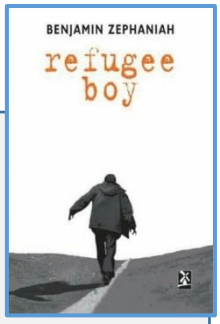
Knowledge Organiser: Refugee Boy, Benjamin Zephaniah



The plot

Chapter 1: Alem and his father arrive in England. They go sightseeing and stay at a hotel.
Chapter 2: Alem's father leaves him alone.
Chapter 3: Alem tells the story of his homeland to the Refugee Council.
Chapter 4: Alem fills out his asylum request form.
Chapter 5: Alem is sent to stay at a children's home.
Chapter 6: Alem makes a friend- Mustafa, but also has a fight with an enemy.
Chapter 7: Alem escapes from the children's home, but returns after an unhappy night.
Chapter 8: Alem begins life with a foster family, the Fitzgeralds.
Chapter 9: Alem starts school in England.
Chapter 10: Alem's asylum request is denied.
Chapter 11: Alem begins to settle into school and he has his first Christmas in England.
Chapter 12: Alem buys a bike. He attends his first asylum appeal hearing in court.
Chapter 13: Alem receives a letter from his father and finds out his mother has been killed.
Chapter 14: Alem becomes closer friends with Robert and meets his appeal lawyer, Nicholas.
Chapter 15: Robert and Alem go out for the evening.
Chapter 16: Alem's bike is stolen. His father arrives from Africa.
Chapter 17: Mr Kelo is arrested.
Chapter 18: Mr Kelo is housed in a hostel.
Chapter 19: Alem and Mr Kelo's application for asylum is refused.
Chapter 20: Alem's friends campaign for him to be able to stay.
Chapter 21: Alem leaves his foster home to stay with his father in the hostel.
Chapter 22: Alem's supporters march in protest. Alem and Mr Kelo speak to the crowds.
Chapter 23: Alem's father is shot and killed.
Chapter 24: The news reports on the death.
Chapter 25: Alem's appeal is heard in court. He is finally granted permission to stay in England.
Chapter 26: A peace treaty is signed in Africa between Ethiopia and Eritrea.
Chapter 27: Alem tells his story and his hopes for the future.

Key themes

Love Family Prejudice War
Violence Friendship Hope

Key Vocabulary

Refugee: a person who has been Forced to flee their home country due to war, violence or persecution.
Persecution: the mistreatment of an individual by a person or group of people.
Asylum seeker: someone who leaves their own country, often for political reasons or because of war, and who travels to another country hoping that the government will protect them and allow them to live there.

Main characters

Alem: Teen boy seeking asylum.
Mr Kelo: Alem's father.
Robert: School friend.
Mr and Mrs Fitzgerald: Alem's foster parents
Ruth Fitzgerald: Foster sister
Mariam: Refugee Council worker
Pamela: Refugee Council worker
Sheila: Social worker

Context

War: When the area of Eritrea became a country separate from Ethiopia in 1993, there was a dispute about where the border between countries should be. This was so severe that there was a war between 1998 and 2000 over it, and many people fled their homes to try to keep safe. Final peace was only official in 2018.
The Home Office: A government department responsible for security, law and order and immigration. The Home Office determines who is granted asylum in the UK.

The author

Benjamin Zephaniah (born 15th April 1958) is a poet and novelist who grew up in Jamaica and Birmingham. As a teenager, he was in trouble with the police and even spent time in prison. He is now a respected writer who often writes about the repression of black people and current issues.

Vocabulary and Techniques

Nostalgic: Thinking sentimentally about the past	**Melancholy:** Feeling gloomy	**Humbled:** To feel insignificant, modest	**Stoic:** To seem to be unaffected by things, to not show emotion especially when difficult things happen.
Alienated: To become isolated and distant socially	**Patriotic:** Love of one's country	**Vulnerable:** To be or feel susceptible to harm or damage	**Apprehensive:** To be nervous or frightened about something.
Candid: To be honest	**Humiliated:** To be embarrassed or ashamed	**Dismayed:** To lose enthusiasm, to be discouraged.	**Content:** To feel satisfied.
Resentful: Feeling angry you have been forced to accept something you do not like.	**Pessimistic:** Tending to expect only bad things.	**Optimistic:** Seeing the bright side, believing good things will happen.	**Bleak:** Depressing, dreary, feeling a bit hopeless.

Zephaniah's Techniques

First person narration: At times, written from the speaker's viewpoint, using words like 'I' and 'we'.
Matter-of-fact style: Using plain, straight-forward, unemotional language**.**
Emotive language: Using words which to deliberately evoke an emotional response in the reader.
Simple sentence structures: Using simple and compound sentences.
Simple words: Using limited vocabulary, often with monosyllabic words to be easily understood.
Idiom: A phrase which usually has a figurative meaning, for example 'he was getting cold feet about performing on stage'.
Colloquialism: A casual expression, such as 'Alright'.
Dialect: Language used by a group of people, usually determined by where they come from or social influence, for example 'she was a bonny lass'.
Pathetic fallacy: Giving objects in nature human qualities.
Contrast: Using opposites to highlight something.
Structure: Order of events and the chapters, used to create effects.
Emotive language: Using language to create an emotional response from the reader.
Likeable characters: Crafting characters to make the reader feel emotionally connected to them.
Verbs: Use of action words, such as 'strolled', 'wrote' or 'drive'.
Adjectives: Describing words, such as 'cold' 'blue' or 'tall'.