



# TeachersFirst **READING TREKS**

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## Refugee

[TeachersFirst Reading Treks Link](#)

### **Synopsis of Book**

Alan Gratz braids together the stories of three older children and their families as they struggle to escape the only world they have ever known and journey to what they hope to be a new forever home. Real, life-threatening dangers pursue each. All are leaving a violent crisis--Josef is a Jewish boy in Nazi Germany in the late 1930s, Isabel is about to become a big sister amidst the riots against Cuba's Communist regime in 1961, and Mahmoud is just trying to survive and be the best big brother possible with the Syrian Civil War literally bringing down the walls around them. Joseph and his family travel by ocean liner to Cuba aboard the MS St. Louis, only to be turned away; Isabel and her best friend's families travel by a small makeshift boat across the Florida Straits, only to be blown off course by the Gulf Stream all the way to the Bahamas; Mahmoud and his family travel by car, raft, ferry, train, and foot across the Aegean Sea and Eastern Europe. Each child loses someone dear to them along the way, and yet does not lose hope. Gratz brings the struggles of refugees to an eye-opening realization, motivating change.

This text lends itself to being a key component in a project-based learning unit.

### **Using a TeachersFirst Reading Trek to Explore This Book**

TeachersFirst Reading Treks are a way of creating a virtual field trip of resources about a piece of literature or text using the My Maps feature of Google Maps. To motivate and enrich student reading, teachers and students can reference this visual collection of web resources and images as they relate to a book.

TeachersFirst has done the hard work for you! Use the activities in this Instructional Guide and the accompanying Reading Trek as you and your students explore this book. And, if you feel inspired, you (or your students) can create your own Reading Trek about this or another book!

### **Grade Level & Content Areas**

Ages 10-14. Grades 6-9 and Young Adult (CD version Grades 4-7). Lexile Level: 800L. DRA Level: 60. Guided Reading Level: Y. ACR Level: 5.3. Language arts, English, reading, literature, social studies, and history.

## Common Core State Standards for K-6 and MS/HS

### Reading

- **Literature** (key ideas and details and craft and structure)

### Writing

- **Text Types and Purposes** (claims and support)
- **Research** (to build and present knowledge)

### Speaking and Listening

- **Comprehension and Collaboration** (collaborative discussions)

## ISTE: Student Standards

- (1) Empowered Learner: Students leverage technology to take an active role in choosing, achieving and demonstrating competency in their learning goals, informed by the learning sciences.
- (3) Knowledge Constructor: Students critically curate a variety of resources using digital tools to construct knowledge, produce creative artifacts and make meaningful learning experiences for themselves and others.
- (6) Creative Communicator: Students communicate clearly and express themselves creatively for a variety of purposes using the platforms, tools, styles, formats and digital media appropriate to their goals.

## National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

- Theme: **CULTURE**
- Theme: **PEOPLE, PLACES, AND ENVIRONMENT**
- Theme: **INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT AND IDENTITY**
- Theme: **POWER, AUTHORITY, AND GOVERNANCE**

## National Core Arts Standards for Visual and Performing Arts

- **CREATING**
- **RESPONDING**
- **CONNECTING**

## Using the Reading Trek in Class

This title has connections to culture, people, places, and environment; additionally, this text has history connections in the realm of time, continuity, and change.

1. Introduce the book to the whole class on an interactive whiteboard or a projector using the Reading Trek map, and highlighting the various layers.
2. A refugee is someone who must leave their home due to a situation beyond their control for their safety. Sometimes it may be due to a weather event or emergency, natural disaster, or violent crisis; the time an individual may be away varies from a relatively short term to permanent relocation. Students can work independently or in groups to create a slide presentation using [comSlider](#) ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to share potential situations pertinent to their location, and the duration they would be away, as well as where they would go.
3. Identify realistic, short term crisis potentials for the school's population. Have students work in groups to draft and record public service announcements using [Adobe Premier Rush](#) ([TeachersFirst review](#)). These might be translated to support ELL families within the school.
4. For many refugees coming to the United States is their ultimate goal. Immigration policies and procedures have changed over the years. Discuss what it means to be an American. Take a [Virtual Field Trip to Ellis Island](#) (31 minutes) ([TeachersFirst review](#)).
5. Invite a member of the Refugee Council USA to be a guest speaker. Have students generate a list of questions in advance that can be provided to the speaker using [Padlet](#) ([TeachersFirst review](#)). If an in-class speaking opportunity is not feasible, consider using [Proficonf](#) ([TeachersFirst review](#)) or [Skype](#) ([TeachersFirst review](#)).
6. Listen to [Home](#) by Landon. Have students compose a written or artistic response. Artistic responses may be submitted to [Refugees In Towns](#) for the organization's arts festival.
7. Challenge students to write an epilogue for one of the characters from the story.
8. Consider having students write a story/recount an incident about going from feeling "invisible" to "visible" using [Write the World](#) ([TeachersFirst review](#)).
9. Use [edpuzzle](#) ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to add questions and allow students to comment while watching the videos [Auschwitz Birkenau German Concentration and Extermination Camp](#) and [Holocaust Survivors--First Steps in DP Camps and a New Beginning](#).

## Additional Project Activities Ideas

1. World Refugee Day is June 20. Participate in the [Take a Step on World Refugee Day](#).
2. Visit [WRAPS](#) to locate resettlement organizations and agency contacts to establish a limited partnership to assist local refugees; a similar resource is [Office of Refugee Resettlement](#) Programs by State.

3. Visit [Refugees In Towns](#) to discover how worldwide refugees are faring, the routes taken by refugees to their hopeful new homes, the after stories, and read case studies of migration mapping, urban economic impacts, and experiences. Use this information with your class to create a project to support refugees local to the school community.
4. Contact the local soccer center or club. Inquire about hosting or volunteering with a soccer camp for refugee families. Multilingual volunteers are quite helpful. Possibly consider inviting an adult education instructor to the event for parent resources.
5. Research needs of local refugee families, school social workers and guidance counselors will be very helpful resources. Host a “drive” to meet those needs paying special attention to cultural concerns.
6. Host a “Spare Change for Change” drive where the donations benefit [UNICEF](#) or [Save the Children](#).

## Helpful Resources

- [Alan Gratz](#)
- [Alan Gratz Q and A](#)
- [Home](#) by Landon
- [Meet Alan Gratz, Author of \*Refugee\* on how the story came about](#)
- [Facing History and Ourselves: The Voyage of the St. Louis -Holocaust and Human Behavior](#)
- [U. S. Policy During the Holocaust: The Trajedy of the SS St. Louis](#)
- [MS St Louis-Voyage of the Damned](#)
- [MS St. Louis Holocaust Survivor on Canada's Apology](#) (actual footage of the ship)
- [Refugees in Towns](#) Study and Reports of Immigration and Refugees Worldwide
- [WRAPS--Worldwide Refugee Admissions Processing System](#)
- [Refugee Admissions](#)
- [Office of Refugee Resettlement](#) Programs by State
- [Auschwitz Birkenau German Concentration and Extermination Camp](#)
- [TeachersFirst CurriConnects Book List - Maps](#)
- [TeachersFirst Review of Google My Maps](#)
- [OK2Ask: Google MANIA - Google Maps: Make Learning a Journey with Reading Treks](#)