

# Year 8 'Refugee Boy' Knowledge Organiser

## Assessments:

1. A letter in role of Alem.
2. A persuasive speech.
3. A newspaper article.

## Brief Summary:

- Alem's family are threatened at gun-point in both Eritrea and Ethiopia.
- Alem's father takes him to London and leaves him alone in a hotel room.
- The Refugee Council send Alem to a children's home and then to the Fitzgeralds (a foster family).
- Alem starts school in London. He makes two friends - Robert and Buck.
- Alem receives a letter from his father indicating his mother is missing.
- Alem's application for asylum is rejected. He has his first appeal hearing.
- Alem receives a second letter from his father explaining that his mother has been killed.
- Alem's father arrives in the UK but is arrested and taken to Campsfield detention centre.
- Alem and his father have an appeal hearing together and their application for asylum is rejected as the judge believes that war has not affected the whole of Ethiopia or Eritrea.
- Alem is not allowed to stay with the Fitzgeralds. He is forced to live in a hotel with his father.
- Alem's friends start a campaign to support Alem and his father.
- Alem's father is shot and killed.
- Alem returns to live with the Fitzgeralds and his application for asylum is accepted.

## Context:

On 6th May 1998, a conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia began which left tens of thousands dead or injured in the space of just two years. The war was sparked by a battle for control of the border town of Badme - a humble, dusty market town with no apparent value.

A peace agreement was signed in December 2000, establishing the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission. It was meant to settle the dispute over Badme but its "final and binding" ruling 18 months later, awarding Badme to Eritrea, was not accepted by Ethiopia without the preconditions of further negotiations with Eritrea. Eritrea refused to talk to Ethiopia until the ruling was adhered to and peace between them remained elusive until July 2018 when a peace deal was signed.



## Key Characters:

**Alem:** the protagonist of the novel. Alem is not safe in either Ethiopia or Eritrea because he is mixed-race. He has to seek asylum in England.

**Mr Kelo:** Alem's father. He is Ethiopian.

**Mrs Kelo:** Alem's mother. She is Eritrean.

**Mr and Mrs Fitzgerald:** Alem's foster parents.

**Ruth:** Mr and Mrs Fitzgerald's daughter.

**Sheila:** a social worker who supports Alem.

**Mariam and Pamela:** they are from the refugee council. They help Alem to apply for asylum.

**Robert:** Alem's friend from school. His real name is Roberto Fernandez.

**Sweeney:** a bully from the care home.

**Stanley:** a boy in the care home that shares a room with Alem.

**Mr Hardwick:** the hotel manager who finds Alem alone.

**Nicholas Morgan:** a barrister for Alem. He is trying to get him refugee status.

**Buck:** one of the students from Alem's school.

**Asher:** is a very friendly to Alem and has a way of thinking that Alem admires.

## Key Vocabulary:

**Refugee:** a person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster.

**Asylum:** a place of shelter or safety. An asylum seeker is someone who has come to the country because it is a safe place for them, where their life will not be in danger.

**Ethiopia:** Africa's oldest independent country and its second largest in terms of population.

**Eritrea:** won independence from Ethiopia in 1993 after a 30-year war, but has been plagued by repression at home and tense relations with its neighbours.

**The Refugee Council:** a UK based organisation which works with refugees and asylum seekers.

**Political asylum:** the protection granted by a state to someone who has left their home country as a political refugee.

**The Home Office:** a department of the Government which is responsible for immigration, security and law and order.

**EAST:** East African Solidarity Trust.

**Detention Centre:** an institution for the short-term detention of illegal immigrants, refugees, people awaiting trial or sentence.

**Appeal hearing:** the appeal re-hears the evidence of the disciplinary matter and reaches a decision regarding the fairness of the decision.

**Appellant:** a person who applies to a higher court for a reversal of the decision of a lower court.

**Persecution:** hostility and ill-treatment, especially because of race or political or religious beliefs; oppression.

**Barrister:** a type of lawyer in common law jurisdictions.

## Themes:

**War and conflict:** Alem is forced to become a refugee due to the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia. Whilst living in England, he encounters conflict every day and compares it to the war in Africa.

**Love:** Alem's parents love him and Mr Kelo leaves Alem in England to protect him from the dangers of war. Alem's friends and foster family also love him and protest against the decision to send him back to Ethiopia or Eritrea.

**Hope:** Alem continuously has hopes that peace will be declared between Ethiopia and Eritrea and that he will be able to return safely to Africa to live with his family.

**Injustice:** Alem is not welcome in either Ethiopia or Eritrea because he is mixed-race and is threatened at gun-point by soldiers who tell his family to leave. However, a judge (who has never been to either country) decides that it is safe for Alem to return. This leads to Alem's friends protesting against the decision.

**Isolation:** Alem is left alone in England at the beginning of the novel. Throughout the book, Alem is faced with isolation and loneliness and there are many barriers which make him feel like an outsider.

## Literary Techniques and Terms:

Allegory	A story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one.
Alliteration	The occurrence of the same letter or sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words.
Assonance	A repetition of vowel sounds.
Connotation	Associated meaning of the word.
Dialect	A particular form of a language which is peculiar to a specific region or social group.
Emotive language	Language used to create a particular emotion in the reader.
Foreshadowing	When the writer hints at a future event.
Formal and informal language	Formal language is used in situations that are serious or that involve people we don't know well. Informal language is more commonly used in situations that are more relaxed and involve people we know well.
Hyperbole	Exaggerated statements.
Metaphor	A comparison – made directly or indirectly – without using "like" or "as."
Pathetic fallacy	When a character's feelings, thoughts or emotions are displayed through the environment around them. For example, when a character is depressed and it is raining.
Pun	A joke exploiting the different possible meanings of a word or the fact that there are words which sound alike but have different meanings.
Personification	Giving human characteristics to something which is not human.
Plosive	"b," "p," "t" and "d" sounds – which can be harsh, aggressive or shocking.
Protagonist	The main character.
Sibilance	Repeated "s" sounds – most often caused by "s" "ss" and "c." These can be harsh, smooth or sickly.
Simile	A comparison made using the words "like" or "as."
Slang	A type of language consisting of words and phrases that are regarded as very informal.
Theme	The central idea of a literary work.



