

# The Voyage

**Author:** Robert Vescio

**Illustrator:** Andrea Edmonds

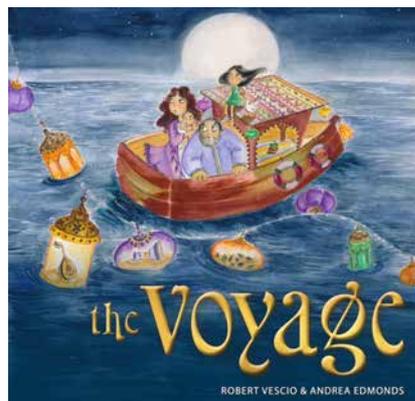
**Publisher:** EK Books

**Price:** \$24.99

**ISBN:** 9781925820034

**Publication Date:** October 2019

**Audience:** Children aged 3–8



Teacher Notes prepared by [Robert Vescio & Andrea Edmonds](#).

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## Type of Text

Picture book

## Key Curriculum Areas

English  
Language  
Current Affairs

## Themes

Empathy  
Resilience  
Refugees  
War and Conflict  
Human Rights  
Hope

## Synopsis

Displaced by war and conflict, a refugee family sets out on a voyage into the unknown. Told in only few words, this is a powerful story of a family fleeing their war-torn country and making a dangerous trip across the ocean to a new life in a new land. 'Chaos' begins the story, as the family escapes. 'Wild' is the midway point, as their boat battles through a storm. 'Land' is the sight of a green, beautiful land ahead of them. 'Safe' is the beginning of their new life in their new home.



## Author Background

**Robert Vescio** lives in Sydney and is a published children's author. He writes picture books and short stories. He has won awards for his children's writing, as well as being an author on the NSW, VIC and QLD Premier's Reading Challenge list. Two of his picture books *Finn and Puss* and *Eric Finds A Way* were shortlisted in the 2018 BILBY Awards. Robert is a Books in Homes Role Model and enjoys visiting schools. His aim is to enthuse and inspire children to read and write and leave them bursting with imaginative ideas. For more information visit: [www.robertvescio.com](http://www.robertvescio.com) or [www.facebook.com/RobertVescioAuthor](https://www.facebook.com/RobertVescioAuthor)



## Illustrator Background

**Andrea Edmonds** has always loved drawing, and is passionate about creating art that encourages children to read and express their own imagination and creativity. *The Voyage* is her second picture book with EK, her first was *Visiting You* (Rebecka Sharpe Shelberg, released March 2018). Andrea has also illustrated books for Scholastic Australia.

Working in traditional mediums, she loves to develop her own story and character ideas, fuelled by a stash of dark chocolate and countless cups of tea. She lives in Sydney. Visit [www.andreaedmonds.com](http://www.andreaedmonds.com) to view more of her work.

## Illustration Style

Traditional-Water colour, Translucent, Figurative, Linear, Atmospheric.

## Selling Points

- Allows children to expand on the words in the story through what they see
- Powerful illustrations to help visualise people impacted by war
- Draws the reader into each stage of the voyage
- A discussion starter about the world and its surroundings
- Explores the heartache and anxiety of looking for a new and better life
- Excellent cross-curricular resource to explore important issues about empathy, compassion and current affairs

## Author/Illustrator Interview

### 1. What was the inspiration for the story?

**Robert:** We all hope that our children will never have to face such trauma, but the facts are that it's real and present and countless children are actually living it. I hope my story will help facilitate conversation and promote healthy communication to help foster empathy, understanding and inspire children to ensure a welcoming environment in their own communities.

## **2. What was the most rewarding part of this project?**

**Robert:** Andrea cleverly created powerful illustrations to help children visualise the people impacted by poverty, war, and more. The book draws the reader into each stage of the voyage, inviting the opportunity to imagine the challenges he or she would face. It explores the heartache, anxiety and exhaustion of refugees looking for a new and better life. The images are sensitively rendered and perfectly suited for younger children.

**Andrea:** Being given the opportunity to contribute to such an important picture book, which will ideally encourage readers to learn more, understand and empathise with the plight of refugees, and spark positive discussions to embrace our humanity.

## **3. What was the most challenging part of this project?**

**Robert:** Writing a story with sensitivity to people's own circumstances. Today, we find ourselves living alongside refugees who have suffered and experienced horrific trauma. They all have different experiences and come from different cultures. It's important that we understand and build good communities and the only way we can do this is through stories – stories that help us explore and imagine being that someone else.

**Andrea:** As this is such a serious subject matter, I was initially conscious of not wanting to create images that would possibly be too heavy for young readers. I really appreciated Anouska's (our publisher) and Robert's help in guiding me to explore more possible options for certain spreads, while still keeping things real.

## **4. What media did you use to create your illustrations? Can you briefly describe your process?**

**Andrea:** The Artwork for '*The Voyage*' was created with Watercolour and pencil on Arches hot pressed watercolour paper 300gsm.

As I researched refugees from different parts of the world, I was led to the millions of refugees in the Middle East.

Idea began to flow around creating a Middle Eastern family, as the central characters in **The Voyage** with their own authentic back story.

I had also read several accounts of refugees not able to abandon their pets (mainly cats and dogs) as they embarked on their journey to find safety, and astoundingly they had survived the journey.

This gave me the idea of including a family pet in *The Voyage*- so to complete the family unit I drew their pet duck.

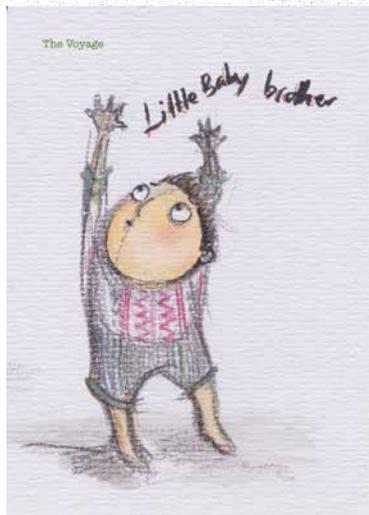
The Middle East is so rich in tradition, culture and aesthetics- the architecture,

colours, tapestry, fabrics, music and food, - that portraying the Middle East gave me lots to work with.

It all started with finding out *who* this family were and then going from there. My first sketches produced the father being a traditional oud musician, who had actually come from a family line of oud players. From this first rough sketch, I developed the rest of the family.



I next drew the central character-his daughter who plays the darbuka drum, Mum who enjoys gardening & cooking, and baby brother who adores his big sister.



Once I got to know the family, I could better understand their heartache of having to experience leaving everything behind. Going on to illustrate each scene was much easier.

## Teaching Notes

### **Class Discussions**

#### **- English**

- Looking at the cover what do you think the story is about?
- After reading the blurb predict what the story might be about.
- After reading the story why do you think the author may have written this story?
- Why do you think the girl and her family left their home?
- Why do you think the mother carries a little plant with her?
- If you had to leave your home what would you take?
- What does it mean to be a refugee?
- What is the difference between a refugee and an immigrant?
- Why do people arrive in Australia by boat?
- How do refugees feel when fleeing their country?
- How do refugees feel when arriving in a new country?
- How can we work and help to make refugees feel welcome and safe?

### **Class Activities**

#### **- Evocative Language**

- In the story, the writer uses one word to describe the scene. Ask the students to expand through action and plot. Have them write a paragraph or two about each scene.
- Ask the students to come up with their own list of evocative words that serve as inspiration.
- Take a spread from the book and explain to them the old adage – a picture is worth a thousand words – and explain how a visual image can display a message.
- Take an image from the book and ask the following questions: Who? How old? Where? What? Happy? Scared? Now have the students write a story about the picture. Students exchange their stories with the class.
- Take another image from the book (perhaps ‘SAFE’) and ask the students to create a role for that person in the image. Describe the person’s feelings and have the other students guess who they have chosen by looking at the image from the book.