****[**https://www.alangratz.com/**](https://www.alangratz.com/)

**1. Give author information/biography**

Born on January 27, 1972 in Knoxville, Tennessee. Gratz attended the University of Tennessee to study Creative Writing, and he earned a Master’s degree in English education. In fact, *Refugee* was nominated for the Audie Award for Middle Grade in 2018.

**2. Write a summary of the book**

**Summary:** Joseph is a Jewish male who resides in Nazi Germany during the emergence of concentration camps in the 1930’s, which forces him and his loved ones to venture out of Germany by boarding a vessel in hopes of a prosperous future. Isabel is a Cuban female who resides in a communist society ruled by Fidel Castro during 1994. Fidel Castro stated: "Anyone who wants to leave Cuba can do so," which Isabel and her family take full advantage of the new regime, and escape on a raft to the United States of America. Mahmoud is a Syrian boy stuck in the middle of one of the most brutal civil wars in history. In fact, he constantly witnesses killings, woundings and bomb explosions in his town located in Syria. Although Josef, Isabel, and Mahmoud never cross paths because they are divided by different time periods and different continents, yet each child is optimistic about a future without having to sleep with one eye open, which can be the difference between life or death for the children and their family.

**3. Select three quotes that are representative of the book; comment on or explain the significance of the three quotes.**

**1st quote**

“And that was the real truth of it, wasn't it? Whether you were visible or invisible, it was all about how other people reacted to you. Good and bad things happened either way. If you were invisible, bad people couldn't hurt you, that was true. But the good people couldn't help you, either. If you stayed invisible here, did everything you were supposed to and never made waves, you would disappear from the eyes and minds of all the good people out there who could help you get your life back. It was better to be visible. To stand up. To stand out” (158).

**Significance Importance**

This quote illuminates Mahmoud’s profound transformation throughout his journey as a refugee. Mahmoud contemplates whether he should help or stand by while a minor gets harassed and beaten for resources by the neighborhood bullies. Although in the past, when he attempted to defend someone, he had been unsuccessful and severely beaten in the process. In response to the bullies attacking the child, Mahmoud avoids the threat of the bullies by staying out of plain sight, yet later as a full-fledged refugee, he acknowledges that its essential to be visible, not invisible to receive assistance from others. In fact, Mahmoud positioned himself in the forefront of the march out of Hungary into Austria. This passage of the novel focuses on the development of Mahmoud’s character and illuminates the struggles each individual feels when confronting harm against others.

**2nd Quote**

“Towering shadows burst into the room. The air seemed to crackle around them like static from a radio. Josef tried to hide in the corner of his bed, but shadowy hands snatched at him. Grabbed for him. He screamed even louder than his little sister, drowning her out. He kicked and flailed in a panic, but one of the shadows caught his ankle and dragged him face-first across his bed. Josef clawed at his sheets, but the hands were too strong. Josef was so scared he wet himself, the warm liquid spreading through his nightclothes” (2).

**Significance Importance**

This quote symbolizes the Nazi regime that controlled all aspects of life in Germany between 1933 and 1945. This Nazi regime crisis created a dilemma for many Jewish families, including Josef’s family. The quote depicts Josef’s terrifying and disturbing encounter with the Nazis, when they broke into his home in the middle of the night, which posed a real threat to him and his family because he’s Jewish, and his father wasn’t allowed to practice law in Nazi Germany. In fact, it is not uncommon for Nazis to utilize force when breaking into Jewish people’s homes to drag families out of their homes, and carted off to concentration camp during the 1930’s. This encounter changed Josef’s life because from being a normal kid, this converted him into a refuge who is living with chronic perturbation and fear on a daily basis. This excerpt of the novel illuminates the life of a Jewish refugee fleeing from home and the constant threat of death. In addition, it also highlights the theme of the novel for it portrays the emotional strain associated with being a refugee.

**3rd Quote**

“Your mother is pregnant, for one thing!” Lito said. “There’s no food to feed the baby here anyway,” Isabel said. “There’s no food for any of us, and no money to buy it with if there was. But there is food in the states. And freedom. And work” (44).   
**Significance Importance**

This quote showcases the horrific cycle of poverty, where the poverty stricken get poorer because of the prolonged cruel and unjust treatment under the rule of Fidel Castro. Isabel and her family lack the resources needed to avoid death from starvation, which elucidates the recurring theme of survival in the novel. As in the passage above, Gratz describes these circumstances as forces that have a significant impact on their decision to unwillingly escape to the United States of America on a raft despite the threat of imprisonment in Cuba and the dangers of storms, sharks, dehydration, and starvation between Cuba and Florida. Gratz exemplifies the desperation of the situation and this notion is vividly contrasted by the response of “Isabel,” such as the line: “There’s no food for any of us, and no money to buy it with if there was.” This supports the notion of the oppression of the poor individuals living under the rule of Fidel Castro in Havana, Cuba during 1994 .

**4. How might you use this book in a classroom? Include some ideas for presenting the book. For what age level is the book most appropriate? Why should teens read this book? Which category of books (from Chapters 4-8 in Adolescents in the Search for Meaning: Tapping the Powerful Resource of Story) might this book fit?**

I would utilize the novel, *Refugee* in the ninth grade and tenth grade Literature classes as a means to present them an in depth look of the challenges and struggles that most individuals will never experience in the United States of America. In addition, I would use the novelas a tool to teach empathy in the classroom because having the ability to understand and relate with other individuals from different walks of life plays a crucial role in our social lives. For instance, the topic of immigration and refugees is closely connected to the current political climate in the United States of America. In fact, students are bullying other students due to their native tongue, religion and skin color. Therefore, I believe that sharing immigrant and refugee stories in the classroom will benefit young children's minds comprehend the unfortunate situations of their immigrant and refugee classmates. Students can learn a good deal from refugee families about specific time periods in history and experience the Nazi regime, Cuba under Fidel Castro's rule, and the Syrian crisis through a refugee. Therefore, a community interview activity would suffice. This novel is suitable for anybody willing to read about refugees seeking freedom and shelter elsewhere. It is also vital to understand the essence of the refugee experience because people need to know that humans aren't always nice to each other during demoralizing circumstances. In addition, teens should read this novel to learn about history and the cruel hostility, and ill-treatment of refugees who are susceptible to physical, and emotional harm. One of the major themes presented in *Refugee* by Alan Gratz depicts the major theme of courage and survival, which illuminates Chapter seven in *Adolescents in the Search for Meaning: Tapping the Powerful Resource of Story*.

**5. Text Complexity**

Lexile Level: 800L

ATOS Reading Level: 5.3

Grade Level: 4-8

Ages: 10-14