



The Little Refugee

Anh Do , Bruce Whatley (Illustrator)

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After Australian comedian Anh Do told his story about being a refugee in his award-winning memoir, *The Happiest Refugee*, he received many requests for a children's version. This is the inspiring result.

Anh nearly didn't make it to Australia. His entire family came close to losing their lives as they escaped from war-torn Vietnam in an overcrowded boat. Anh's life in Australia also started off badly as he was a small boy who didn't speak English. But he never stopped smiling and went on to achieve his dreams.

The Little Refugee is illustrated by Bruce Whatley, who created the beloved illustrations in Jackie French's *Diary Of A Wombat*.

Anh is donating his book royalties to charity.

The Little Refugee Details

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Author : Anh Do , Bruce Whatley (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review The Little Refugee for online ebook

Jack says

This unspeakably good book was utterly outstanding! It really makes you feel like you're there with him, always by his side, experiencing both the horrors and the good times. This is actually a funny autobiography. I recommend this book to anyone who likes to visualize books.

AnJelLina says

I remember reading this book in the ~Reader`s Cup 2012~, when we got to meet an famous author (Gerard Bauer). Little Refugee was based on a famous Australian comedian Anh Do who travelled on a boat with his family. They faced some cruel pirates and a bad storm which wrecked all their food supplies. This is a great memoir of Anh Do, who also wrote `Weirdo` another fantastic children`s book.

Megan says

Anh Do`s autobiographical picture book is brilliant for understanding the 1970s Vietnamese refugee situation. He describes war and poverty from his point of view as a young child and his family's desperate decision to flee aboard an old fishing boat. Once at sea, storms ruin the supplies and pirates take everything of value. Thankfully their fishing vessel is rescued by a German ship and the families reach Australia in safety. As you'd imagine, it`s not all pretty. There`s soldiers, guns and trauma. But eventually the tide turns. Anh`s family settles and he makes friends in school.

Anh Do is now a successful comedian and well known entertainer. He`s also a prolific writer and his *WeirDo* series is loved in schools. I've seen kids almost wrestle over titles and I enjoyed reading one of them to my class last year. I liked *The Happiest Refugee: A Memoir* a few years back, but this picture book is my pick for portraying his story effectively.

Much success here can be attributed to tight editing, but also Bruce Whatley`s sensitive pen and ink artwork. Drawings of disturbed children and angry faces leave no doubt as to the severity of the situation. Similarly, in the portrait of Anh's mother with young children, there's no question as to the intensity of family ties. As the family finds security and stability, the illustrations become more saturated and less monotone.

It`s my view that books like this help develop compassion and tolerance. Because of war and conflict many children are thrust into situations they have little means of comprehending or articulating. They just show up in a classroom some place, if they`re lucky. Those already in the classroom have even less idea of the forces and reasons through which they just acquired a new classmate. On the foreground of the cover we meet the cheerful young Anh Do virtually stepping off the page to greet us. Behind him there's sinister seas and a boat in obvious trouble. This story is an effort to connect one with the other. It`s a personal story and a political one. It`s about hope and courage in the face of adversity. I wouldn`t pick it up and read it with anyone anytime, but it`s a significant story for Australians (and Americans) to hear and I think it will resonate for some time to come.

Book Bazaar says

Anh Do's "The Little refugee" is a wonderful picture based around Anh's true story. This story is a simplified version of the full memoir and it captures the basic facts and emotions in a way that is accessible for younger readers.

The text of "The Little Refugee" is factual, yet still emotive as Do describes his childhood flight from danger in Vietnam, a perilous journey by boat, and his settlement in Australia. The familiar story of hardworking migrants who want the best for their children is told in a way that informs and touches the heart. The relationship between mother and child is particularly strong in this story and when the mother who has always been so strong and positive is brought to tears by the theft of her precious sewing machines it is a beautifully poignant moment that allows the reader to see a glimpse of the adult world.

Bruce Whatley's illustrations transform throughout the story from realistic sketches of the world of Vietnam, dangerous oceans and pirates to the caricatures of Anh and his brother – colour finally being released once they arrive in Sydney.

Anh highlights the issues face by migrant kids when trying to fit in to a new school environment and shows that friendly overtures are never wasted. Hard work and a friendly smile take our narrator from a frightened child with a strange lunch to class captain and it is a pleasure to go along for the ride.

Clare Cannon says

Anh's true story is an outstanding one to share with young readers. He shows that it is possible to hope against all odds, and that love and family can bring good from any hardship. Adults too will not be able to read it without shedding a tear, but they must also read *The Happiest Refugee: A Memoir* to get the full story. What an incredible person.

Ella.Wainman says

The Little Refugee is a true story written by Anh do. I recommend this book for people 8+. I love this book as it is coming from Anhs real life experience. The book is about his journey to Australia from Vietnam during the war, his struggles at school and his early years of growing up in Australia. I definitely recommend this book for non-fiction lovers!

Perry says

This a really excellent book to expose children to refugee predicaments.

Andy Hickman says

"The Little Refugee" by Anh Do

Tragic, yet redemptive, story of one young man's plight. ***

“I didn't know there was a war going on. Outside our house, in the jungles and in the villages of Vietnam, many people were dying. Lots of them were soldiers, but some were mothers and fathers, and some were even children.”

Bonnee Crawford says

I am studying this book in my university children's literature class some time in the next few months and I read an ebook version on my campus library's website.

I love the way it translates the hardships and terrors of being an asylum seeker and coming to Australia to start a new life in a way for children to understand and I like that it deals with both the voyage AND settling into the new life. I think kids would find it easy to relate to because of the main character's age, starting school when he arrives in Australia and then growing until he is in year 5 at the end of the book.

I enjoyed reading it and I can't wait to study it in class and get into some good discussions.

Jeannie May says

Beautiful! A must-read for all families! Amazingly hidden depths to this very special story.

Ashley D-- says

A nice story for teaching about refugees. The illustrations are really clear and look a lot more playful than the text was. It's great to have options for picture books about refugees, and this one is particularly good because it is so positive, so it won't upset younger readers like some other "issues" books can. Since it is based on a memoir, it is done in the memoir style, but I wonder if it might have been more entertaining if it had been done a little bit differently. I always find issues books done in memoir style for younger readers a bit lacking in the storytelling department, so this one does well enough for its genre. Just not my favourite!

Awesome resource for teachers or for introducing the idea of refugees to kids in a sympathetic way.

Monique says

This is a storybook about a Vietnamese refugee who travels on a fishing boat to Australia. I read the story to my class and we looked at migration and the reason behind it, focusing on the effects of the Vietnam war. It is an emotional story and has some violent scenes, but it is well told and offers insight into refugee's experiences. Anh Do is a successful comedian, actor, author and artist and lives in Australia.

The Styling Librarian says

The Little Refugee by Anh Do and Suzanne Do, illustrated by Bruce Whatley – Love traveling to Vietnam through another perspective but reading about the war and conflict through the eyes of a child was tough as was following the family's escape and subsequent invasion by pirates... what a tumultuous time they had. Appreciate the fact that the family was able to arrive in Australia and start a new life as refugees there... special story to share with children. Good for discussions on conflict.

Morgan Dunton says

This book was upsetting to read but has a great ending. It shows an example of the long and scary journey a family of refugees must face to get a new home somewhere else because of war. Once they find home, they struggle to adjust to their new life and make money. They face many ups and downs, many with the children not understanding school and the parents working all the time. However, the ending shows the success of the young boy in school becoming captain of his class, making his parents very proud. This book would be for grades 3rd-6th.

Penney says

I cried when I read this book. To go through such, life threatening hardship and to be so grateful for the things we take for granted in our lucky, Australian life. A beautiful book and great for kids.

Carrie Tahlor says

This autobiographical multi-award winning book is the true story of a Vietnamese immigrant to Australia. The illustrations in this book are truly spectacular, and they are sure to do an exquisite job of bringing the story to life. Anh Do tells the story of how he and his family left war torn Vietnam in the middle of the night on a crammed boat. Starving and thirsty, the immigrants' boat is raided by pirates who steal all of their belongings, and threaten to hurt a young baby on the boat. That young baby is Anh's brother. The author continues to tell of his family's arrival in Australia, their hard work, and their struggle to learn English while adjusting to life in their new country. Anh makes a new friend, and he ultimately feels happiness as he adjusts to his new life. While some of the subject matter is a little heavy, the language used is age-appropriate for young elementary school children. The plot is rich, problems and solutions are constantly cropping up throughout the story, and the characters and settings are authentic. This is a lovely book that teaches the value of family, friends, hard work, and a positive attitude.

Mia Jade says

I loved this book! It was not what I was expecting when I read it with my mum...nothing like the WeirDo books!!

It made me sad but also made me laugh. I felt connected to the story and the words Anh Do used to tell the

story made it easy for me to visualise and understand his journey, which was almost the exact same as my mums. I wanted to share this book with my friends so that we could make sure we look after refugees and treat them better.

Mia, aged 9

Nola says

This is a children's picture book based on comedian Anh Do's bestselling autobiography "The Happiest Refugee". It starts with the family's life in Vietnam, then moves to their harrowing boat trip where they were robbed by pirates and eventually rescued by the crew of a German cargo ship. The story then follows their new life in Australia up until the end of Anh's Year 4 at school.

Although it's a serious theme, the book is filled with hope. Indeed Anh's parents always told him to "have hope, and to believe that everything would turn out okay in the end". I found myself getting teary at the book's happy ending and now want to read Anh's autobiography.

Due to the topic, it might be better suited to middle primary school children rather than very young readers. The sadder parts of the book are done with sensitivity, but it might be good for a parent or teacher to discuss it with their children.

It was also interesting that Bruce Whatley's illustrations were mainly done in grey and sepia for the Vietnam and boat sections, but then changed to colour when the family reached Australia. It was a nice touch that added to the hopefulness of the story.

I wish everyone who feels negatively about boat people could read this book. Hopefully books like this will help spread a little more compassion and understanding. Anh and his wife Suzanne, who is also the co-author, are donating all of their royalties for the book to a charity that helps poor and disabled children in Vietnam.

Highly recommended.

Nhi Le (The Literary Bystander) says

This can also be read on my blog [The Literary Bystander](#).

Reading this book was very awkward and odd, I dare say, if only because I am pretty familiar with the 'refugee' story, as my parents were one of the many people who fled to Australia during the Vietnam war. A lot of small details Anh Do uses to describe Vietnam is pretty much how I imagined Vietnam, a result of my parent's accounts, the Anh Do television series of him visiting Vietnam and the 93785293587+ other Vietnam-related/Vietnam War documentary my parents used to make us watch throughout our childhood.

Although I do say that it was also a bit jarring/confronting when we get a total time lapse between Anh being stranded on the boat with his family and several other refugees, and then bam! He's staring out to the Sydney Opera House and Harbour bridge and telling us how amazing Australia is. But then again, I think that weird feeling of dissatisfaction and assumption that we just had to fill in the gaps reminds me a lot of how I felt whenever my parents used to tell us the story of how they came to Australia, always leaving up massive

holes in their story when I was a kid and we just had to 'imagine' what happened in between point A and C.

Another thing I would have loved to see is how Anh Do and his family managed to integrate into Australian and its culture - because we only got like a sentence talking about how he initially didn't fit in, and how his parents set up a sewing business in the shed in their backyard (which I swear is like 110% true because aside from my parents, there wasn't anyone else' parents I knew that didn't have their own sewing business back in the day).

I don't know, I would've loved to see bits and pieces of how the little boy (i.e. our protagonist) felt at other kid's responses to stuff he does with his family because that's how it's always been done. I don't know, I guess I was trying to find something that could let me relate to Anh Do's story, mostly because although I am lucky enough to be raised in Australian society, the constant clash between two different cultures is something I could see be relevant to other kids like us, whether it was back then or even now.

Francesca Pashby says

Wonderful story of the early life of Vietnamese/Australian author, Anh Do
