

Alexandria Award Curriculum Supplement

When Stars Are Scattered

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Note to educators: This supplement serves as a resource to support your planning and teaching of *When Stars Are Scattered*. It offers a buffet of resources, questions, and activities to aid in this process, rather than a prescriptive set of learning plans. We invite you to pick what works for you and your students and classroom context. If you are interested in any follow-up events, including a Zoom discussion with other teachers about the book and your use of it in the classroom, or if you have any questions about this document or about the Award itself, feel free to email Mike Macaluso, the Award Committee Chair, at mmacaluso@nd.edu.

Why *When Stars Are Scattered*?

- Watch [the official, animated book trailer](#)
- Read [Notre Dame's press release](#)
- Read [the Institute for Educational Initiatives's press release](#)
- Watch [an interview with the authors and the Award Committee](#)
- Read [Penguin's Educator Guide](#)
- Review [author Victoria Jamieson's resources](#)



Why is it important to include *When Stars Are Scattered* in schools?

According to the UN Refugee Agency, there are nearly 83 million displaced people in the world. Of that, nearly 27 million are considered refugees, with about 13 million under the age of 18. As people of faith, we are called to honor and protect the life and dignity of all people. *When Stars are Scattered* offers a window into the experiences of refugees, providing an opportunity for awareness as well as to encounter, welcome, and care for refugees, migrants, and immigrants. Furthermore, the book touches on [all seven themes of Catholic Social Teaching](#), but most notably: Option for the Poor and Vulnerable; Call to Family, Community, and Participation; and Life and Dignity of the Human Person. To learn more specifically about the Church's position on immigration, [see here](#) for the USCCB's Catholic Social Teaching on Immigration and the Movement of Peoples. In that document, they note – and we echo:

The Catholic Church in the United States is an immigrant Church with a long history of embracing diverse newcomers and providing assistance and pastoral care to immigrants, migrants, refugees, and people on the move. Our Church has responded to Christ's call for us to "welcome the stranger among us," for in this encounter with the immigrant, the migrant, and the refugee in our midst, we encounter Christ.

Faith-Based Connections

Dimensions of Faith

When Stars Are Scattered offers some wonderful opportunities to explicitly engage with the Gospel values of hope, faith, and love. Omar, in particular, maintains a strong faith life despite the adversity he and his brother have endured. We might think about our faith life across three dimensions: our relationship to God, our relationships with others, and our relationship with ourselves. Consider these three dimensions in the context of the book as well as in students' lives using the questions in the table below.

Dimensions of Faith	Relating to the Text	Extending to the Students
Relationship to God	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- How do the characters, especially Omar, relate to God?- What events in their lives cause this to change?- Does a relationship with God help Omar in any way throughout the story?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- How do you relate to God in your own life right now?- Has talking to God ever helped you when you are struggling? Why or why not?- What have you learned from <i>Stars</i> that you want to incorporate in your own life of faith?
Relationships with Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- What Christian values do the characters in the book exhibit? Consider, for example, Gospel Values, Beatitudes, and CST.- Are there points in the book where they do not show these values? When? Why?-What do the characters learn about how they should treat each other, especially in difficult times?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- In what ways do you act like Jesus toward others? In what ways would you like to change to act more like Jesus?- What helps you treat others well? What makes it difficult to do so?- What have you learned from the characters in <i>Stars</i> about how to treat other people?
Relationship to Myself	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- How does Omar view himself at the beginning of the book? At the end?- What causes this change?- Does Omar's faith play a role in how he views himself? How and in what ways?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- How do you see yourself right now in your life?- What do you like about what you see? What would you like to change?- How does Omar's journey help you as you continue to try and see yourself as God sees you?

Virtues and Values

A number of supporting characters exemplify Catholic [virtues and values](#) as they assist Omar and his brother during their time at Dadaab.

How might any or all of these characters be Gospel witnesses to/for Omar and Hassan: Fatima, Jeri, Salan, Nimo, Maryam, Susana, Michael?

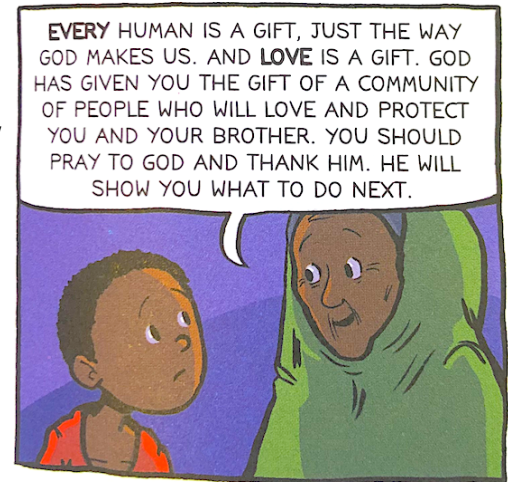
Grade-level Topics and Connections: Students can use an [Essential Question Journal](#) to track their thought evolution on the questions below.

Elementary	<p>Essential Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What makes a friend? - What makes a family? - For what are we grateful? - How do we show love to others? <p>Making Connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text-to-Self: How are you similar to Omar, Jeri, Nimo, or another character? How are you different? • Text-to-Text: What other stories does this text remind you of, and how do they connect? How is this different from other texts you have read? • Text-to-World: How are the events of this text similar or different to what is happening in the real world?
Middle School	<p>Essential Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is community? - Why do people persist during hard times? - What is fair and equitable? - What is love? What does it look like? - Omar is in 5th grade – how are his experiences similar to and different from your own? <p>Making Connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text-to-Self: What communities are you a member of? What communities exist with the graphic novel? Compare and contrast these communities. • Text-to-Text: In what other texts have you noticed a character persisting through a challenge? What are some challenges in this text that require persistence? Do these challenges, and perhaps the characters that face them, have anything in common? • Text-to-World: Is America a fair and equitable place to live? Why or why not? Consider the similarities and differences between America and Kenya, specifically a refugee camp.
High School	<p>Essential Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What does it mean to say, “love is a gift”? - How might one’s gender impact their choices and opportunities? - What does the word “home” mean? What– or where– is Omar’s home? How does that change throughout the story? What is/are your home(s)? - What does it mean to be educated or to have an education? What might education look like around the world? - What are our gifts and how can we use them to help our communities? - How do we regain or restore hope during difficult times? <p>Making Connections (for research possibilities in ELA, Social Studies, and/or Theology classes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugees and refugee camps around the world—current events with Afghan refugees • Immigration and the immigration process • Religious Difference • Educational crises throughout the world • People with varied special needs and/or disabilities

Guiding Questions

Literary

- This book is a graphic memoir. What is the purpose of a graphic novel/memoir compared to a traditional text? How does the graphic nature of the book support its purpose? How do the images aid in your understanding of Omar's story?
- Stars and sand are motifs throughout the book. What do these symbols come to mean for the characters and for the meaning of the book as a whole?
- Analyze the full page illustrations in the story (e.g., pgs. 4-5, 12-13, 114-115, 149, 220-221). Why do you think Jamieson chose to depict the scenes this way? What makes the last full page illustration on pg. 257 different? What effect does that have on you as a reader?



Social Factors

- Omar has a tense, often conflicted and contradictory, relationship with school. How does his understanding of school and schooling influence his choices and behaviors? Why is the opportunity to attend school so important for Omar?
- Though Omar is only 11 when the book begins, he is forced to mature and “grow up” quickly. What are some examples of Omar having to grow up fast? What responsibilities does he take on that are not common for the typical 11 year old?
- Several characters, including Jeri and Hassan, have special needs. How does Omar's understanding of people with special needs develop over the course of the book?

Faith

- Fatuma continually reminds Omar about God's will in his life. How does Omar follow what he believes is God's will? What does he hope God has planned for him?
- Prayer is a significant part of Omar's identity. Track the different ways he prays as well as his intentions. What do these moments reveal about Omar?
- Though Omar and Hassan's mother does not “appear” in the book, her presence is felt and influences how the boys think, behave, and believe. For example, contrast Omar's frustration on pg. 93 with the revelation at the end of the book about the meaning behind Hassan's “Hooyo.” In what ways do hope and love – in their mother, in God – animate who they are, what they do, and how they persevere?

Extension Activities

– Write a letter from the perspective of Omar to his mother, father, or any one of his friends. What might he say to each one of them looking back on his experiences in Dadaab? How might he express what he has learned from his experiences?

– *When Stars Are Scattered* is a graphic memoir. Using your own illustrations,

- Tell your story. What aspects of your life do you want to capture and share with others?
- Create the next chapter of the book! What happens to Omar and Hassan in America?
- Create an alternate ending or add another scene! Imagine what else has happened to Omar and Hassan while at Dadaab or elsewhere. How do these new experiences add to their story?

– After a conversation with his friends about their desired future occupations, Omar reflects, “It was nice talking like this. Pretending we were normal kids, with normal futures to look forward to” (p.86). What does this mean? How might we sometimes take for granted that we are “normal kids with normal futures to look forward to”? What can you do to plan for the future you hope to have one day?

– Omar loses and gains hope over the course of his story. When have you lost hope in something? What helped restore your hope? In the Afterword and Authors’ Notes, we learn that Omar has used his experiences at the refugee camp to help others in similar situations. How might his actions since Dadaab be hope for others?

– Omar’s view of education develops throughout the story. How has the book affected your view of your own education and of education around the world? Research the different ways in which education is conducted throughout the world and in other settlement camps like Dadaab. How are these approaches different from your own educational experiences?

– Contact a refugee resettlement agency and ask them what you/your class could do to assist a refugee family. Ask if there is a member of the agency that could come speak to your class about what refugees experience in your city/state and if they know of a refugee that would be willing to come visit your class and talk about their experiences. If you have a classroom visitor, prepare a list of questions together as a class to ask your visitor.

– Read *Refugee High: Coming of Age in America* by Elly Fishman or *A Stranger and You Welcomed Me: A Call to Mercy and Solidarity with Migrants and Refugees* by Pope Francis. Consider that Jesus, Mary, and Joseph were refugees in their time, as depicted in the *La Sagrada Familia*, an icon painting by Kelly Latimore [linked here](#) and pictured right.



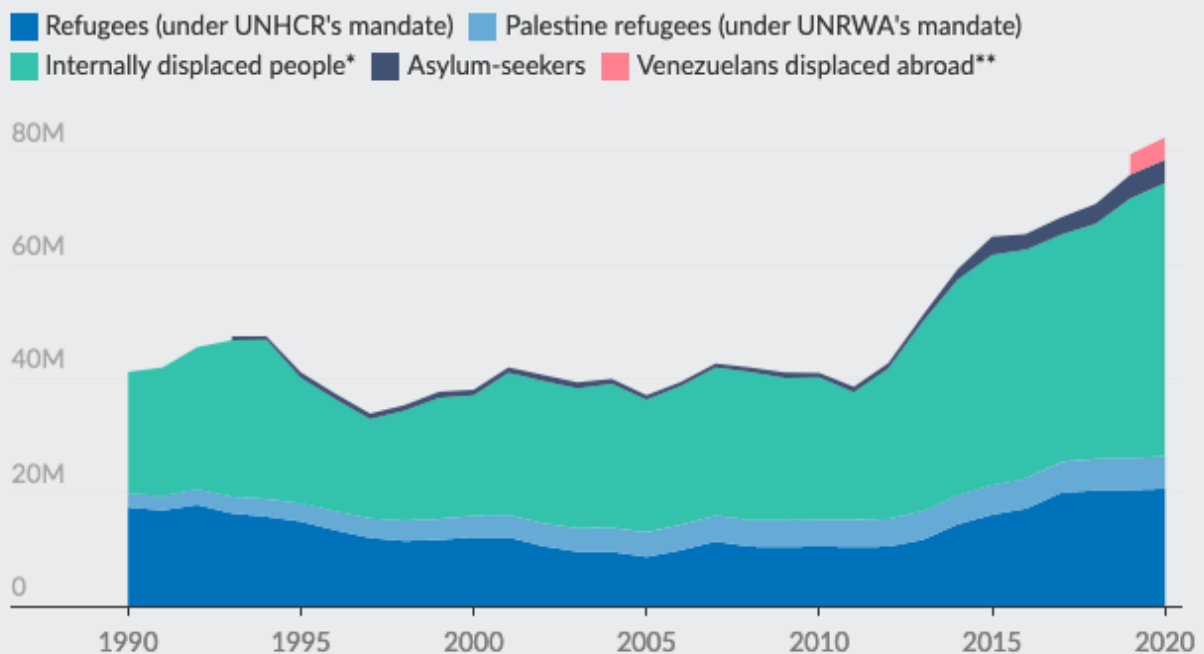
– Compile a list of refugees to the United States who have made a significant contribution to the public good (doctors, scientists, politicians, authors, etc.) and their accomplishments. How did their experience as a refugee help them make these contributions?

Resources about Refugee and Migration

- Curricula from *Learning for Justice*
 - [Refugees in America](#)
 - [Refugees and Human Migration](#)
 - [Immigration and Refugee Unit](#)
- [USCCB's Committee on Migration](#)
- [Data about Refugees worldwide, from UNHRC](#)
- [Learn about a high school in Chicago that serves a majority refugee population.](#)

82.4 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced

at the end of 2020 as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order.



18 June 2021

* Source: IDMC

** This number excludes Venezuelan asylum-seekers and refugees.

Source: [UNHCR Global Trends 2020](#)