower', invites us to build connections, and celebrate belonging. Communities can bring people together. Bridging divides and offering support. Spaces of resilience and places for healing.

Find out more: refugeeweek.org.uk

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR WRITING

The National Centre for Writing, based in the heart of England's first City of Literature, is a vibrant hub celebrating the transformative power of stories. Its year-round programme offers inspiring opportunities to connect, learn, and create—through events, residencies, collaborations, and activities for writers, literary translators, and readers. As a charity, the Centre works with children, young people, families, and older adults, empowering them to explore their voices and use creative expression to reflect on the past and shape the future.

Find out more: nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk

NORWICH CITY OF LITERATURE

This year, Day of Welcome has partnered with the UK Cities of Literature in a shared commitment to celebrating reading and nurturing a culture of empathy. Norwich City of Literature collaborated on the creation of this resource pack, which will be distributed to schools and libraries in Norwich, as well as in sister Cities of Literature: Edinburgh, Exeter, Manchester, and Nottingham.