

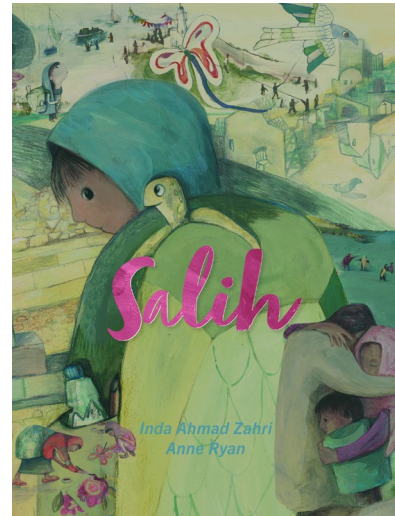
## Teacher's Notes

### *Salih*

**Author:** Inda Ahmad Zahri

**Illustrator:** Anne Ryan

**Publisher:** Ford Street Publishing in  
2021



*Like a turtle, Salih carries his home on his back. He must cross a raging sea in search of a safe home.*

*Salih paints his happiest memories and sends them as messages in bottles.*

*Will someone find them and understand? Will Salih find a new home?*

#### **About the Author**

Inda Ahmad Zahri writes and illustrates for children and adults. Her stories are inspired by natural and cultural gems curated from her travels and lovingly added to her Malaysian heritage. She is also a surgical doctor, swapping her writer's hat and paintbrush for scrubs and scalpel when duty calls.

For more information about Inda's work, visit [www.indabinda.com](http://www.indabinda.com)

#### **About the Illustrator**

Anne Ryan an author, illustrator, artist, and art educator who lives and works in Melbourne. She is passionate about sharing storytelling, visual literacy and creativity with young children through art making and children's picture books.

Anne wrote and published her first picture book, *Unforeseen Circumstances*, in 2005. For more information about Anne's work, visit [www.anneryan.com.au](http://www.anneryan.com.au)

**Themes**

Empathy

Art

Kindness

Hope

Refugee

Humanity

Migration

**Author's Inspiration for the Story**

This story was written in early 2018, during a period where many thousands of people were making their way across the Mediterranean, fleeing war, persecution, and poverty in their home countries.

These journeys were incredibly dangerous and involved crossing both land and sea with little shelter and food. Almost half were children. Many led perfectly ordinary lives until they were forced to become refugees. Unfortunately, many did not survive.

According to a UNHCR report, in 2018 alone, there were 139,300 new arrivals into Europe by both land and sea (across the Mediterranean) from strife-stricken countries in Africa and the Middle East. Shockingly, this number was a decrease from the staggering number of humans seeking refuge in previous years.

The stories that were coming out of the news were heartbreaking, and I found it disturbing that the nightmare often continued at the end of their journey. Instead of finding safety and the chance to rebuild their lost lives, many refugees faced indefinite detainment, abuse, indignity and prejudice in new lands.

At the time of writing, I was a new mother. So, not only did I wonder what it would be like to make that journey myself, I wondered what it would be like to make it with a child. It led me to imagine the entire ordeal from a child's point of view – how would they feel, and what would they do to handle those emotions and difficulties?

After writing about the journey, I wanted very much to showcase a best-case-scenario ending, where the refugees' hopes and dreams could come true, simply because people chose to be kind and generous in accepting them.

I included art as a form of expression and therapy. The paintings that the refugees made were rolled up into bottles, as I liked the idea of messages in bottles arriving in a new place.

**Suggestions for Discussion**

- Who is a refugee or asylum seeker?
- Are there refugees or asylum seekers here in Australia? Where have they come from?
- What are the ideas or presumptions that come with the word 'refugees'? Are these correct or fair?
- Are refugee families different or similar from our own? What makes this so?
- What are some of the reasons that someone like Salih might have to leave their home country?
- What are the emotions that Salih and his fellow travellers experience throughout the story? (Young children may want to mime emotions like happy, sad, angry, scared, hope, safe.)
- What emotions do you feel when reading the story?
- Why does Salih identify with a turtle in the story?
- What is the role of art in their journey?
- Which double page spread do you like the best? How do you interpret the artwork in those pages, with or without the words?
- The word 'Salih' means 'goodness' in Arabic. What is the word for 'good' in other languages that you know?
- What are the problems or difficulties faced by someone who has had to relocate to another country?
- Do you believe that we each have a role to play in this dilemma? What steps would you like to take to help Salih and his fellow travellers?

**Activities**

- Draw a child with a turtle shell (can be a self-portrait).
- Pretend that the turtle shell is your backpack. You need to leave home, but you can only carry what you can fit inside it. What would you bring?
- Place an item in each of the shell compartments. Think about why you've chosen each item. Are your chosen items:
  - Essential?
  - Precious?
  - Useful?
  - Full of memories?

- Draw a picture of something that makes you happy. Now swap it with a classmate. Write down what acts of kindness you would perform based on the wishes or drawings of others.

### **Online Resources**

In the past year, Inda compiled a short series of videos where she chatted with friends about their experiences with refugee aid and awareness, and shared information regarding the plight of refugees and ways to help.

In each episode, she shares a picture book that deals with the topic of refugees with the hopes of starting conversations, shedding light on issues and inviting ripples of change. These can be found on her website: <https://indabinda.com/refugee-week-video-project/>

Anne has written a blog post about her reflections on refugees and displaced people, including some earlier artwork inspired by refugees travelling in harsh conditions. Her thoughts and experiences helped her to bring Salih's story to life in her illustrations. These can be found on her website: <https://anneryan.com.au/below-zero/>

### **Refugee Council Australia**

- <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/quick-guide/>
- Plenty of up-to-date information
- Recommend starting with a quick guide and delving further from there.

### **Multicultural Australia**

- <https://www.multiculturalaustralia.org.au>
- A non-profit organisation in Brisbane, QLD, working with refugees in the community.

### **You Belong Australia**

- [www.youbelong.org.au](http://www.youbelong.org.au)
- A charity organisation empowering newly-arrived refugees to thrive in Australia.

### **Australia for UNHCR**

- [www.unrefugees.org.au](http://www.unrefugees.org.au)

**Asylum Seeker Resource Centre**

- [www.asrc.org.au](http://www.asrc.org.au)
- A Melbourne-based (VIC) organisation providing frontline services, advocacy and empowerment for refugees.

**Other Picture Books with a Refugee Theme**

‘I’m Australian, Too’ by Mem Fox & Ronojoy Ghosh

‘Waves’ by Donna Rawlins, Mark Jackson & Heather Jackson

‘My Two Blankets’ by Irena Kobald & Freya Blackwood

‘Grain of Hope’ by Nicola Philp & Aldy Aguirre

‘Kind’ by Alison Green and various illustrators including Axel Scheffler

‘Room on Our Rock’ by Kate & Jol Temple & Terri Rose Baynton

‘A Home For Luna’ by Stef Gemmill & Mel Armstrong

**Junior Fiction/YA with a Refugee Theme**

‘Boy Overboard’ by Morris Gleitzman

‘Girl Underground’ by Morris Gleitzman

‘Detention’ by Tristan Bancks

‘The Bone Sparrow’ by Zane Fraillon