



REFUGEE

BY ERIC COBLE

BASED ON THE BOOK BY
ALAN GRATZ

A Guide for Educators

To accompany Florida Repertory Theatre's Touring & Lunchbox Production

Created and Compiled by Anna McCullers, Education Outreach Manager & Skylar Shelton, Education Intern
(2018-2019)

Updated by DJ Kelly, Education Outreach and Tour Manager (2025-2026)

Programming Sponsored by: The Baker Family Foundation



INTRODUCTION

Dear Teachers and Community Leaders,

Thank you for supporting arts education in SWFL!

With your help, Florida Rep Education now reaches upwards of 33,000 students per year, and that number is growing every day. It is our mission to enrich the lives of our young people with exceptional theatre experiences, and we are looking forward to sharing the world premiere of *Refugee* with you and your students.

We highly recommend that you read the novel and prepare your students for the performance by introducing them to the material. Please know that "Refugee" deals with themes that can be very emotional, such as leaving home, the separation of families, and witnessing the death of a friend. Please use this study guide as a resource to help your students explore the context of the story, make connections to the performance, and complete activities that will deepen their learning.

We are thrilled to be able to tell such an important story, and we hope you find this a helpful resource.

Sincerely,

The Florida Rep Education Staff

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DISCLAIMER

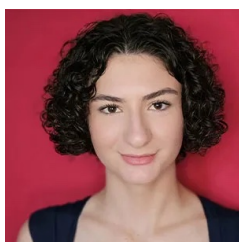
Refugee explores the journeys of three refugees escaping dangerous situations in their home countries. In order to sufficiently represent these important stories in a theatrical manner, **the show does contain sound effects of gunshots, bombs, and explosions**. Please advise your students and teachers as this may be disturbing to some.



CAST



Ethan Antonio León
Mahmoud



Jana Denning
Isabel



Cody Klimek
Josef



Patrice Eakman
Young Woman



Hannah Easton
Woman



Gabriel Hunyor
Man

CREATIVE TEAM

Director
Megan Leonard

Tour/Stage Manager
DJ Kelly

Scenic Designer
Jordan Moore

Costume Designer
Amanda Miller

Sound Designer
Braden Downing

Prop Artisan
Miranda White

Production Manager
Charles Clark

EDUCATION TEAM

Education Director

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Outreach Manager

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Asst. Education Director

Megan Leonard

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Meet the Author: Alan Gratz

Alan was born and raised in Knoxville, Tennessee, home of the 1982 World's Fair. After a carefree but humid childhood, Alan attended the University of Tennessee, where he earned a College Scholars degree with a specialization in creative writing, and, later, a Master's degree in English education. He now lives with his wife Wendi and his daughter Jo in the high country of Western North Carolina, where he enjoys playing games, eating pizza, and, perhaps not too surprisingly, reading books.



Photo by Wes Stitt

Where did you grow up and go to school? I went to middle school and high school at Webb School in Knoxville, then went to the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, for both undergraduate and graduate school.

How old are you? I was born in 1972. You can do the math.

Where do you live? In a little town called Bakersville in Western North Carolina.

Do you have a day job? Yes. It's writing. This is my full-time job! (Pretty awesome, huh?) And despite what my dad thinks, I really am in my office researching, outlining, writing, or taking care of writing business stuff all day.

If you weren't a writer, what would you be? I was an eighth grade English teacher before I was a full-time writer, so I suspect that's what I would be doing. My dream job, outside of writing novels? Game show host. I also wish I could draw comics.

Do you have any hobbies? Sure. I love playing board games and video games and role-playing games. I also like building things, like chicken coops and woodsheds and catapults. I collect action figures and other toys. Oh, and I read a lot, of course. Books, magazines, and comic books.

Who were your favorite authors/what were your favorite books as a kid? To tell the truth, I didn't read a lot of books when I was a kid. I was more likely to be out building a fort in the woods or inventing a fake country or playing video games. I read books, yes, but I didn't always have my nose buried in a book all the time the way some people do. I read a lot of classics, and loved books like Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. I also really liked *The Westing Game* by Ellen Raskin, *The Phantom Tollbooth* by Norton Juster, and mysteries like *The Hardy Boys* and *Encyclopedia Brown*. I do wish I'd read more as a kid though, if only so I wouldn't feel so very behind with all the great books I want to read now!

Where did you get the idea for *Refugee*?

Refugee started for me with the story of the MS *St. Louis*. It was a real ship, and it was famous back in the 1940s, and has been ever since. There have been books about it, and movies, even an opera! But there wasn't a book about the MS *St. Louis* for young readers. So I decided to write one!

I was in the middle of figuring out who my main character would be and what the story would be when my family and I went on a vacation to the Florida Keys. One morning we got up to walk on the beach, and we found a raft refugees had taken to come to the United States. No one was on board, and I still don't know where it came from, but my best guess is that it came from Cuba. It made me think—why was I writing a book about Jewish refugees seventy-five years ago, when there were refugees right here, right now, I could be writing about?

And of course at the same time, I was seeing images on the news and on the Internet about the Syrian Civil War, and the millions of Syrian refugees looking for some place of safety. I couldn't decide—which book should I write? They are all important stories! And then I realized—why do I have to write three books? What if I just wrote one book, and combined all three stories? And that's how *Refugee* was born.

Are any of the three main characters in *Refugee* real people?

No. But every single thing that happens to them really happened to a refugee at some point. So each of my main characters and their families represent many different refugee stories, all of which were real.

from AlanGratz.com

If you didn't write your books, would you want to read them? I get this question a lot, and it always surprises me. Maybe it's because I write books meant for young readers and I'm not "young" anymore? I guess what some people don't realize is that a lot of adults — including me — still read young adult novels. So yeah, I'd read my own books even if I wasn't the author. I can't imagine writing a book I wouldn't read! I write about only those stories and characters I'm interested in. If I didn't like them, I wouldn't write about them — especially since it takes such a long time and such a lot of work to write a book. If I didn't like what I was writing, it would be awful — and the books probably would be too!

Did you always want to be a writer? When did you decide to be a writer? My original dream was to be a Jedi master. Unable to master the Force, I quickly turned to writing. When I was in grade school I produced a newspaper called the Blue Spring Lane News for my street, and by fifth grade I had written my first book. It was called Real Kids Don't Eat Spinach, and it was a play on a popular humor book at the time called Real Men Don't Eat Quiche. I kept writing stories and newspaper articles all through middle school and high school, and studied writing in college. I guess I should have seen this coming.

Where do you get your ideas? All over the place. In line at the grocery store, reading a magazine, surfing the internet. There are stories everywhere if you're looking for them. My favorite writing teacher showed me the trick of keeping an idea book, a journal where I can scribble a good piece of dialogue, an idea for a character, a random quote — anything. I've filled five and a half books in fifteen years. Not everything in my idea books will turn into a novel, but they're great places to experiment and have fun without the pressure of turning them into a real story.

How do I become a writer? Well, you sit down at your computer and start writing. If you want to write well, I suggest you (a) spy on your friends and family and listen to the way people talk, (b) keep your eyes open and watch everything that happens in the world around you, (c) always start in the middle of the action, (d) make sure your story has a beginning, middle, and an end, (e) read a lot and imitate your favorite authors. Note I didn't say copy what they write — just how they write. And did I mention you actually have to sit down at your computer or your notebook and start writing?

When and where do you do your writing? I write on a computer. I love writing by hand, but it just takes too much time. I find that my thoughts get ahead of my ability to scribble, and then I lose whatever it was I was thinking about. Typing on the computer is so much faster, and allows me to cut and paste and rework with the words right in front of me. As to where I write, my family and I live in a house we designed and built (a lot of) ourselves, and I have a small office with a nice view of the woods. When I'm working on a new book, I research, outline or write from around 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. every week day.

How long does it take you to write a book? The research on historical novels actually takes longer than the writing. The idea for *Samurai Shortstop* had been percolating for a month or two when I thought of the title and a rough story idea. Then I hit the library, and for the next few months I only did research. When I felt like I could construct a chapter outline of my story, I stopped reading and started building the story. The outline probably took me a month to refine (it was very detailed!), and then I began writing. Once I begin writing, especially when I have a detailed outline that tells me where the story is going, I can write a chapter a day, sometimes two if I'm really cruising. At that rate, I can have a first draft in about a month — but then begins the long editing phase. I rewrite things that are choppy or don't work, bounce the story off trusted early readers, and then go through another round or three of corrections. From idea to final draft, it probably took me about nine months to write *Samurai Shortstop*. After it sold, I spent another year doing more research and going through even *more* rounds of revision with my editor. A year to a year and a half is about my average for most books now.

What do you do about writers block?

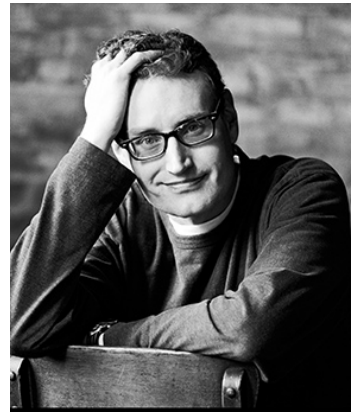
I used to suffer from writers block all the time — I'd be sitting at my computer, ready to write, and have no idea what I was going to write. The clock would tick away, and with it would go the time I had to write that day. Then I'd come out of my office mad that I hadn't gotten words on the page. Then I learned to outline, and that's made all the difference. I now outline every novel I write, chapter by chapter, before I ever write the first word. If I hear a scene in my head, I scribble it down — when the muse speaks, you listen and take notes! — but I never try to push past the inspiration in the outline phase.

Once I know in detail what is going to happen, I sit down to the keyboard and try to figure out how to tell it. Those are two very different processes, but most writers try to tackle them both at the same time. Separating them was a real breakthrough for me. I still get writers block (of a kind) when I can't figure out what's supposed to happen next during the outline phase, but at least then I don't come out of my office thinking that I've wasted time by not getting words and paragraphs and chapters written. Once I have the outline finished, I never get writers block — which is important when you're in a mood to knock out first draft pages. I look at my outline in the morning, read what's going to happen, and then start writing it.

Do you belong to a critique group? I have a critique group of one—my wife, Wendi. She reads everything I write, and gives me good, honest feedback on it. Sometimes too honest, and I don't want to talk to her for a few days, but then I get over it. Usually.

from AlanGratz.com

Meet the Playwright: Eric Coble



"I grew up in a pretty impoverished world -- there was one family with a TV. So we were forced to create our own stories with our bodies, sticks, rocks, whatever came to hand. And we'd create entire complex worlds of characters. I just never really stopped doing that. It morphed into acting in high school and college, but the drive to tell stories and play never left. And by acting in so many plays by so many authors (Shakespeare, Moliere, Shepard, Aykourn, etc), I felt what it was like to have those words live in one's body — which I think has heavily influenced me as a playwright. I was tasting samples of some of the best wordsmiths out there, and then got to see how I could join in that conversation as a writer. I shifted into playwriting when my son was born and I was staying home with him, and have been playing in that world ever since."

- Eric Coble

People find this hard to believe, but Eric Coble was born in Edinburgh, Scotland and raised on the Navajo and Ute reservations in New Mexico and Colorado, playing with rocks, sticks, seeing 1940's serials at the movie theatre thirty miles away, and wandering the desert with his friends trying to avoid cactus until he was 15 years old.

Much of that time was spent writing/drawing comics and rigging up poorly built stage shows (much falling out of trees ensued). Moving off the reservation led to acting in high school, which led to majoring in English at Fort Lewis College (Colorado) before winging it to Ohio University for an MFA in Acting. Along the way he started writing plays, which (thank god) were well-received enough to spur him on.

Since then he has written a lot of scripts for adults and not-quite adults, including "The Velocity of Autumn" (which opened on Broadway in 2014), "Bright Ideas", "The Dead Guy", "Natural Selection", "For Better", "Southern Rapture", "A Girl's Guide To Coffee", "My Barking Dog", and "The Giver" which have been produced Off-Broadway, in all 50 states, and on several continents, including productions at Manhattan Class Company, The Kennedy Center, Playwrights Horizons, Arena Stage, Actors Theatre of Louisville Humana Festival, the Denver Center, New York and Edinburgh Fringe Festivals, Alliance Theatre, Cleveland Play House, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, South Coast Repertory, Florida Repertory Theatre, Indiana Repertory Theatre, Asolo Repertory, Coterie Theatre, Curious Theatre, Actors Theatre of Charlotte, Oregon Children's Theatre, People's Light and Theatre Company, Stages Repertory Theatre, Great Lakes Theater Festival, and The Contemporary American Theatre Festival.



Eric Coble and Lois Lowry answering audience's questions after a performance of *The Giver* at Florida Repertory Theatre.

Awards include an Emmy nomination, the 2011 AATE Distinguished Play Award for Best Adaptation, the Chorpenning Playwriting Award for Body of Work, the AT&T Onstage Award, National Theatre Conference Playwriting Award, Edgerton Foundation New American Play Award, an NEA Playwright in Residence Grant, a TCG Extended Collaboration Grant, the Cleveland Arts Prize, two Creative Workforce Fellowships from Cuyahoga Arts and Culture, and four Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Grants.

Eric has now traded the cactus of the southwest for the poison ivy of northeast Ohio, where he is a member of the Cleveland Play House Playwrights Unit. He does miss the mesas, but can't stop admiring the lush trees and that huge body of water just north of him.

from EricCoble.com

Berlin, Germany: 1938

Josef's Home: The Holocaust, Year Five

*"Can this be true? This is the twentieth century, not the Middle Ages.
Who would allow such crimes to be committed? How could the world
remain silent?"*

- Elie Wiesel



A group of men read a propaganda billboard titled "The Jews Are Our Misfortune" in 1933.

On January 30, 1933, Adolf Hitler was named chancellor, the most powerful position in the German government. President von Hindenburg hoped Hitler could lead the nation out of its grave political and economic crisis. Hitler was the leader of the right-wing National Socialist German Workers Party (called "the Nazi Party" for short).

Once in power, Hitler moved quickly to end German democracy. He convinced his cabinet to invoke emergency clauses of the constitution that permitted the suspension of individual freedoms of press, speech, and assembly. Special security forces – including the Gestapo, the Storm Troopers (SA), and the SS – murdered or arrested leaders of opposing political parties (Communists, Socialists, and Liberals).



Students salute their teacher in Berlin, January 1934. Most teachers in Nazi Germany were required to join the National Socialist Teachers League, which mandated that they take an oath of loyalty and obedience to Hitler. If their lessons did not conform to party ideals, they risked being reported by their students or colleagues.

On March 23, 1933, the Law to Remedy the Distress of the People and the Reich (The Enabling Act) was passed, and Germany fell under dictatorship. The Enabling Act allowed Hitler to enact laws, including ones that violated the Weimar Constitution, without approval of either parliament or President von Hindenburg. Since the passage of this law depended upon a two-thirds majority vote in parliament, Hitler and the Nazi Party ensured the outcome by intimidation and persecution. They prevented all 81 Communists and 26 of the 120 Social Democrats from taking their seats, detaining them in "protective detention" in Nazi-controlled camps. In addition, they stationed SA and SS members in the chamber to intimidate the remaining representatives and guarantee their compliance. In the end, the law passed with more than the required two-thirds majority, with only the remaining Social Democrats voting against it.

With complete control, the Nazis began to put their racial ideology into practice. They believed that the Germans were "racially superior" and that there was a struggle for survival between them and inferior races. They saw Jews, Roma (Gypsies), and the handicapped as a serious biological threat to the purity of the "German (Aryan) Race," what they called the "master race".

Jews, who numbered about 525,000 in Germany (less than one percent of the total population in 1933) were the principal target of Nazi hatred. The Nazis identified Jews as a race and defined this race as "inferior." They also spewed hate-mongering propaganda that unfairly blamed Jews for Germany's economic depression and the country's defeat in World War I (1914-1918).

New laws forced Jews out of their civil service jobs, university and law court positions, and other areas of public life. Between 1937 and 1939, new anti-Jewish regulations segregated Jews further and made daily life very difficult for them. Jews could not attend public schools; go to theaters, cinema, public playgrounds, museums, swimming pools, or vacation resorts; or reside or even walk in certain sections of German cities.

Although Jews were the main target of Nazi hatred, the Nazis also persecuted other groups they viewed as racially or genetically "inferior." Nazi racial ideology was supported by scientists who advocated "selective breeding" (eugenics) to "improve" the human race. Laws passed between 1933 and 1935 aimed to reduce the future number of genetic "inferiors" through involuntary sterilization programs: 320,000 to 350,000 individuals judged physically or mentally handicapped were subjected to surgical or radiation procedures so they could not have children.

Compiled from resources by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Kristallnacht: Night of Broken Glass

On the night of November 9, 1938, violence against Jews broke out across the Reich. German propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels and other Nazis carefully organized the pogroms (massacres of a particular ethnic group). In two days, over 250 synagogues were burned, over 7,000 Jewish businesses were trashed and looted, dozens of Jewish people were killed, and Jewish cemeteries, hospitals, schools, and homes were looted while police and fire brigades stood by. The pogroms became known as Kristallnacht, the "Night of Broken Glass," for the shattered glass from the store windows that littered the streets.



A shattered storefront of a Jewish-owned shop destroyed during Kristallnacht in Berlin, Germany on November 10, 1938.

The morning after the pogroms, 30,000 German Jewish men were arrested for the "crime" of being Jewish and sent to concentration camps, where hundreds of them perished. Some Jewish women were also arrested and sent to local jails. Businesses owned by Jews were not allowed to reopen unless they were managed by non-Jews. Curfews were placed on Jews, limiting the hours of the day they could leave their homes.

After the Kristallnacht, life was even more difficult for German and Austrian Jewish children and teenagers. Already barred from entering museums, public playgrounds, and swimming pools, now they were expelled from the public schools. Jewish children, like their parents, were completely segregated in Germany. Most families tried desperately to leave, though most foreign countries, including the United States, Canada, Britain, and France, were unwilling to admit very large numbers of refugees.



Local residents watch as the synagogue in Oberramstadt, Germany is destroyed during Kristallnacht.

Concentration Camps



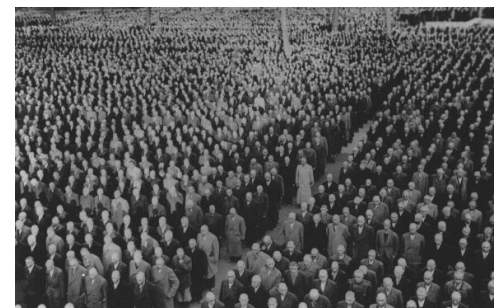
From its rise to power in 1933, the Nazi regime built a series of detention facilities to imprison and eliminate so-called "enemies of the state." Most prisoners in the early concentration camps were German Communists, Socialists, Social Democrats, Roma (Gypsies), Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, and persons accused of "asocial" or socially deviant behavior. These facilities were called "concentration camps" because those imprisoned there were physically "concentrated" in one location.

Following the German invasion of Poland in September 1939, the Nazis opened forced-labor camps where thousands of prisoners died from exhaustion, starvation, and exposure. SS units guarded the camps. During World War II, the Nazi camp system expanded rapidly. In some camps, Nazi doctors performed medical experiments on prisoners.

To facilitate the "Final Solution" (the genocide or mass destruction of the Jews), the Nazis established killing centers in Poland, the country with the largest Jewish population. The killing centers were designed for efficient mass murder. Chelmno, the first killing center, opened in December 1941 where Jews and Roma were gassed in mobile gas vans. In 1942, the Nazis opened the Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka killing centers to systematically murder the Jews of the Generalgouvernement (the territory in the interior of occupied Poland).

The Nazis constructed gas chambers (rooms that filled with poison gas to kill those inside) to increase killing efficiency and to make the process more impersonal for the perpetrators. At the Auschwitz camp complex, the Birkenau killing center had four gas chambers. During the height of deportations to the camp, up to 6,000 Jews were gassed there each day.

Millions of people were imprisoned and abused in the various types of Nazi camps. Under SS management, the Germans and their collaborators murdered more than three million Jews in the killing centers alone. Only a small fraction of those imprisoned in Nazi camps survived.



Prisoners stand during roll call the Buchenwald concentration camp in 1938.

Compiled from resources by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Havana, Cuba: 1994

Isabel's Home: The Special Period, Year Four

"All of a sudden, all of us had nothing, nothing. No energy, no electricity, no water, no soap, no nothing." - Martha Nuñez

On January 1, 1959, revolutionaries successfully overthrew the current Cuban government. As the undisputed leader of the revolution, Fidel Castro became the commander in chief of the armed forces in Cuba's new government. In February of 1959, Castro became premier and head of the government, transforming the country into the first communist state in the Western Hemisphere. He held the title of premier until 1976 when he began a long tenure as president of the Council of State and the Council of Ministers.

In 1960, the Soviet Union's Vice Premier Anastas Mikoyan made a trade agreement with Castro and began buying Cuban sugar at inflated prices, beginning an increasing dependence on the superpower nation. Cuba's entire economy hinged on the Soviet Union, and when it collapsed in 1991, Cuba spiraled into a crisis that Castro himself dubbed "The Special Period". Cuba quickly lost approximately 80% of its imports and 80% of its exports. Food and medicine imports slowed severely, with some stopping altogether, but perhaps most immediately impactful was the loss of nearly all of the oil imports by the Soviet



A father and daughter wait over two hours for a bus in Old Havana in 1994.

The effect was felt immediately. Entirely dependent on fossil fuels to operate, the major underpinnings of Cuban society—its transportation, industrial, and agricultural systems—were paralyzed. Waiting for a bus could take three hours, frequent power outages could last up to sixteen hours, and food consumption was cut back to one-fifth of their previous levels. Although starvation was avoided, persistent hunger suddenly became a daily experience. Initially, malnutrition in children under five was evident after just a few weeks and the average Cuban lost about twenty pounds.

Over the next three years, many Cubans tried desperately to leave the country, although it was strictly forbidden by their communist government. But in August of 1994, Castro



Cubans lower a raft into the water on August 19, 1994 preparing to leave the Cuban coast in Cojimar, near Havana during the exodus.

declared that 'whoever wanted to leave could go', indicating that government forces would not prevent refugees from fleeing the country. Not knowing how long the offer would last, over 35,000 Cubans took the opportunity to leave, most heading to Florida in small boats and makeshift rafts marking the beginning of the largest exodus from Cuba since 1980.

Worried about the large number of refugees heading their way, the United States ended the traditional welcome for all Cubans and instilled a new policy that came to be known as "wet-foot/dry-foot": those intercepted at sea must qualify for asylum or are returned to Cuba; those who make it to U.S. soil, generally, get to stay. The Clinton



Cuban refugees on a makeshift raft float in the open sea about halfway between Key West, Florida, and Cuba on August 24, 1994.

administration ordered the Coast Guard to detain the refugees caught at sea and ship them to Guantánamo Bay, a United States Naval Base in Cuba.

At Guantánamo, the refugees lived under drab-olive and yellow tents in an unusually arid landscape under the strictest military rule. At first, they had no communication with family members, who had no way of knowing if their loved ones had died at sea. The refugees waited for months in limbo until finally, on May 2, 1995, the Clinton administration announced that most of the detainees would be screened and allowed to immigrate to the United States. Many of the rafters were professionals and highly educated Cubans who, for the most part, began to successfully rebuild their lives in South Florida.



Cuban refugees at Guantánamo Bay on August 27, 1994.

Compiled from Britannica.com, PBS.org, CubaHistory.org, TheAtlantic.com, and TampaBay.com

Aleppo, Syria: 2015

Mahmoud's Home: Syrian Civil War, Year Five

"We're just living on the edge of life. We're always nervous, we're always afraid." - Mariam Akash

In March of 2011, conflict in Syria arose alongside a string of revolutions in the Middle East, known as the Arab Spring. Residents in the small town of Dara'a took to the streets to protest the torture of young boys who had put up anti-government graffiti on their school building, declaring "The Government must go!". President Bashar al-Assad responded with heavy-handed force, causing even more pro-democracy demonstrations to quickly spread across the country. Assad continued to crackdown on such demonstrations and in April, he began to send tanks into cities and ordered regime forces to open fire on civilians.



On the left is a shot of the Shahba Mall in Aleppo on December 12, 2009. On the right is the same shot of the mall on October 16, 2014.

In the summer of 2011, thousands of regime soldiers began to break away from the government and launched attacks against the regime. As the opposition grew stronger, the United Nations warned that Syria was on the verge of a civil war and called for immediate action. In August 2011, the Syrian National Council (SNC) was formed to fight the Syrian government. Their goal was to end President Assad's rule and establish a modern democratic state. Unfortunately, the opposition was a collection of varying political groups, longtime exiles, grass-roots organizers, and armed militants, who were all deeply divided along ideological or ethnic lines, and too disjointed to agree on a strategy to topple the standing government.

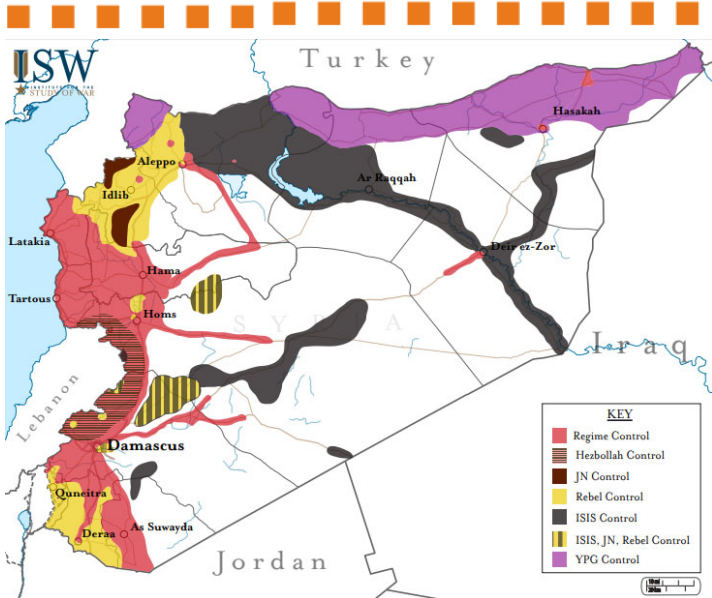
By February 2012, the United Nations and the Security Council tried to pass a resolution condemning President Assad's attack on his civilians. Countries such as Russia and China blocked these efforts, and the death toll in Syria continued to rise rapidly, from 400 deaths in



An aerial view of the buildings destroyed by the Assad regime forces and Russian army in the Tariq al-Bab neighborhood.



People continue with daily life in Aleppo after being targeted by a government airstrike.



This map reflects the control of Syria's terrain on September 14, 2015. The Institute for the Study of War continues to publish updated maps as the terrain control is continually changing.

June of 2011 to more than 3,000 in June of 2012. Today, it is estimated that over 400,000 Syrians have lost their lives. Before the war, Syria's population totaled at 22 million. Now, the UN identifies 13.5 million Syrians who require humanitarian assistance, of which over 6 million are displaced from their homes within Syria, and around 5 million are refugees who have fled to other countries.



On the left is the entrance to al-Zarab souq market in Aleppo on November 24, 2008. On the right, it the same entrance on December 13, 2016.

Compiled from IAmSyria.Org, CNN.com, and NYTimes.com

Pre Show Discussion

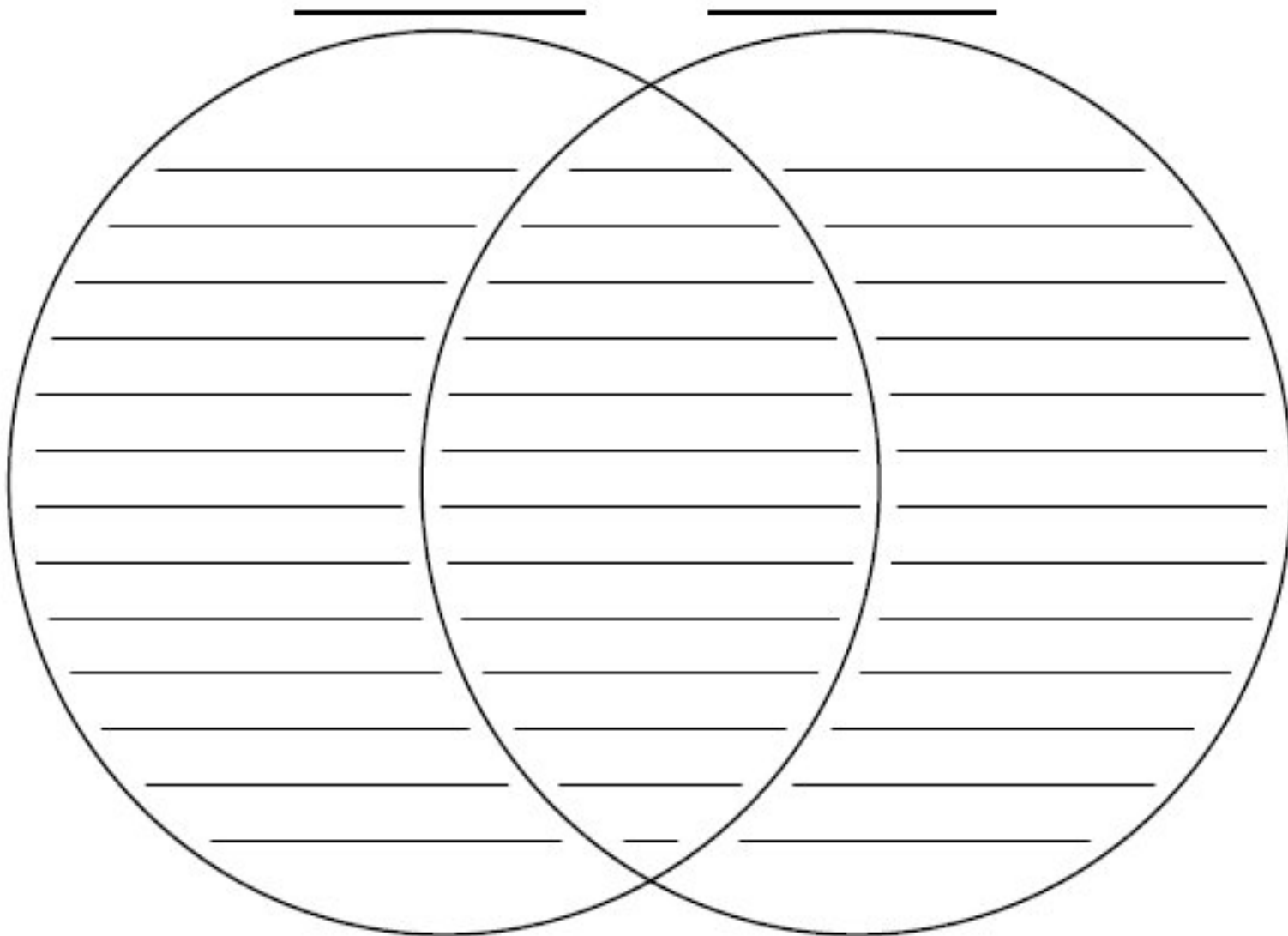


Before seeing the play and after reading the book, discuss the following questions with the whole class or in small groups.

1. How do you expect the play to be different than the book? How will it be the same? What scenes do you think the playwright will have omitted? What do you hope he kept? Do you think he will have added any new scenes or elements?
2. What part(s) of the story are you most excited to see come to life onstage? Do you have any ideas on how the director, playwright, and designers might achieve this scene onstage?
3. Who is your favorite character from the book? Why? What do you admire about them? Do you have anything in common with them?
4. Discuss the personalities of the three main characters and how you expect the actors to play them.
5. *Refugee* takes place in three different timelines in many different locations. How do you think the scenic designer will achieve the varying settings?
6. What do you know about Germany in 1938 and 1939? What do you know about the Holocaust?
7. What do you know about Cuba in 1994?
8. What do you know about the ongoing conflict in Syria?
9. What does it mean to be a refugee in the world today? What did it mean in the past?
10. Discuss the different types of government that Josef, Isabel, and Mahmoud were living under in their home countries.
11. What different cultures/races/religions are represented in *Refugee*? Compare and contrast them.
12. Discuss theatre etiquette and how audience members are expected to behave when viewing a live performance.

Page to Stage

Use the Venn diagram below to compare and contrast the book *Refugee* and the stage adaptation.



Talk About It!

1. Which version of *Refugee* did you enjoy more? The book or the play? Why?
2. How are the characters in the book different than in the play?
3. If you were adapting *Refugee* into a play, would you have included any other scenes? Which ones? Why do you think Eric Coble omitted them?
4. Discuss other books you would like to see adapted into plays. Research online and see if any of your choices actually have been!

Map It Out!

Refugee takes place during three different timelines in various locations. With a partner or in small groups, use the map below to draw the routes that Josef, Isabel, and Mahmoud traveled in the play. Use a different colored pen or marker for each character's journeys. Don't forget to include a key! Place a dot in each location where the characters stopped. **Hint:** One character doesn't make any stops.



Talk About It!

Once you've finished mapping, discuss each path with your group.

1. What modes of transportation did they use to travel to each location? How did transportation change over time? How did it stay the same?
2. What risks were involved with each journey? How did the mode of transportation effect these risks?
3. Do any of the paths intersect? Are any locations the same?

Stage Combat

Refugee features several moments of **STAGE COMBAT**. Stage combat, or fight choreography, is a specialized technique in theatre designed to create the illusion of physical combat without harm to the performers.

Is it safe?

Stage combat can be risky, and it is preferable for actors to have as much training and experience as possible. A **FIGHT CALL** is a brief rehearsal before each performance that sets aside time for the actors to "mark" through the fight to increase their muscle memory. With *Refugee*, a fight call is especially important because each space we perform in is a different size. A show that involves fight choreography will typically be supervised by a professional **FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHER** and may also include a **FIGHT CAPTAIN**, who runs fight calls and ensures that actors are remaining safe throughout the duration of the show.

Things to remember:

- We at Florida Repertory Theatre in NO WAY condone real-life violence. However, we may employ the techniques of stage combat in order to most authentically tell stories.
- If you are interested in learning more about stage combat, or even want to try it yourself, great! Find a professional workshop or master class at your local theatre! Florida Rep typically offers one of these every year.
- DO NOT TRY THIS WITHOUT THE SUPERVISION OF A **CERTIFIED FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHER**!

How do you rehearse?

The combat phase of a play rehearsal is referred to as a **FIGHT REHEARSAL**. Choreography is typically learned step by step, and practiced at first very slowly before increasing to a speed that is both dramatically convincing and safe for the performers and their audience. Performers first practice the choreography at what is called **1/4 SPEED**, moving at 1/4 of the speed as you would in a real-life fight. Once the actors are comfortable and the fight choreographer approves, they will speed up to **1/2 SPEED**. Once they have the fight in their muscle memory and they all feel 100% safe, they will increase once more to **3/4 SPEED**. 3/4 speed is the fastest stage combat will ever be. Fight choreography is never rehearsed or performed at full speed.



Post Show Discussion



After seeing the play and reading the book, discuss the following questions with the whole class or in small groups.

1. What was your favorite part of the play?
2. Who was your favorite character in the play? Why? Are they different than your favorite character in the book? Why or why not?
3. What did you think about the set? The costumes? Did these elements help to tell the story? Were they confusing at all? Discuss the challenges the designers faced and how they overcame them, if they overcame them at all.
4. Were you surprised there were only six actors? What are your thoughts on the small cast size?
5. How did the sound design help create the mood and tell the story?
6. If you could play a role in *Refugee*, which role would you want? If you would not want to be in the play, which stagecraft element would you want to design and/or construct (Set designer, costume designer, sound designer, props designer, carpenter (builds the set), draper/cutter/stitcher (builds the costumes), props artisan (builds the props)?
7. What did you learn by watching this play?
8. Describe Florida Repertory Theatre's production of *Refugee* in one word.

Critical Review



Write a critical review of the play. What did you like? What did you not like? How did the story make you feel? How did the actors perform their roles? How did the set, costumes, and sound fit into the world of the play? Would you recommend this play to anyone? Were you inspired at all by the play?

Making Connections



About the Author and Playwright:

LAFS.K12.R.4.10

Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Pre and Post Show Discussion Questions:

LAFS.K12.SL.1.1

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

LAFS.K12.SL.1.2

Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Berlin, Germany : 1938

SS.912.A.6.3

Analyze the impact of the Holocaust during World War II on Jews as well as other groups.

SS.8.G.6

Understand how to apply geography to interpret the past and present and plan for the future.

Havana, Cuba: 1994

SS.8.E.2.2

Explain the economic impact of government policies.

TH.912.H.1

Through study in the arts, we learn about and honor others and the worlds in which they live(d)

Aleppo, Syria: 2015

SS.8.A.5.6

Compare significant Civil War battles and events and their effects on civilian populations.

SS.912.W.9.7

Describe the impact of and global response to international terrorism.

Page to Stage

WL.K12.IL.5.4

Compare and contrast information, concepts, and ideas.

LAFS.8.RI.3.7

Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of using different mediums (e.g., print or digital text, video, multimedia) to present a particular topic or idea.

Map It Out

SS.912.G.2.3

Use geographic terms and tools to analyze case studies of regional issues in different parts of the world that have critical economic, physical, or political ramifications.

SS.8.A.1.2

Analyze charts, graphs, maps, photographs and timelines; analyze political cartoons; determine cause and effect.

Stage Combat

PE.8.C.2

Identify, analyze and evaluate movement concepts, mechanical principles, safety considerations and strategies/tactics regarding movement performance in a variety of physical activities.

PE.912.C.2.27

Compare and contrast how movement skills from one physical activity can be transferred and used in other physical activities.

Critical Review

TH.912.S.1.3

Develop criteria that may be applied to the selection and performance of theatrical work.

LAFS.68.WHST.1.2

Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/ experiments, or technical processes. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.

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