



The Sky at Our Feet

By Nadia Hashimi

A gripping story about two brave children on the run in the Big Apple.

This timely story features two American children: Jason, the son of a single mom from Afghanistan who has overstayed her visa in America, and Max, a white American girl who has epilepsy. Serendipity brings the two children together and leads to an exciting but nerve-wracking adventure around New York City.

Notes Suitable For:

Australian Curriculum English Year 5, 6, 7 and 8. NSW Stages 3 and 4

Curriculum Summary

ACELT 1619 EN4-8D, ACELT1807 EN4-8D

Themes

War, refugees, perseverance, adventure, challenges, Epilepsy

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Book Summary

Nadia Hashimi (*One Half from the East*) addresses the plight of undocumented immigrants while taking readers on a glorious, madcap race through Manhattan. Twelve-year-old Jason Riazzi, the novel's guileless narrator, has just learned that although he is an American citizen, his mother is not, having overstayed her student visa. When he sees her being taken away by two official-looking men, he assumes that she is being sent back to Afghanistan, and he boards a train from New Jersey to Penn Station, hoping to use a partial street address to locate his Auntie Seema. A concussion lands him in the hospital, where he meets the delightfully smart-mouthed Max, a self-proclaimed genius who is hooked up to a slew of wires. Both strangers to New York City, they escape the hospital together and are soon navigating the subways, the annual marathon, and the Central Park Zoo while being pursued by frantic adults. A winsome supporting cast, snappy dialogue, and nonstop adventures just shy of fantastic make this a thought-provoking, heart-warming page-turner.

Author

Nadia Hashimi was born and raised in New York and New Jersey. Both her parents were born in Afghanistan and left in the early 1970s, before the Soviet invasion. In 2002, Nadia made her first trip to Afghanistan with her parents. She is a paediatrician and lives with her family in the Washington, DC, suburbs. She is the author of three books for adults, as well as the middle grade novels *One Half from the East* and *The Sky at Our Feet*. Visit her online at www.nadiashimi.com.

Author Inspiration

Nadia Hashimi wrote this books for various reasons, as a daughter of refugees she understood what it was like for them to struggle for identity whilst re-establishing themselves in a new country. Nadia feels that it's important to talk to children about what what's happening around the world and how diversity is enriching our lives.

Discussion Topics

1. The heroic protagonists exhibit a good balance between independent problem-solving and making mistakes

Question: Discuss a time where you had to problem solve something that was important?

2. Explore the similarities and differences in Max and Jason's lives: how they grew up, their relationships with their families, the ways they use their wits, and their levels of trust.
3. Most children with epilepsy lead full, active lives. Discuss epilepsy and what your role is when someone you know has a seizure.
4. Complex issues of illegal immigration. Discuss with the students their understanding of their understanding.

The questions below are discussion points addressing the issues highlighted in the novel. Taken from the UNHCR website <http://www.unhcr.org>

Who is a refugee?

1: Some asylum-seekers are not granted refugee status but can be granted the right to stay somewhere safe for a temporary amount of time. This status is often offered through a more local or regional agreement.

Question: -

What do you think the benefits can be of having different types of protection for those fleeing dangerous situations and for countries accepting to host them from those dangers?

Is it better to have one type of protection or many?

Why?

2: Some people are forced to leave their home environments because their natural environment is no longer habitable. We can view these people as forcibly displaced.

To what extent should international law and organizations provide shelter for them?

Should these people be classified as refugees?

3. If a country is struggling to provide for its own citizens, should it take in refugees?

What reasons are there for taking in or not taking in refugees?

Resources

Epilepsy

For many children, stories with pictures are often the best way to learn. Here are some stories you can share. You might want to tell your child's teacher about them too.

- [My Friend Matty: A Story About Living with Epilepsy](#) - A colorful picture book about the active, happy life of a third grade boy with epilepsy.
- [Because You Are My Friend](#) - A very simple, easy to understand story in which a boy tells his friends that he has epilepsy and that 'I know you'll understand.'
- [All About Epilepsy](#)

This book has a number of stories about how epilepsy affects different families. It's especially good to share with children who have epilepsy and their sisters and brothers. You can also print out some of the pages so children can colour in the simple line drawings.

- [Get Going Gang Coloring Book](#)

This fun, easy-to-understand coloring book teaches young children about epilepsy. Print out pages for your child for your child to color.

- Visit the [Epilepsy Foundation Store](#) for other books and materials for children.