

# Sea Prayer



**KHALED HOSSEINI**

ILLUSTRATED BY DAN WILLIAMS

*Resource Pack for KS2/KS3 Teachers*

B L O O M S B U R Y

# Sea Prayer

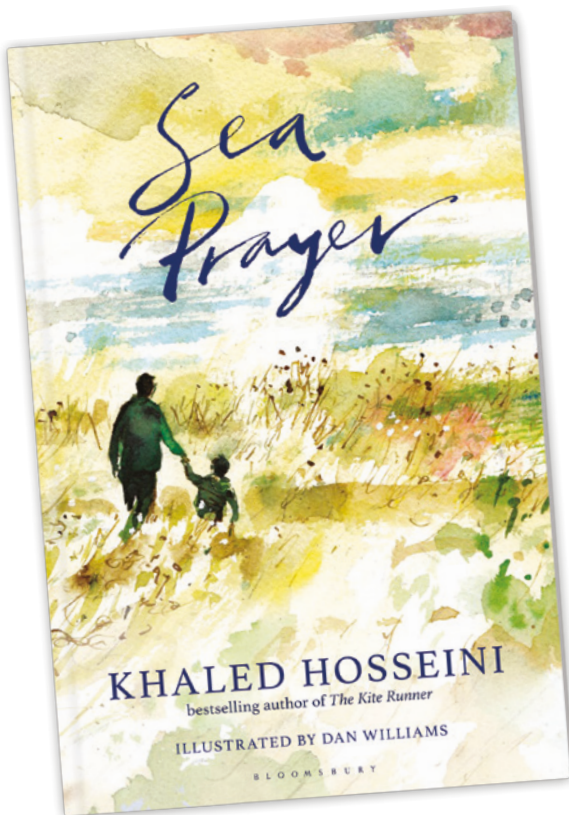
## INTRODUCTION

The classroom activities included in this pack are based on *Sea Prayer* by bestselling author Khaled Hosseini and beautifully illustrated by Dan Williams. They introduce pupils ages 9+ to the challenges and difficulties facing refugees from around the world, forced to leave their homes in dangerous or difficult circumstances.

*Sea Prayer* is a love letter from a father to his son as they flee a deadly war zone and embark on a perilous sea journey in search of a new home. Inspired by the real-life story of Alan Kurdi, the three-year-old Syrian refugee who drowned on his journey to reach safety in Europe in 2015, it introduces the heart-wrenching challenges of the refugee experience and opens up important PSHE and Literacy Citizenship objectives in the classroom.

*Sea Prayer* is a thought-provoking class reader for pupils aged 9–12 years. This Resource Pack is designed to help learners explore universal human values and mutual respect and understanding, exploring themes of love, separation and what it means to call somewhere ‘home’ – and building empathy towards refugees and asylum seekers.

## ABOUT THE BOOK



*On a moonlit beach a father cradles his sleeping son as they wait for dawn to break and a boat to arrive. He speaks to his boy of the long summer of his childhood, recalling his grandfather's house in Syria, the stirring olive trees in the breeze, the bleating of his grandmother's goat, the clanking of the cooking pots. And he remembers, too, the bustling city of Homs with its crowded lanes, its mosque and grand souk, in the days before the sky spat bombs and they had to flee.*

*When the sun rises they and those around them will gather their possessions and embark on a perilous sea journey in search of a new home . . .*

A short, powerful, illustrated book written by beloved novelist Khaled Hosseini in response to the current refugee crisis, *Sea Prayer* is composed in the form of a letter from a father to his son on the eve of their journey. Watching over his sleeping son, the father reflects on the dangerous sea-crossing that lies before them. It is also a vivid portrait of their life in Homs, Syria, before the war, and of that city's swift transformation from a home into a deadly war zone.

B L O O M S B U R Y





# Sea Prayer

## LESSON ONE: Pre-reading activities

This lesson is designed to help students explore ideas and speculate about themes in the book. They should feel free to discuss anything that comes to mind.

### Lead-in questions:

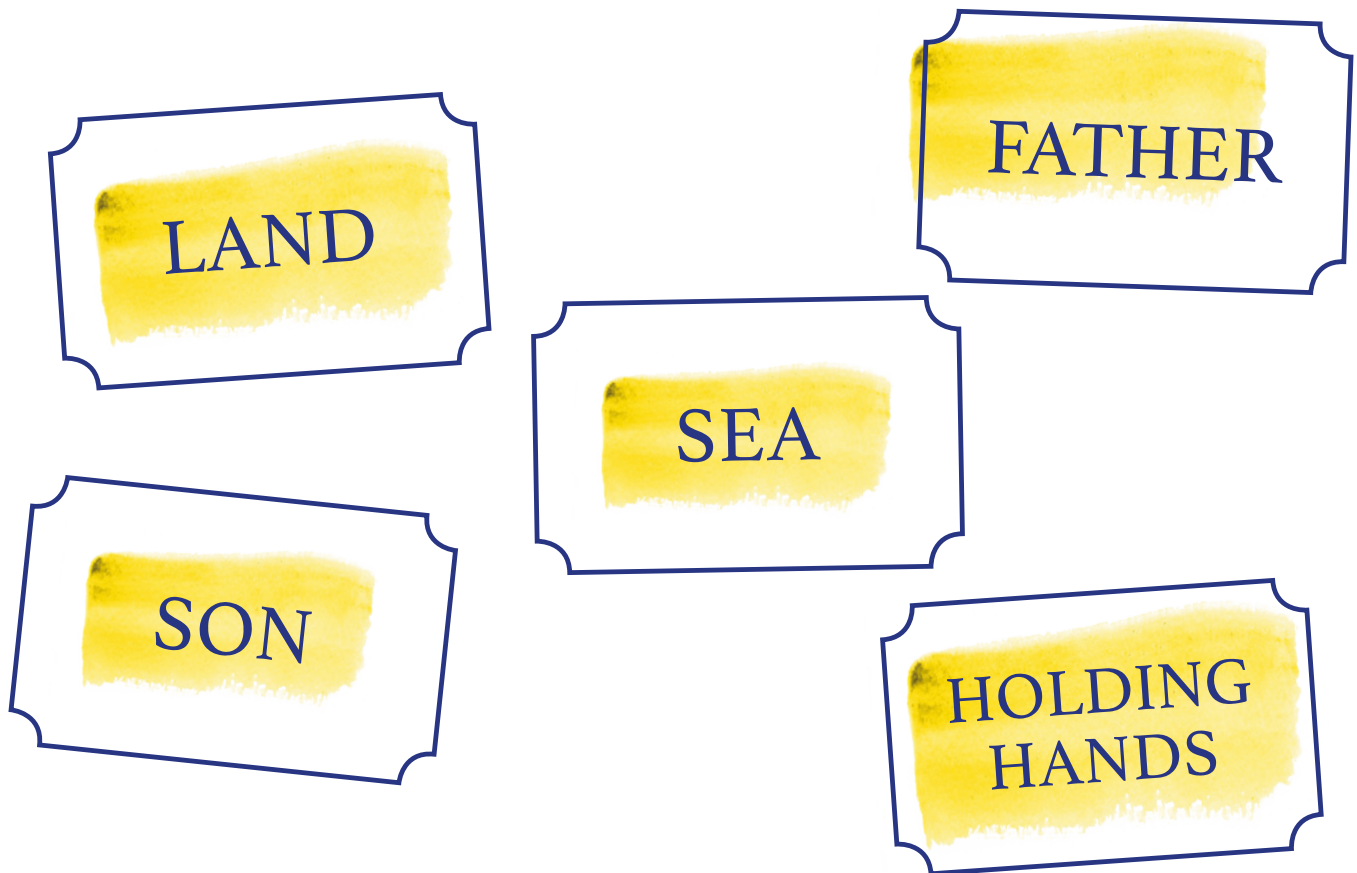
- What does the title *Sea Prayer* make you think about?
- What might the prayer be in this story? Who might be saying the prayer?

### Task 1:

In pairs, discuss the cover of *Sea Prayer*. Which characters can you see? What might their relationship be? What surrounds them? Where do you think they are going? Together, come up with a list of words that best describe them.

### Task 2:

Can you find some of the following things in the image?







# Sea Prayer

**KHALED HOSSEINI**

bestselling author of *The Kite Runner*

ILLUSTRATED BY DAN WILLIAMS

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### Task 3:

Now that you've found all of the things above, write down what you think each of them could represent and what you can infer about the story based on the front cover illustration by Dan Williams. Use the grid below to record your ideas.

Image	What could it represent	What we can infer about the story
E.G. The sea	It is a symbol of the unknown	The two characters don't know where they are going.
		
		
		

### Extension task:

Consider some of the following elements of the cover:

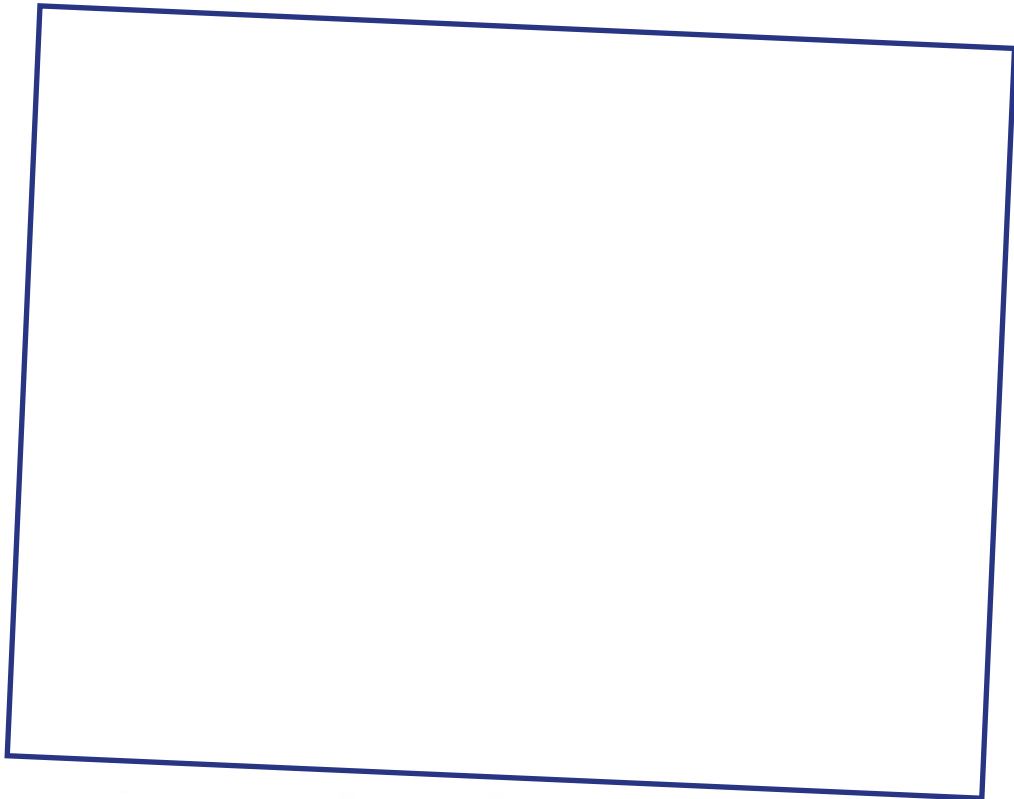
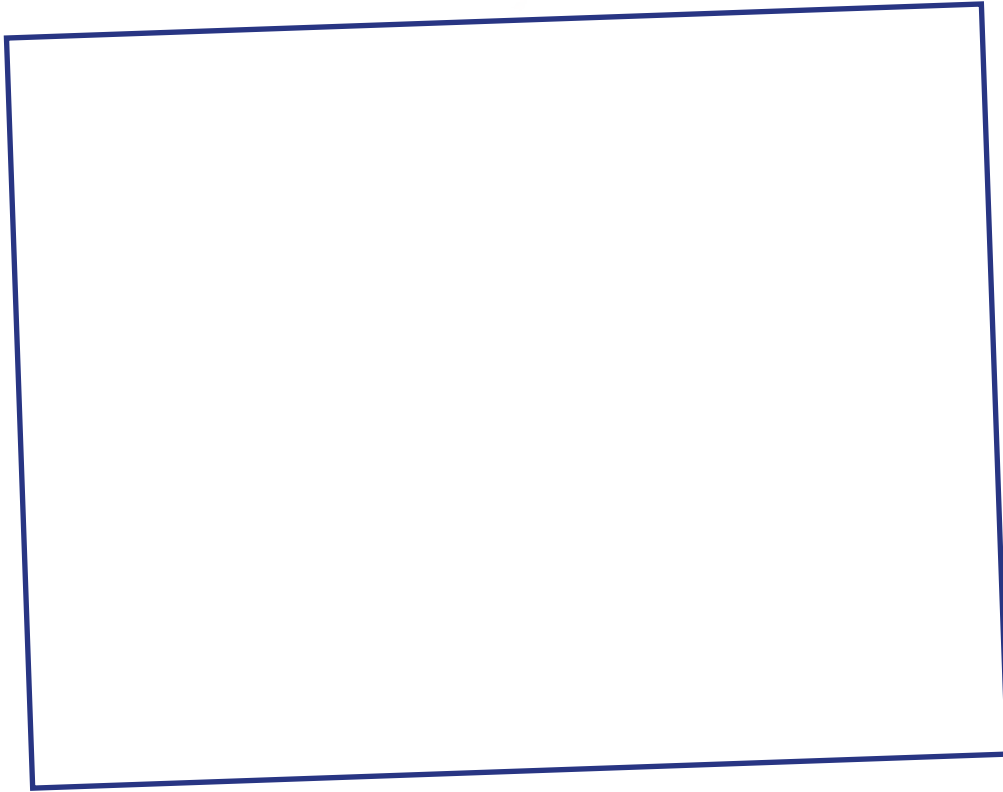
- Style of illustration
- Colours used

What do the illustrator's choices suggest to you about the type of story *Sea Prayer* might be?



## Task 4:

Using everything that you've discussed in this lesson, draw two more images to show what might happen next in the story. What are your predictions about the themes in the book? What might happen to the two characters that you can see on the cover?



# Sea Prayer

## LESSON TWO: What is home?

### Lead-in questions:

- What reasons might force somebody to leave his/her home and family?
- How would you feel if you were forced to leave your home?

### Task 1:

In pairs, can you match the following terms to the correct definitions?

Refugee

Someone who, like a refugee, has been forced to leave their home, but has found safety in another part of their own country.

Asylum Seeker

Someone who has fled their own country and crossed an international border, asking another country to recognise them as seeking refuge and give them protection.

Internally displaced person

Someone who is outside their own country and unable to return, in fear of death, imprisonment or harassment because of their race, religion, nationality, social group or political opinions.

What do all three groups of people (refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced people) have in common in terms of their 'home'?





# Sea Prayer

## LESSON TWO: What is home?

### Task 2:

As a class, read the first 16 pages of *Sea Prayer*, in which Marwan's father describes their home as he remembers it before it became a war zone.

Then, in pairs, behave like detectives to find as many clues as possible about Marwan's home. Pick out key words and phrases from the text to support your ideas, and use a dictionary to look up any unknown words. Here are some questions to help you:

1. Where is Marwan's home located?
2. What sort of landscape does it have?
3. What sort of house did Marwan and his father live in?
4. What was the city centre like?

### Task 3:

Now, in groups of four, you will be given an extract from the story describing Marwan's home before it became a war zone. Work together to create a piece of drama of the description. You can read the extract out as a group, act it out line by line, or simply create a freeze-frame to convey the scene. Use musical instruments to add atmosphere and sound effects.

Perform your scene to the group.





We woke in the mornings  
to the stirring of olive trees in the breeze,  
to the bleating of your grandmother's goat,  
the clanking of her cooking pots,  
the air cool and the sun  
a pale rim of persimmon to the east.



I have a sharply etched memory  
of your mother from that trip,  
showing you a herd of cows grazing in a  
field blown through with wild flowers.





In its bustling Old City,  
a mosque for us Muslims,  
a church for our Christian neighbours,  
and a grand souk for us all  
to haggle over gold pendants and  
fresh produce and bridal dresses.



I wish you remembered  
the crowded lanes smelling of fried kibbeh  
and the evening walks we took  
with your mother  
around Clock Tower Square.



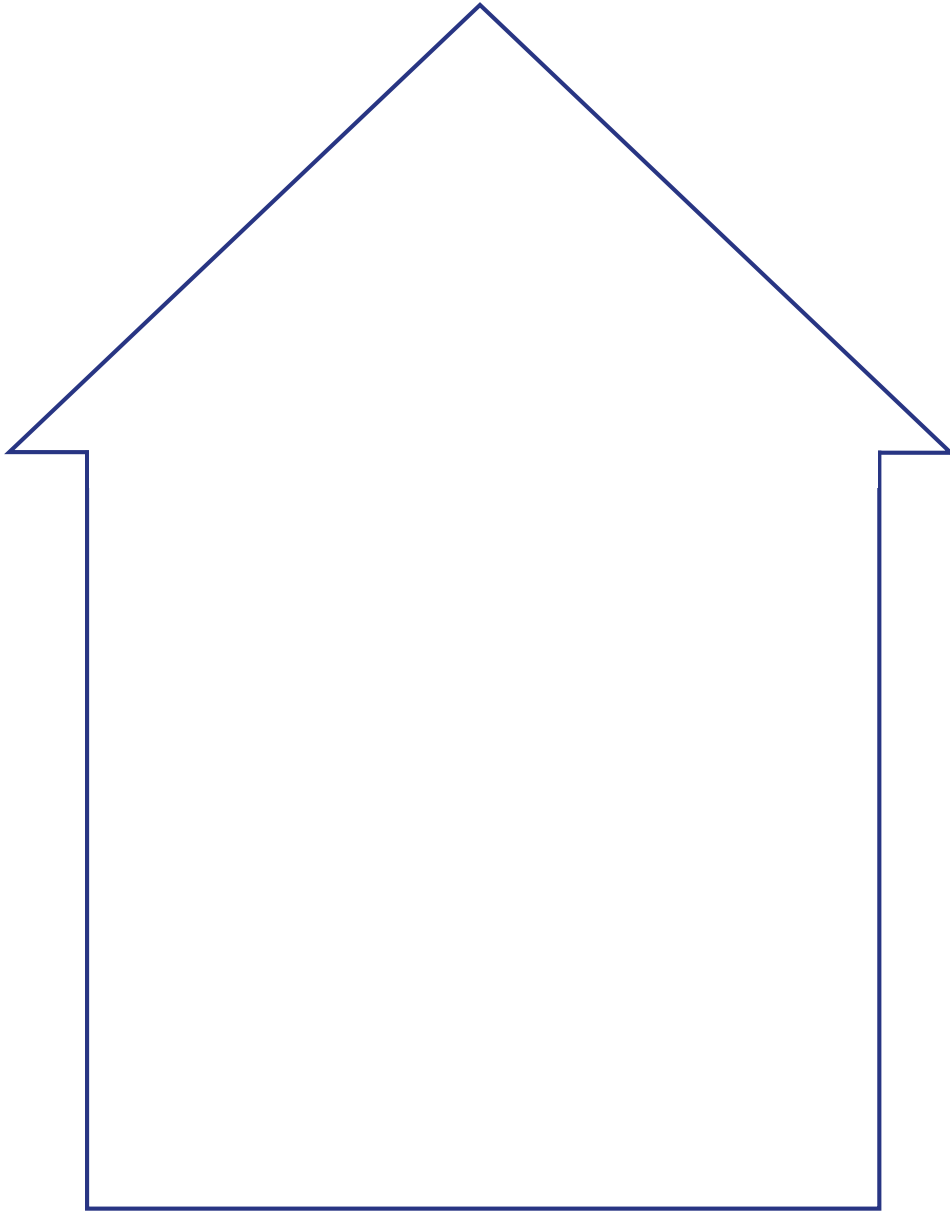


## LESSON TWO: What is home?

### Task 4:

What does the word 'HOME' mean to you? In the house template below, describe or draw something that you love about your house or hometown. Maybe it is an object, a smell, a person, or even a feeling.

You can write a short description, a poem, or draw a picture to show your ideas. Use your group's extract from Task 3 as inspiration; how can you incorporate some of the literary devices that Khaled Hosseini uses in his own writing? e.g. powerful vocabulary, emotive language, sensory description, colour.



## LESSON THREE: Escaping a warzone

Recap questions:

- What is a refugee?
- How does Marwan's father feel about his home?

### Task 1:

Look at the extract below. What has happened to Marwan's home here? How is it different to the home was described in the first few pages of the book?

*The skies spitting bombs.*

*Starvation.*

*Burials.*

Put the following words into the correct column to describe Marwan's home before and after it became a war zone:

HOPEFUL

BLEAK

JOYFUL

FRIGHTENING

HOPELESS

SAFE

RELAXED

DANGEROUS

BUSTLING





# Sea Prayer

Marwan's home <i>before</i> it became a warzone	Marwan's home <i>after</i> it became a warzone

Extension task: add some of your own words to each column.



# Sea Prayer

## Task 2:

Using the empathy cards below, rank how Marwan's father feels about the changes to his home by putting them in order from 1–5 (1 being the emotion he'd feel the most and 5 being the emotion he'd feel the least). For each card, pick out a word, phrase or illustration that shows evidence of it in the story. There might be more than one word, phrase or illustration for each emotion.

Don't forget to add another emotion that you think Marwan's father has onto the blank empathy card.

Nostalgia

Fear

Shock

Regret

Sadness





# Sea Prayer

## Task 4:

Put yourself into Marwan's father's shoes and write a private diary entry explaining his feelings about his home, the changes to his home and his fears.

Extension task: carry out some research into different warzones across the world. How are these warzones similar or different? How are the local people affected in each warzone that you find out about?



*Dear Diary*

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## LESSON FOUR: Universal human values

Lead-in questions:

- What do we mean by the phrase 'universal values'?
- Why is it important to think about refugees using the same values as you would for your own friends?
- What 'universal values' have been explored so far in *Sea Prayer*?

### Task 1:

Look at the illustration from *Sea Prayer* and answer the questions below:

1. What is happening in the image?
2. What does this image represent?
3. Why is this image an example of 'universal values'?



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# Sea Prayer

## Task 2:

In groups, you will need some post-it notes and a copy of the 'universal human values map' below, which shows the values that are important to everyone no matter their background or situation.

In your groups, agree on the five values you think are most important, writing your choices on the post-it notes, one value on each note.

When you have finished, bring the ideas from each group together in a way that everyone can see, for example by putting the sticky notes on a board/wall. Group the values so that it is possible to see those that were selected by more than one group.

Discuss the most common values chosen in the class.

## Task 3:

Use the universal human values map to identify what values you think might be important to Marwan's father in his situation in *Sea Prayer*. How do his values bring him hope in the story?

## Task 4:

Write a letter to Marwan's father. What would you say to empathise with him and to help him? What values can you share with him to give him hope that his prayer might somehow be answered?



# *Universal human values map*

SELF-RESPECT

HONESTY

EQUALITY

LOVE

WEALTH

HAVING  
RESPECT FOR  
TRADITION

FREEDOM

BEING  
HEALTHY

HOPE

CLEANLINESS

PEACE

TRUE  
FRIENDSHIP

PLEASURE

SENSE OF  
BELONGING

SOCIAL POWER

PRESERVING  
SOCIAL IMAGE

SOCIAL JUSTICE

PROTECTING THE  
ENVIRONMENT

SELF-DISCIPLINE

SOCIAL  
RECOGNITION

INTELLIGENCE

HAVING A HOME

HAVING  
AMBITION

RESPONSIBILITY

EDUCATION

FAMILY  
SECURITY

ENJOYMENT

SETTING  
PERSONAL GOALS

CURIOSITY

BLOOMSBURY



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## REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

Take a moment to think about the work that you have completed in these lessons.

In your groups, take turns to complete the following sentences:

- My favourite piece of work was...
- One thing I learned about myself was...
- One thing I learned about another person was...
- I enjoyed working in a group because...
- I have enjoyed the book *Sea Prayer* because...

