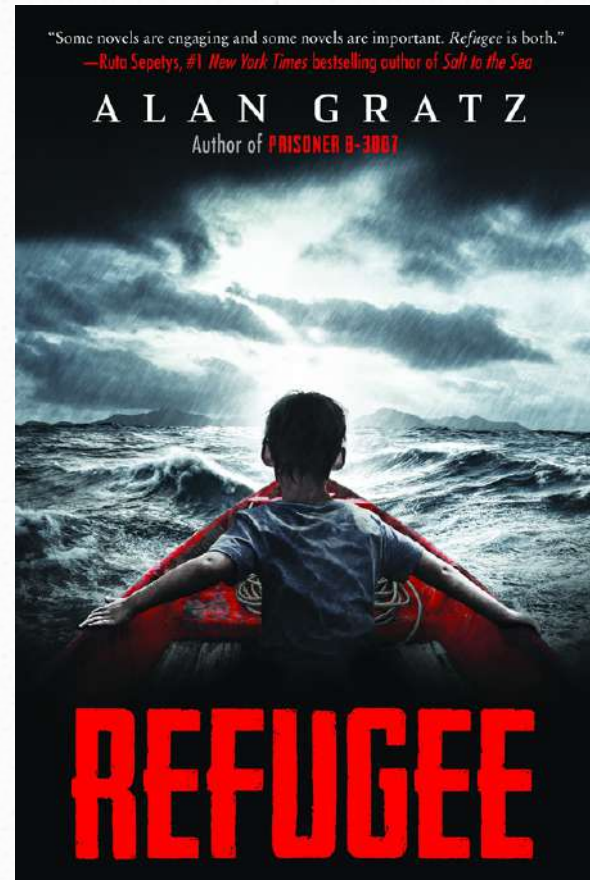


# *Refugee* by Alan Gratz

Introduction to the Novel



# What is a Refugee?

- Take a second to turn to someone next to you and discuss what you think this is- whoever is right will win bragging rights.



# What is a Refugee?



How would you define a refugee? What makes someone a refugee and who is **not** a refugee?

- The United Nations defines a refugee as “any person forced to flee from their country by violence or persecution.”
  - Must have a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group
  - Cannot return home or are afraid to do so
  - Some groups of people, such as war criminals, do not qualify
- Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) flee their homes but do not cross an international border; often displaced by natural disasters
- Asylum - the right to be recognized as a refugee and receive legal protection and material assistance.



# Facts About Refugees



- 51% of refugees are school-aged children under the age of 18
- War and ethnic/tribal/religious conflicts are leading causes
- More than half of refugees worldwide come from Syria, Afghanistan, and South Sudan
- Refugee children are 5x more likely to be out of school – 3.5 million refugee children not in school



# Refugees in the United States

- o The United States resettlement program is the largest in the world and the U.S. has been the global leader in resettling refugees since the 1970s.
- o Refugees are recommended for placement to a country by the UN and begin the process, which takes between 12 and 24 months and includes:



- o Screening by eight federal agencies including the State Department, Department of Homeland Security and the FBI
- o Six security database checks and biometric security checks screened against U.S. federal databases
- o Medical screening
- o Three in-person interviews with Department of Homeland Security officers



# About the Novel *Refugee*

“Three young people are looking for refuge, a place for themselves and their families to live in peace. Separated by



decades in time and by oceans in geography, their stories share similar emotional traumas and desperate situations ... and, at the end, connect in astounding ways.”



# Analyze the Effects:

- o What problems might refugees face, both during their journey and once they arrive?
- o What problems might host countries encounter when taking in refugees?





# 3 Alternating Stories



- o Josef in 1930s Nazi Germany
- o Isabel in 1990s Cuba
- o Mahmoud in present-day Syria



# Words to Know for Josef's story

- o Kristallnacht – “Night of Broken Glass” November 9 & 10, 1938; synagogues burned and Jewish businesses’ shop windows’ smashed
- o Dachau – first concentration camp established by Nazi party in Germany
- o bar mitzvah - the religious initiation and coming-of-age ceremony of a Jewish boy who has reached the age of 13
- o minyan - a group of ten men over the age of 13 required for traditional Jewish public worship.
- o tallisim - a shawl with a ritually knotted fringe at each corner, worn by Jews at morning prayer
- o Führer - political title associated with the Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler



# Words to Know for Isabel's story

- o Batista- dictator of Cuba from 1952–59 ; jailed his opponents, used terrorist methods, and made fortunes for himself and his associates; His regime was finally toppled by the rebel forces led by Fidel Castro
- o Fidel Castro – communist political leader of Cuba from 1959–2008
- o el norte – Spanish for ‘the North,’ meaning the U.S.
- o clave – rhythm that is the backbone of Latin music. (Click the sound icon to play a sample!)
- o mañana – Spanish for ‘tomorrow’





# Words to Know for Mahmoud's Story

- Bashar al-Assad - current President of Syria, holding the office since 17 July 2000. He is also commander-in-chief of the Syrian Armed Forces.
- Aleppo – largest city in Syria pre-Civil War
- Daesh - an Arabic acronym for ISIS; becoming more widely used around the world because ISIS objects to its use
- Mecca - Islam's holiest city; birthplace of the Prophet Muhammad ; in a desert valley in western Saudi Arabia
- hijab - a head covering worn in public by some Muslim women
- EU (European Union) - political and economic union of 28 member states that are located primarily in Europe.



# Definitions Review

- o Which words did you already know?
- o Which words had you never heard of before?
- o Have you read other texts or seen movies or tv shows in which you saw any of the words?





# **Background – the MS. St. Louis**

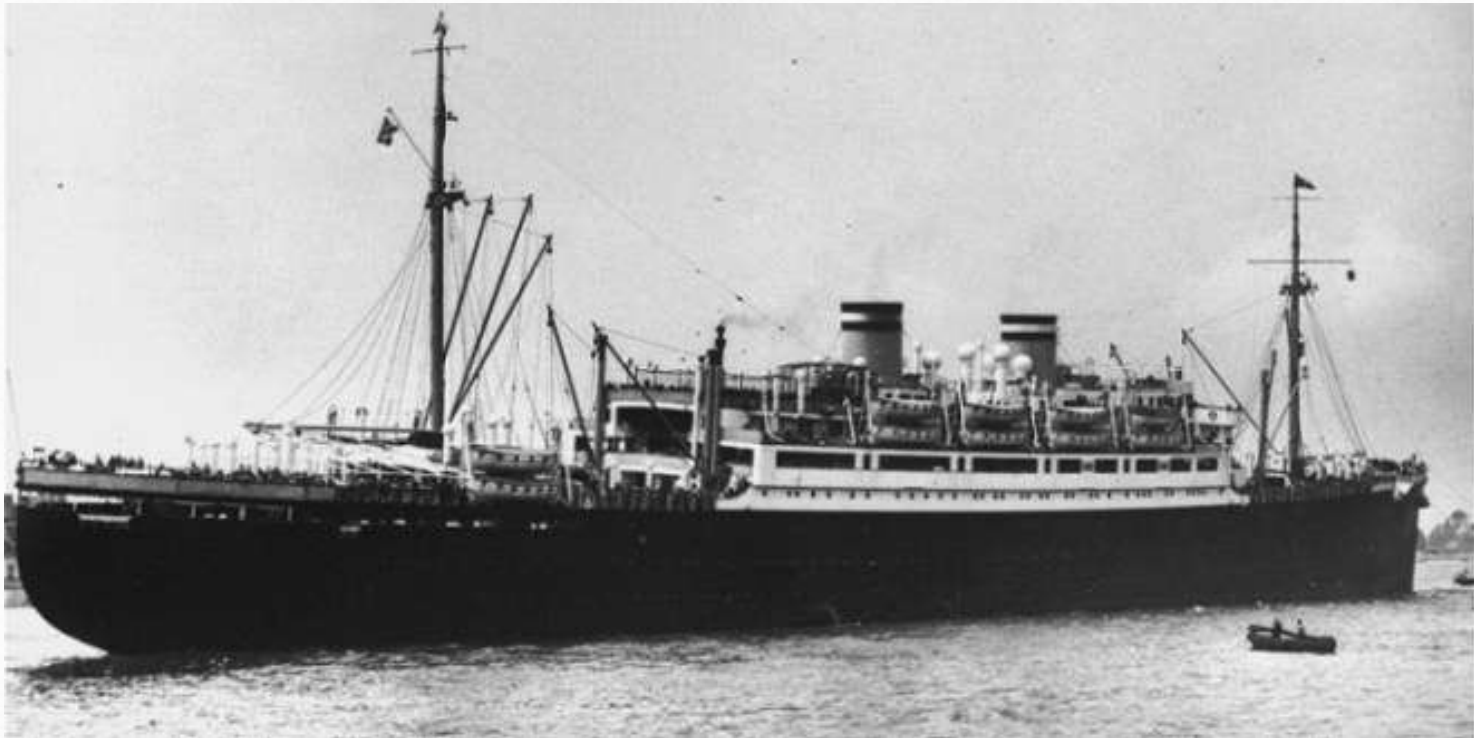
## **Josef's Story**



- o Sailed from Hamburg, Germany, for Havana, Cuba, on May 13, 1939
- o 937 passengers, almost all Jews fleeing from the Third Reich
- o Passengers held landing certificates and transit visas issued by the Cuban Director-General of Immigration, but Cuban President Bru had issued a decree just a week before the ship sailed that invalidated all recently-issued landing certificates



# **Background – the MS. St. Louis**











## **Background – Cuba in the 1990s Isabel's Story**

- o Dissolution of the Soviet Union on December 26, 1991
- o Cuba lost 80% of imports (including almost all petroleum imports) and 80% of exports
- o Economy was impacted severely and there were widespread food shortages
- o For a time, waiting for a bus could take three hours, power outages could last up to sixteen hours, and the average Cuban lost about twenty pounds.











# **Background – Present-Day Syria Mahmoud's Story**



- 2011 – Peaceful protests are met with violent crackdowns by Syrian security forces; Civil War begins and people begin to flee
- April 2017 – 58 people killed in nerve gas attack
- 2015 - Hungary erects border wall and closes border with Serbia
- Thousands of refugees arrive daily in Greece
- Over 5.6 million people have fled Syria since 2011, seeking safety in Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan and beyond.
- Total registered Syrian refugees, as of May 2018 = 5,654,807



# Aleppo, Before and After Civil War



Before

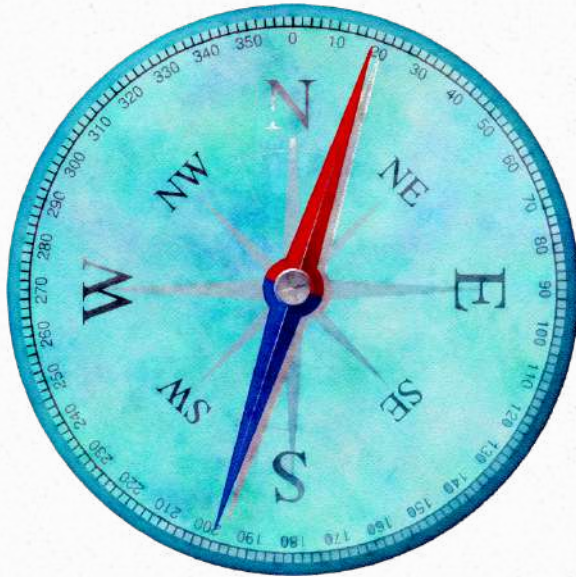


After









# Tips for Reading

- o Think about connections between the three stories – what do the characters have in common with each other?
- o Put yourself in their position -- What difficult choices must each character make? Would you make the same choices?