



## Boy, Everywhere

written by A. M. Dassu

### About the Book

**Genre:** Realistic Fiction

**Format:** Hardcover, \$19.95  
400 pages, 5 x 7-1/2

**ISBN:** 9781643791968

**Reading Level:** Grade 7

**Interest Level:** Grades 4–8

**Guided Reading Level:** Z

**Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:**  
N/A

**Lexile™ Measure:** N/A

\*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

**Themes:** Bullying, Conflict Resolution, Courage, Cultural Diversity, Discrimination, Empathy/Compassion, Families, History, Immigration, Middle Grade, Muslim/Muslim American Interest, Overcoming Obstacles, Realistic Fiction, Refugees, Religious Diversity, War

**Resources on the web:**

[leeandlow.com/books/boy-everywhere](http://leeandlow.com/books/boy-everywhere)

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.

### SYNOPSIS

Sami loves his life in Damascus, Syria. He hangs out with his best friend playing video games; he's trying out for the football team; he adores his family and gets annoyed by them in equal measure. But his comfortable life gets sidetracked abruptly after a bombing in a nearby shopping mall. Knowing that the violence will only get worse, Sami's parents decide they must flee their home for the safety of the UK.

*Boy, Everywhere* chronicles their harrowing journey and struggle to settle in a new land. Forced to sell all their belongings and leave their friends and beloved grandmother behind, Sami and his family travel across the Middle East to Turkey, where they end up in a smuggler's den. From there, they cross the treacherous waters of the Mediterranean and manage to fly to England, only to be separated and detained in an immigration prison for the "crime" of seeking asylum. Yet the transition from refugee to immigrant in a new life will be the greatest challenge Sami has ever faced.

Based on the experiences of real Syrian refugees, this thoughtful middle-grade novel is the rare book to delve deeply into this years-long crisis. A. M. Dassu has used her publishing deal advances for *Boy, Everywhere* to assist Syrian refugees in her city and set up a grant to support an unpublished refugee/recently immigrated writer. Sami's story is one of survival, of family and friendship, of bravery and longing . . . Sami could be any one of us.

## BACKGROUND

### Author's Note from A. M. Dassu

"The civil war in Syria began in March 2011, when schoolboys in the southern city of Daraa wrote graffiti on a school wall asking for a change in the political regime. By 2015, when I first began writing *Boy, Everywhere*, millions of Syrians had been forced to leave their homes and seek refuge elsewhere in Syria or in other countries. Around the world, people watched countless news pieces describing the crisis, the influx of refugees, and the rising hatred toward them. Our constantly-informed world knew of their plight, but people soon became desensitized to their story. *Boy, Everywhere* was inspired by a news interview that showed refugees in muddy camps wearing Nike trainers, holding smartphones, and talking about what they'd left behind. Looking around my comfortable living room, I realized that it could easily have been me. Due to media coverage at the time, many people assumed refugees were poor, uneducated, and wanted to come to Europe because they'd have a better economic life. But the more Syrian people I met and the more research I did, the more I realized that if it weren't for the war, most Syrians would never have left. It became clear their lives were very similar to ours in the West, and a civil war could easily bring the same fate upon any of us.

For years we've only seen grey rubble and debris on the news, or refugees on boats -- it's easy to forget that Syria is one of the oldest civilizations in the world. It has embraced, harbored, and protected thousands of refugees from other countries--most recently those fleeing from the Iraq war. But when the time came for Syrians to seek refuge, the world struggled to help. And that pained me. Because of my own family's story of cross-cultural relocation and immigration, I know what it's like to leave everything behind and start again, and so I have long had an affinity toward Syrians. I had been supporting refugees by setting up various fundraising campaigns to provide food and aid for many years, but I knew this wasn't enough. I wanted to do something long-lasting by sharing their incredible achievements, culture, and backgrounds. Through *Boy, Everywhere*, I wanted to focus not only on the arduous journey a refugee takes to get to safety, but also what and who they leave behind and how difficult it is to start again. I wanted the focus to be on who they were and are, their identities as Syrians, not just the temporary political status attributed to them in their new country.

The Syrians I've met in the UK and in Damascus want the world to know what they have been through. They want people to know that they had good lives and were forced to leave. They want the world to know this wasn't their choice. Yet this is where they have ended up. I have been honored to spend time with some of the most amazing people, who had been left with no choice but to leave Syria. Among them were English graduates, department-store buyers, teachers, doctors, and architects, and all of them had to start anew.

A lot of what I discovered in my research for this book made me cry. The most difficult: articles and footage about life inside Syria now and in refugee camps, interviews of children sharing their experiences of the bombings, the trauma, the bad dreams, and their hopes to live like other children. I spoke to many refugees, some who'd spent time in detention centers--often treated far worse than in this book. Although this book is set in 2015–2016, I chose to show the legal process in force during early 2015, before fast-track cases were ruled to be unfair, to show what it feels like to

be detained for long periods. My research also revealed the everyday, happy lives of Syrians before they were so terribly affected by civil war. I watched videos online of Syrian teenagers chilling out in cafes, in schools, and on social media. I looked at photos shared by Damascenes on Instagram. I watched rap songs by Syrians on YouTube, in which they played basketball and dressed in chinos, blue oxfords, silk dresses. They were smiling, laughing, painting, swimming, fishing, horseback riding, cooking, studying at school, selling in shops, presenting on the radio, playing the violin, the drums, and, of course, football. These videos showed their normal, happy lives, which made me cry for what they'd lost. And then hearing it all in person from Syrian friends themselves made me even more passionate about challenging stereotypes and sharing another perspective to the well-known refugee "story."

*Boy, Everywhere* was further motivated by the stories of three Damascene refugees. Nawar Nemeah was a sixteen-year-old boy from an English- and French-speaking private school in Damascus, who escaped the war and eventually settled in San Diego, California, where he became a rising star in his high school. Razan Alsous was a Syrian mother of three who fled Damascus in 2012 when her husband's office block was blown up. Even though Razan had two degrees, she struggled to find work in the UK. But she didn't give up and established the multi-award-winning Dama Cheese Company, which has provided jobs to people in the UK. And then there was Ahmed, who featured in a CBBC documentary about four Syrian boys who had settled in the UK. Ahmed had four bedrooms in his house in Syria, yet now lived in just one room. He never went out because his parents were anxious about their new surroundings. I felt compelled to amplify the voices of boys like Ahmed.

My main aim for this book was always to convey the true lives of Damascenes—to show the color and richness of their lives before the civil war, in contrast to the gray rubble and dust that dominates TV footage. I wanted to challenge the narrative that refugees are needy and desperate and instead show the reality of their lives, the choices they're forced to make and also what and who they leave behind. I wanted this to be a universal story, in which my protagonist is a typical boy who loves cars, playing football, and his PlayStation. My hope is that this book helps to challenge stereotypes and break down barriers in our society. In a world where we are told to see refugees as the "other," I hope you will agree that 'they' are also 'us.'"

### Resources for Teaching about the Syrian Conflict

For more information about how to teach about the Syrian Conflict in your respective setting, consult the following resources and lesson plans below:

- PBS: Teach Syria Lesson Plan (<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/lessons-plans/teach-syria/>)
- Visual Resources for Teaching about the Syrian Conflict (<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/lessons-plans/visual-resources-teaching-syria/>)
- *New York Times* "Examining How the Syrian Crisis Has Shaped the Lives of Young Refugees: A Guest Lesson Plan" (<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/26/learning/lesson-plans/examining-how-the-syrian-crisis-has-shaped-the-lives-of-young-refugees-a-guest-lesson-plan.html>)
- Duke University-UNC: Ideas for Teaching about the Syrian Refugee Crisis ([https://ncmideast.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/1065/2011/07/TeachingIdeas\\_ArabRefugees1.pdf](https://ncmideast.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/1065/2011/07/TeachingIdeas_ArabRefugees1.pdf))

- Lessons from Challenge Islamophobia: A Project for Teaching for Change (<https://www.challengeislamophobia.org/lessons-overview>)

Be aware of students who may be refugees or have experienced displacement in your classroom. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network has an article, "Ways Teachers Can Help Refugee Students: Some Suggestions," for more information on how to support students (<https://depts.washington.edu/uwhatc/PDF/TF-%20CBT/pages/3%20Psychoeducation/Ways%20Teachers%20Can%20Help%20Refugee%20Students.pdf>). You can also consult the National Association of School Psychologists' "Supporting Refugee Children & Youth: Tips for Educators" (<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/mental-health-resources/war-and-terrorism/supporting-refugee-students>) and Colorín Colorado's "How to Support Refugee Students in Your School Community" (<https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/how-support-refugee-students-ell-classroom>). Learning for Justice also has a guide, "Immigrant and Refugee Children: A Guide for Educators and School Support Staff" for further information (<https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/spring-2017/immigrant-and-refugee-children-a-guide-for-educators-and-school-support-staff>).

## BEFORE READING

### Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

- Have you and your family ever had to move? What was it like? How did it make you feel? What kinds of emotions did you have to manage as you were in the process of moving?
- What strategies do you use when you're sad or scared? What kinds of techniques do you use to make you feel better? How did you come up with ways that help you in times of need?
- What does it mean to be resilient? How do you demonstrate resilience even though something may be challenging? Why is it important to be resilient? Do you think it can be learned? How so?
- Why might someone need to leave their home and country? What are different factors that play into families having to leave their homes unexpectedly?
- What are some of your favorite things about where you live? If you had to move, what would you bring with you to remember it by?
- What do you know about the experiences of refugee children and families? What does it mean to be a refugee? What have you heard about refugees from books that you've read or what you've heard before? How are refugees different than immigrants? **Note:** Please be cognizant of students who may be refugees in your classroom and be aware of speaking about refugee children and their circumstances at all times.
- Have you ever solved a problem? What did you do? Why did you have to solve that particular problem? How did you think quickly? How were you acknowledged afterward?
- Ask students to think about their family and what family means to them. How is family important to you? How do you interact with your family members? How do you help them? What about siblings, if any? How do you help your siblings, and vice versa?

### Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1; Craft & Structure, Strand 5; and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

- **Book title exploration:** Talk about the title of the book, *Boy, Everywhere*. Then ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?
- **Read A. M. Dassu's biography:** Read about A. M. Dassu on the jacket back flap as well as on her website <https://amdassu.com>. Encourage students to think about what could have been her inspiration for writing *Boy, Everywhere*.

- Encourage students to stop and jot in their reading notebooks during the read-aloud when they: learn new information, see a powerful image, have an emotional reaction or an idea, have a question, or hear new words.
- Have students quickly write a feeling in their notebooks during reading. After reading, ask students why they wrote down that feeling and have them write a journal entry about it.

### Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- what happens to Sami's sister and mother
- why Sami's family has to leave his home country
- how Sami and his family travel to England and the obstacles they encounter along the way
- how and why trauma can affect people differently
- what racism and discrimination Sami and his family experience throughout their harrowing journey
- how Sami manages and copes with complex emotions while his life is changed forever
- how the support from family and friends during difficult times is important
- why each refugee experience is different and how it's important to learn about journeys from all over the world

Encourage students to consider why the author, A. M. Dassu, would want to share Sami's powerful story with young people.

## VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word. (Many of the Spanish words can be found in the book glossary, but there are also some that are not included. Students could be encouraged to create a log of these words—they will not be listed here.)

### Content Specific

Damascus, Syria, Arabic, Alhamdulillah, As-salaamu alaikum, habibi, shukran, habibti, Thumbelina, kibbeh, Aleppo, Beirut, al-Hejaz, Mezze Air Base, Bekaa Valley, civil war, rebels, Istanbul, Turkey, Blue Mosque, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Manchester United, Real Madrid, football, Ferrari, lira, akhi,

dinghy, smuggler, Lebanon, Shahada prayer, Quran, Allah, Allah hu akbar, yalla, hoopoe, Boeing 737, turbulence, Immigration Act 1971, Stockport, Eurodac Europe-wide database of fingerprints, detention center, G4S, canteen, Air Jordans, canteen, jiddo, Kindertransport, General Medical Council, British Medical Association, Weetabix, Mercedes, duplex, salaam, tabbouleh, baba ghanoush, pita, *Coronation Street*, mosque, Quranic Arabic, SIM card, *Balamory*, *101 Dalmatians*, scalpel, extractor fan, Prosecution Service, Souk al-Hamidiyeh, *Animal Farm*, Britain First, *FIFA*, voucher, Liverpool, Antalya, Qatar

### Academic

funicular, peer, perpetual, adoration, kaleidoscope, mosaic, magnificent, victorious, staggers, precariously, groggy, outwardly, patrolled, mayhem, foreseeable, tampered, incredulously, scaffolds, cherishes, contrast, unavoidable, eerie, hubbub, ajar, agitated, disastrous, sheepishly, equivalent, dramatically, pang, eavesdrop, culprit, dilemma, meddle, tampered, corroborates, instrumental, fumbling, blatantly, eerie, coax

## AFTER READING

### Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite textual evidence with their answers.**

### Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

#### Chapters 1-8

1. What does Mr. Abdo tell the class?
2. Where is the bombing?
3. Who picks Sami up from school? Where does Sami go?
4. Who is at the mall where the bombing took place?
5. What does Sami remember about what he asked Mama to do?
6. Where does Sami go after Joseph's house?
7. How do Mama and Sara look when Sami saw them?
8. How does Baba explain the conflict to Sami?
9. What does Sami overhear Mama saying on the phone?
10. How does Sara act when Sami sees her at home?
11. What does Tete give Sami?
12. What does Tete tell Sami that Sara saw at the bombing?

13. What does Mama tell Sami about why she's cleaning and packing up their things? Where are they going?
14. How does Sami react when Mama tells him they're leaving Syria? What does she say about Joseph and the other families? Why does she tell him that she didn't let him know earlier?
15. Why does Baba have to sell the car?
16. How does the landscape look as Sami and his family were driving away? What does Sami realize?
17. What happens to Uncle Bashir, Baba's younger brother?
18. How did Baba say that the rebels got into Damascus? How does this explain how the war began?
19. Where do Sami and his family first fly to?
20. What does the cab driver say about the change of plan? Where do Sami and his family go?
21. Who does Sami meet at the hiding place in the apartment? What does he tell him? What does it make Sami realize?
22. What does Baba say about the boats to Greece? How does Sami feel about it?
23. What does Aadam tell Sami about his story?

**Chapters 8-19**

24. What does Sami tell Aadam about his own story? What does he tell him about Damascus?
25. Which teams do Sami and Aadam root for in football?
26. How does Sami help Sara when she's sad?
27. What does Sami ask Baba to do with Aadam?
28. What does Sami let Aadam do against his Baba's will?
29. Why does Sami go into Baba's bag? How does Baba react? What does Sami say?
30. How does Baba explain why he didn't give Aadam money? What about if Sami falls in the water?
31. What does Baba give Aadam when they leave?
32. What does the boat look like? How does Sami react when they're about to get on?
33. What is the boat ride like? What happens to the dinghy?
34. Where do Sami and his family go after the boat ride? What goes through Sami's mind?
35. What does Mama tell Sami to say about where he's from? Where are they going? Who takes them there?
36. How does Sami feel as they get onto the plane? What does he think is going to happen?
37. What does Baba tell the airport staff about why they're in England? How does Sami react?



38. What happens after Baba tells the airport staff that they're seeking asylum? Where do Sami and his family go?
39. What does Baba show Miss Patel? How does Baba react?
40. What does Miss Patel tell them is going to happen?
41. Where do Sara and Mama go after they get to the detention center? What images does Sami say will stay with him?
42. What does the detention center look like? What does it remind Baba and Sami of? What does Sami think of to feel better?

### **Chapters 19-30**

43. Whose house does Baba tell Sami that they're going to?
44. What happens when Sami goes to shower? Who does he see when he gets back to Baba's room? What happens afterwards?
45. What does Miss Patel interview Sami about?
46. Who does Sami write a letter to? What does he say?
47. Where do Sami and his family go after the detention center?
48. What it is like at Uncle Muhammad's house? Who lives there and how does Sami feel about it?
49. What does Uncle Muhammad tell Sami about his new school?
50. How does Hassan act toward Sami?
51. What does Aunt Fatimah tell Sami about how to behave in their house? What does she call him under her breath?
52. Who does Sami email on the computer?
53. Where does Sami want to go? What does he read that makes him think that he can go there?
54. What emails does Sami discover on Baba's phone? How does it make Sami react?
55. What does Hassan tell Sami in his bedroom?
56. Where do Baba and Mama work in England?
57. What plan does Sami come up with?
58. Why does Baba tell Sami to not tell anyone that he and Mama are working?
59. Who does Sami talk to first at his new school? What does she ask him?

### **Chapters 30-Epilogue**

60. What do the students call Sami at his new school? How do they treat him?
61. When Sami's in the computer lab, what does he search for? Why?
62. Who is assigned to help Sami adjust to his new school?
63. What happens to Sami's plan?

64. How does Ali make Sami feel welcomed and accepted?
65. Who does Sami see at the fast-food shop? How does that person explain how he got to England?
66. How does Aunty Fatima react when they ask if Aadam can stay? What do Sami and his family do afterward?
67. Where do Sami, Aadam, and his family stay after they leave the house?
68. How do Baba and Mama act toward Sami in the hostel? Why? What do they say to him?
69. Where does Sami go instead of school? Who comes to get him? What does he make Sami realize?
70. What updates does Sami give Joseph? How is everyone in his family doing?

### Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. What does the title *Boy, Everywhere* mean to you after reading the book? Why do you think the author chose this particular title?
2. Explore the structure of this text. Does the story describe events chronologically, as comparison, cause and effect, or problems and solutions? Why do you think the author structured the text the way she did? How does this story compare to other texts you have read?
3. Why does Sami's family mean so much to him? How does he demonstrate his love to his mother, father, and sister throughout *Boy, Everywhere*?
4. How does author A. M. Dassu use flashbacks in *Boy, Everywhere*? Why do you think she decided to use this type of writing form?
5. How does Sami experience guilt after Mama and Sara were victims of the bombing? How does he cope with this throughout *Boy, Everywhere*? How does it change his perspective on life and what's important?
6. How can packing and moving create complex emotions? How does Sami feel as he goes through his belongings in his room when they're preparing to move? How does it get even more difficult once Mama tells him that he isn't allowed to bring a lot with him?
7. What does Sami learn about the importance of material things? How does his family's abrupt move make him learn about the real necessities in life?
8. How does Sami say his life changed after the bombings started? What do you think he means by, "We all know someone who'd been affected by the war, but I had stupidly thought it would never really affect me." Why do you think this statement is important?
9. When does Sami come to the realization that his life has been dramatically altered forever? How does this scene change Sami? What kinds of emotions does he experience?
10. What does Sami wish he did differently with his sister? How does the bombing and how it

affected Sara change Sami and his relationship with her? Why?

11. What does Jiddo's ring symbolize? Why did Tete give the ring to Sami in the first place, and how does he use it throughout the journey? What do you think it represents? How does it make Sami feel? Why? Do you have an object that you turn to like Jiddo's ring?
12. How does Sami feel when Baba tells him that he's proud of him after the incident in the detention center? Why is this scene different from the scene when Baba and Sami are in the apartment before the boat ride? How does this demonstrate their evolving relationship?
13. How does Baba's explanation of what to do if Sami falls in the water demonstrate Sami's family's journey as a whole? Why was it important for Sami to protect himself first, and then others, like Aadam, around him?
14. Playing football makes Sami feel alive—is there something, like a hobby or sport, that makes you feel better when you're having a tough time? How does it make you feel? Why?
15. How does being in England, in Hassan's room and in his new school, affect Sami? Why do you think he feels helpless and alone? What does it make him want to do?
16. What do Sami's friends throughout the book teach him? How do Joseph, Aadam, and Ali all help Sami cope with his situation and make him think differently about his life? How do each of them give Sami perspective?
17. How does Aadam's life teach Sami about his own, both when they're in Turkey and in England?

### Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. **Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion.** You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. What is one big thought you have after reading this book? Think about how Sami navigates and experiences trauma throughout *Boy, Everywhere*. How does he process trauma and extreme change during the story?
2. What do you think is A. M. Dassu's message to the reader? Think about possible motivations behind A. M. Dassu's intentions for writing the book. What do you think she wanted to tell her readers?
3. Have students make a text-to-self connection. What kinds of connections did you make from this book to your own life? What do Sami's experiences, thoughts, and feelings mean to you?
4. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books while you read *Boy, Everywhere*? Why did you make those connections?
5. Have students make a text-to-world connection. What kind of connections did you make between this book and what you have seen in the world, such as online, on television, or in a newspaper? Why did this book make you think of that?
6. What does the meaning of home mean to you after reading? After reading *Boy, Everywhere*,

how did it make you think differently about what home can mean and what happens when your home life is completely uprooted?

7. How has a family member or friend close to you impacted your life? Sami and his father have a relationship that changes throughout the story. Sami also has friends that support him throughout *Boy, Everywhere*. Have you had a family member or other person who really changed your life? What were some things that person did that were significant to you?
8. Have students write a book review after reading *Boy, Everywhere*. Consult ReadWriteThink's lesson plan on how to teach students how to write book reviews (<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/what-think-writing-review-876.html>). Students can also refer to other book reviews for references. What did they enjoy about *Boy, Everywhere*? What would they tell a friend or another person who wants to read the book? Students can share their book reviews with small groups or the whole class.

### ELL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)  
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
  - Review several chapters and have students summarize what happened, first orally, and then in writing.
  - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about how they solved a problem in the past.
5. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.
6. The book contains Arabic words. Have students highlight them in the text, and then record them separately. Have students look up their definitions and share their knowledge about these words, if applicable.
7. Have students create a map and track Sami and his family's journey to England and continue to refer to it throughout *Boy, Everywhere*.

## Social and Emotional Learning

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4-6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1-3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4-6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of this book.

1. How does Sami demonstrate persistence and resilience throughout *Boy, Everywhere*? Identify a scene from the story that exemplifies how Sami is resilient. What made you choose this particular passage? How did it affect you and what did you learn from Sami after reading *Boy, Everywhere*?
2. What kinds of emotions does Sami grapple with after he finds out Sara and his mother are at the mall where the bombing happened? How do these emotions affect his thoughts and actions throughout the story? How does his guilt continue to stay with him during their escape from Syria and living in England?
3. Sami states, "I had to show strength too, it didn't matter how I felt. I had to make sure we got to England. I had to do it for Sara. I had to remember that." Why do you think Sami said this? How does this mentality help and hinder Sami during the story?
4. What are the coping strategies and techniques that Sami uses along the journey to England? How does he combat his negative thoughts and feelings in order to keep going? What happens when he arrives in England? How do his coping techniques change?
5. If possible (and cognizant of your students and their own backgrounds), unpack the scene between Baba and Sami when Sami goes into his bag. Why did Sami do this? Why do you think Baba reacted the way he did? What would you do to help Aadam? How does this scene exemplify the tensions that the whole family feels during their journey?
6. Hassan's behavior toward Sami at Uncle Muhammad's is very difficult for Sami to engage with. How does it make him feel? What does Sami do when Hassan engages with him? Have you ever had to deal with someone like Hassan in your school or family? What did you do?
7. After the long, treacherous journey, what was it like for Sami to go to a new school? How was he treated by his new classmates? How did it make him feel? What did it make you think about being a new student or how to treat someone new in your class or school? In the future, how can you help that person in a way that would make them feel good and supported?
8. How does trauma affect Sami and his family members differently? How do they each cope with the aftermath of the bombing and the upheaval of their home life?
9. Reflect on Sami's quote, "I didn't realize how good life was until it all went wrong." How does this impact his social and emotional development throughout the story? How does this mentality affect his character development?

- 10.** Encourage students to identify passages where characters manage and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways. In a chart with four columns, write: What was the cause of the conflict? What was the consequence of the conflict? How does the character(s) resolve the problem? What are additional ways the character(s) could have solved the problem? What advice would you give?
- 11.** Choose an emotion that interests you: happiness, sadness, fear, anxiety, frustration, hope, perseverance, and so on. Illustrate or act out what that emotion looks like in *Boy, Everywhere*.

## INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

### English/Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Encourage students to prepare a presentation or write an essay about how *Boy, Everywhere* reflects the hardships that displaced and refugee families experience all over the world.** Students can conduct additional research online about refugees from the Background section of this guide. As always, be cognizant of students who may be refugees or have experienced displacement in the past. How does Sami's story in *Boy, Everywhere* shed light on other refugee stories that you may have read about in the news or in other books? Why is it important to read about all kinds of refugee experiences and what can you do to support refugees in the future?
- **Examine the different literary elements that author A. M. Dassu uses throughout *Boy, Everywhere*.** Have students come up with a list and select portions of the text that showcase a specific literary device (i.e. foreshadowing, flashback, metaphor, etc). Afterward, students can select one literary device and write about how that was impactful when reading *Boy, Everywhere*. How do literary devices make the story engaging, and how do they contribute to the story overall? See PBS's Literary Elements and Techniques video for more information about how to teach about literary devices (<https://ny.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/litel18-fig/literary-elements-and-techniques-figurative-language/>).
- **As a follow-up activity, analyze the use of literary devices specifically in Sami's boat journey.** How does A. M. Dassu create the environment and set the stage? How does she describe the boat journey and what it's like for Sami? What kinds of descriptions and figurative language does she use? Have students go back to the boat journey in the book and look at it carefully, examining the word choice, sentence structure, and use of dialogue. Afterward, students can reflect on the way that language can create a vivid scene and imagery as you're reading. How is that important with your own reading and writing? Have students write about a time that they felt scared, using what they learned about literary devices to influence their own writing.
- **Analyze privilege and what it looks like in *Boy, Everywhere*.** How does Sami come to the realization about his privilege during the story? How does his journey to England and Aadam's own experiences make him understand about how fortunate his family is? Show evidence from the text about how Sami's perspective on the world changes in *Boy, Everywhere* and how he thinks about his experiences differently when he meets other people during his

journey who are much less prosperous than his family. Have students also reflect on how *Boy, Everywhere* showcases a range of refugee stories, and how that's impacted their perspective on refugee experiences. Students can share their opinions in an essay.

- **Have students come up with a list of questions to ask author A. M. Dassu.** What do students want to know about the process behind writing a children's book? How did the author come up with the idea to write *Boy, Everywhere*? How did she conduct her research on Syria and the experiences of refugee families? Students can read and refer to the blog post, "Blog Tour: *Boy, Everywhere*—Interview with A. M. Dassu" (<https://readablelife.com/2020/10/21/blog-tour-boy-everywhere-interview-with-a-m-dassu/>). Consider contacting A. M. Dassu and inviting her to your school, library, or other relevant setting for a virtual author visit (<https://amdassu.com/>).
- **Assign students different characters from *Boy, Everywhere* and have them brainstorm about a guiding question: what and how can this character teach us?** Students can think about different characters to examine as a whole class and then break into smaller, specific character groups. Encourage students to think about how characters have made mistakes and also have done good things in the book, and ultimately what they learned from that character. Have students share out their findings: How is this character important to the book, and what lessons did they teach us over the course of the story? How did their actions develop the narrative, and why are they crucial to understanding the meaning of the book?
- **Analyze how Sami's life differs in Damascus compared to England.** Students can use a graphic organizer for additional support to differentiate between the two locations. How does Sami feel in Damascus as compared to his new home in England? What's different? What's similar? How does Sami feel in both places? What does each place signify to Sami? Students can write an essay after planning and create illustrations to demonstrate Sami in both places.
- **Have students identify a place in the story where Sami's character changes in *Boy, Everywhere*.** Why do students think that was a point where Sami changed? How does Sami feel before the change, what causes the change, and then how does he feel and act after? Create a graphic organizer with a column on the left that says "Before," a column in the middle that says "During," and a column on the right that says "After." Afterward, have students write an essay using evidence from the text to support their findings about Sami's character change.
- **Envision a sequel to *Boy, Everywhere* and have students title the second book.** What do they think it would be called? Then, students can write the first chapter to the second book. How does Sami do at his school? What is his friendship like with Ali, Mark, and Aadam? Has Sara improved, and how do Baba and Mama do in their careers? Students can also create a cover for the book (for more details see question 1 in the Art/Media section of this guide).



## Social Studies/Geography

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Conduct a research study on the history of the Syrian conflict.** Refer to the Background section of this guide for additional resources on teaching about refugees and the Syrian conflict. Guiding questions to ask include: When did this conflict begin? Where does this conflict take place? Why did it start? Who is involved? How does it impact individuals, communities, and the country as a whole, as well as the world? TeachMideast has more resources on the Syrian conflict, its history, as well as resources for teaching about it to students in your relevant setting ([https://teachmideast.org/resource\\_guides/syria-civil-war-and-refugee/](https://teachmideast.org/resource_guides/syria-civil-war-and-refugee/)).
- **Encourage students to learn about refugees and forced displacement.** It's critical to be cognizant and aware of the students in your classroom when teaching about these topics. See the Background Section of this guide for how to teach students who are refugees. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has teaching materials on refugees, asylum, migration, and statelessness for further information on how to extend your teaching about refugees in your respective setting (<https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/teaching-about-refugees.html>). Why do people become refugees? What are the different factors that come into play in the refugee experience?
- **Have students read more stories about refugee children and how their lives were impacted by the Syrian conflict.** Students can read accounts from UNICEF, "Letters of frustration and hope from Syrian refugee children now in Europe" (<https://www.unicef.org/eca/stories/letters-from-syrian-refugee-children>). Afterward, students can reflect on what it was like to read an actual account of children who lived through the experience of displacement. Then, students can compare the children's stories to Sami's in *Boy, Everywhere*. What was similar? What was different? How do you think author A. M. Dassu incorporated this kind of research into her writing? Students can share their findings in an essay.
- **Have students conduct a geography study on Syria.** TeachMidEast has more resources about the geography and different landmarks in Syria (<https://teachmideast.org/country-profiles/syria/>). What are the major cities? What landmarks do they pass as Sami and his family leave the country? What countries border Syria? What is the climate like? Students can share their findings in a presentation format of their choosing with photographs, text boxes, and other visual aids.
- **Encourage students to learn more about refugees' journeys and how they are different around the world.** To provide students more context and information about how refugees' experiences vary, have them read the article, "Refugees around the world: Stories of survival" (<https://www.msf.org/refugees-around-world-stories-survival-world-refugee-day>). As students read the stories, have them refer to the map and point out where these people had to leave and then where they traveled to. Afterward, students can reflect on what it was like to hear about other accounts and how refugees differ all over the world.

- **Plot out Sami and his family's journey on a map.** Using colored pushpins, track Sami and his family's journey to England on a large map in small groups or as a whole class. On the map, identify the different modes of transportation that they used in the different areas. How is this an important activity to do in order to visualize how far Sami and his family went? What did students learn about geography in the Middle East and Europe that they hadn't known before?

### Art & Media

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1-3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4-6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7-9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, and Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **For the question about the sequel activity in the English/Language Arts section, have students draw a cover image for their follow-up to *Boy, Everywhere*.** What kind of materials do they want to use for the cover? Encourage students to think about what they think will happen in the second book, and how that reflects the artwork for the cover. How can they use the current cover to inspire their work?
- **Look at the article, “We never chose this’: Refugees use art to imagine a better world”** (<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/gallery/2019/dec/25/we-never-chose-this-refugees-use-art-to-imagine-a-better-world-in-pictures>). Have students reflect on this artwork and what they learned from looking at the photographs. How can artwork help you process difficult things in your life? Afterward, students can create a drawing, illustration, or photo collage about what they learned about the refugee experience in *Boy, Everywhere* and share with a partner, small group, or whole class.

### School-Home Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **Interview a family member about the history of their family.** Have students talk about their country of origin. Why is it important to understand your family history? Why is it important to know the different parts of the world where your family is from? If students do not know their family history, have them interview someone about the history of your town or city.
- **If applicable, encourage students to share the different refugee experiences with family members.** Have students talk with their families about what they learned from Sami's refugee experience, and share the resources from the Background section of this guide with families for additional research. How can students and families support refugees in their immediate communities? The International Rescue Committee has more information about how to welcome refugees in the United States (<https://www.rescue.org/article/how-help-refugees-united-states-12-ways-stand-welcome>).



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**A. M. Dassu** won the international We Need Diverse Books mentorship award in 2017. She is the deputy editor of SCBWI-British Isles' *Words & Pictures* magazine and a director at Inclusive Minds, an organization for people who are passionate about inclusion, diversity, equality, and accessibility in children's literature. Her work has been published by *The Huffington Post*, the *Times Educational Supplement*, *SCOOP Magazine*, Lee & Low Books, and DK Books. She lives in the heart of England. You can find her on Twitter as @a\_reflective or at [amdassu.com](https://amdassu.com).

### REVIEWS

"A Syrian refugee story that disrupts stereotypes while tugging at readers' heartstrings...Compelling, informative, hopeful." –*Kirkus Reviews*, **starred review**

"This isn't an easy read, but it's an absolutely essential one." –*Booklist*, **starred review**

"Carefully researched, wholly convincing, it's a gripping, uncompromising debut, super-charged with the power of empathy." –*The Guardian*

"A fantastically well-researched and empathetic story that gives humanity and respect to those seeking sanctuary, busting a number of stereotypes about refugees along the way." –*Amnesty International*

"Such a realistic story, Sami could be my son, daughter or any of their friends." –*Mayida Yord, Teacher in Damascus, Syria*

"It's amazing. It's like she was amongst us. It's like she's been living here. She knows how people think and react." –*Mohamad Ghabash, 12-year-old student in Damascus, Syria*.

## ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

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