



The Home We Make

written by Maham Khawja

illustrated by Daby Zainab Faidhi

About the Book

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Format: Hardcover, 48 pages
9.25 × 11 in

ISBN: 9781620149577

Reading Level: Grade 5

Interest Level: Grades K–8

Guided Reading Level: S

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:
N/A

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

Themes: Courage, Cultural Diversity, Diversity, Empathy / Compassion, Families, Fiction, Home, Overcoming Obstacles, Persistence / Grit, Refugees, War

Resources on the web:

leeandlow.com/books/the-home-we-make

SYNOPSIS

*One day someone asks me,
Where is home?
And I don't know what to say.
Is home here or there?*

Told from the perspective of a young refugee girl, debut children's book author and New Voices winner Maham Khawja tells the story of a family forced to flee their home due to violence. Emotive illustrations by Daby Zainab Faidhi balance the family's love for one another and hope for the future with the harrowing journey to escape on foot, travel by boat, and then finally resettle in a safe place. Through it all, the young girl tries to hold on to all the pieces of her life before and find a way to rebuild a sense of home.

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.

BACKGROUND

Author's Note from Maham Khwaja

"Before I was born, my family was displaced from Kashmir due to flooding and famine. They moved to Lahore, Pakistan, rebuilding a life through the tumultuous era of British Colonial rule and Partition. When I was six, my family moved to America for better opportunities, and we were lucky to be able to safely journey halfway around the world. That summer was full of firsts. Fried chicken for dinner. Dancing to "Can You Feel the Love Tonight?" at the movie theater. Sleeping in bunk beds. Trying peanut butter. I remember the newness of everything, and the excitement and nervousness about this strange place we were suddenly in. I have friends who were not so lucky. They had to make a treacherous journey through areas that were being bombed and invaded, oftentimes waiting for years to be allowed to live in a safer place. When they finally made it to refuge, they were met with unfriendly people who said unkind things about where they came from and what others thought they represented. Some of my friends can never return or visit their beloved homes because of dangerous conditions.

The world is facing a crisis in which many people are confronted with instability, violence, and prejudice. Refugees must flee their homes in search of better, safer lives. What happens when people are forced to leave everything behind to find safety and their homes are permanently lost or destroyed? This book is about one of those families, and what the word "home" might mean to a child refugee. It is important to note that this story is one with a happy ending. The family survives and is given the opportunity to rebuild. Unfortunately, this is not always the case.

Close your eyes and think about home. Do you see a place? Do you hear a sound? Or smell something familiar? Maybe you think of people you love. Or maybe you feel a certain emotion. Home makes up a big part of who we are, and it's made of so many precious pieces. If there are times when we lose some of those pieces, or even all of them, we must try to rebuild, never forgetting that home is love, hope, and safety that we all deserve. Home is a promise we make to ourselves, letting us know that we will be ok."

Resources for Teaching to and About Refugees

Be aware of students who may be refugees or have experienced displacement in your classroom. Consult the resources below to further aid your teaching:

- The National Child Traumatic Stress Network has an article, "Ways Teachers Can Help Refugee Students: Some Suggestions," for more information on how to support students (<https://depts.washington.edu/uwhatc/PDF/TF-%20CBT/pages/3%20Psychoeducation/Ways%20Teachers%20Can%20Help%20Refugee%20Students.pdf>).
- You can consult the National Association of School Psychologists' "Supporting Refugee Children & Youth: Tips for Educators" (<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis/mental-health-resources/war-and-terrorism/supporting-refugee-students>) and Colorín Colorado's "How to Support Refugee Students in Your School Community" (<https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/how-support-refugee-students-ell-classroom>).

- Learning for Justice also has a guide, “Immigrant and Refugee Children: A Guide for Educators and School Support Staff” for further information (<https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/spring-2017/immigrant-and-refugee-children-a-guide-for-educators-and-school-support-staff>).

Resources for Supporting Students Experiencing Bullying, Racism, and Acts of Hate

Refugee students can experience hate and bullying both in school and out in the community. It is important as educators to talk and listen to students' feelings about traumatic events that occur in their community and around the world. Ensure students that educators are fully available to see them, understand them, and discuss what they're feeling at any time during the reading of the book. Educators can inform students on the harm that racist and xenophobic ideologies can affect individuals and communities. See the following resources below for additional information on how to support students:

- Learning for Justice, “Let’s Talk! Discussing Race, Racism and Other Difficult Topics with Students” (www.learningforjustice.org/sites/default/files/general/TT%20Difficult%20Conversations%20web.pdf)
- Center for Racial Justice in Education, Resources for Talking About Race, Racism, and Racialized Violence with Kids (<https://centerracialjustice.org/resources/resources-for-talking-about-race-racism-and-racialized-violence-with-kids/>)
- ¡Colorin Colorado!, Talking About Racism and Violence: Resources for Educators and Families (<https://www.colorincolorado.org/talking-about-racism-and-violence-students-resources-educators>)
- Edutopia, A Guide to Equity and Antiracism for Educators, (<https://www.edutopia.org/article/guide-equity-and-antiracism-educators>)
- UNICEF, 5 Ways to Fight Racism and Xenophobia (<https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/5-ways-fight-racism-and-xenophobia/34567>)
- The International Rescue Committee’s “Healing Classrooms: Resources for teaching refugees and asylum seekers” (<https://www.rescue.org/uk/article/healing-classrooms-resources-teaching-refugees-and-asylum-seekers>)
- Amnesty International’s “8 educational resources to better understand the refugee crisis” (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/education/2015/10/8-educational-resources-to-better-understand-the-refugee-crisis/>)

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

- Ask students to think about their family and what family means to them. Why is family important to you? What are some favorite childhood memories of your family and/or family members? Why are these memories special or important?
- What is home to you? What do you think of when you think about the word “home”?
- Why might someone need to leave their home? What are different factors that play into people leaving their homes unexpectedly?
- Why do you think learning stories from family members and from other people is important? Have you ever asked your grandparents, aunts or uncles, parents, or other adults in your life about what it was like for them when they were kids? What did you learn?
- Ask students to share a childhood memory. What is a special memory you have from your childhood? What does it mean to you?
- What does it mean to be resilient? How do you demonstrate resilience even though something may be challenging? Why is it important to be resilient? Do you think it can be learned? How so?
- How does food, hobby, or a favorite pastime help people heal? What helps you feel better after a difficult moment or situation?
- What strategies do you use when you're sad or scared? What techniques do you use to make yourself feel better? How did you come up with ways that help you in times of need?
- What does it mean to be hopeful? How can you demonstrate hope during difficult times? Why do you think hope can be powerful and motivational?
- What does it mean to be a refugee? How are refugees different than immigrants and migrants? For more clarification on terminology, see Amnesty International's “Refugees, Asylum Seeker and Migrants” definitions (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/refugees-asylum-seekers-and-migrants/#:~:text=The%20terms%20%E2%80%9Crefugee%E2%80%9D%2C%20%E2%80%9C,there%20is%20a%20legal%20difference.>).

Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1; Craft & Structure, Strand 5; and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Book Title Exploration: Talk about the title of the book, *The Home We Make*. Then ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?

Read about the author Maham Khwaja in the back of the book. Why do you think she wrote this book? Does it give you more insight about what the story will be about? Visit Maham's website (<https://www.mahamkhwaja.com/>) to learn more about her work and other titles.

Read about the illustrator Daby Zainab Faidhi in the back of the book. Why do you think it is important that she illustrated this book? Visit her website (<https://zainabfaidhi.com/>). Click on some of the examples of her work. What do you think of them? What kind of artistic style does she use in her work?

Encourage students to stop and jot down notes in their reading notebooks during the read-aloud when they: learn new information, see a powerful image, have an emotional reaction or an idea, have a question, or hear new words.

Have students quickly write their feelings in their notebooks during reading. After reading, ask students why they wrote down those feelings and have them write journal entries about them.

Ask students to make a prediction: Do you think this book will be fiction or nonfiction? What makes you think so? What clues help you know whether this book will be fiction or nonfiction?

Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- what family means to the young girl
- why the young girl and her parents must leave their home
- where the young girl and her parents go
- who the young girl meets on their journey
- where the young girl and her family live at the end of the story
- the feelings the young girl experiences during the family's journey
- how the story ends and what message the author imparts on the reader
- what does the girl discover about the meaning of home

Encourage students to consider why the author, Maham Khwaja would want to share with young people this story about a young girl, her family, and why they had to leave their beloved home.

VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

Content Specific

Baba, camp, veterinarian, visas, America, resettlement agency, apartment, community center, refugees, asylum

Academic

thorny, rubble, docks, whooshes, creaking, groaning, shiver, huddle, astronaut, mischievous, museums

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite textual evidence with their answers.**

Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. Who is the narrator of the story? How do you know?
2. How does the story begin? What's happening around the young girl and her parents?
3. What difficult decision must the young girl and her family face?
4. What is the walk like for the young girl and her parents? What are the conditions?
5. How does the young girl describe her mother's scent? What memories are tied with her father?
6. What objects does the young girl leave behind? How does it make her feel?
7. What is it like at the docks? Who does the young girl see? How are the other people feeling?
8. Where do the young girl and her family go after the docks? What is the journey like?

9. What does the young girl dream about on the boat?
10. Why does mama call the people in the blue vests “angels”? What do they do for the young girl and her family?
11. What does the young girl receive at the camp? How does she feel about this new place?
12. Who does the young girl play with at the camp? Who else does she meet?
13. What are the weather conditions like at the camp?
14. What paperwork do Mama and Baba have to fill out? Where is the family going?
15. How does the young girl feel about going to America?
16. When does the young girl and her family find out about the visas? What about the other people in the camp?
17. What does the young girl hope for on the plane? What does she imagine?
18. Where does the family go when they get to America? What is their new home like?
19. Who do they meet at the community center?
20. What does the person say when they throw the brick through the window? How does the young girl react? How do Mama and Baba reassure her?
21. Why does Baba say they need to put the puzzle pieces back together? What does the family start to do around their new home?
22. What do the young girl and her parents start to do in their community?
23. How does the young girl respond with where home is? What does she think of when she thinks of home?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. Explore the structure of this text. Does the story describe events chronologically, as comparison, cause and effect, or problems and solutions? Why do you think the author structured the text the way she did? How does this story compare to other texts you have read?
2. What does the young girl learn about the importance of material things? How does her family's abrupt move make her learn about the real necessities in life?
3. What role do the illustrations play in the story? How does the artwork demonstrate the story's message and themes? How does the illustrator show emotion and feeling through her artwork?
4. What role does race play throughout this story? How does discrimination influence and impact treatment of refugees in America? What kinds of racism and discrimination do the young girl and her family face when they arrive in the United States?
5. Why do you think author Maham Khwaja decided to group the stories into chapters? How did

this affect your reading of the book?

6. How did reading the book in verse affect your interpretation of the story? How would this story have been different if it was written in prose? Or nonfiction?
7. What does *The Home We Make* show readers about the importance of family? What do Mama and Baba mean to the young girl? How do they help and support each other throughout their journey?
8. How do certain objects, like the seashells the young girl sees at the docks, remind her of home? What are the things that she comes across during her journey to America that makes her reflect on what she misses about her home?
9. Read Maham Khwaja's Author's Note in the back of the book. What does she tell young readers about why she wrote this book? What did you learn from the story from her note? Why do you think it's important to read an author's note? What can you learn from the author's note that you don't get from reading the main story?
10. What does it mean to adapt? What kinds of feelings did she experience during this period of change?
11. What does it mean to "belong"? What gives people a sense of belonging? Why do you think some people have different beliefs about what the concept of "belonging" means?
12. As a reader, how did you feel throughout the book? What thoughts and emotions did you experience as you read *The Home We Make*? How did this story connect to your life? What moments did you identify with? Why?
13. What is the significance of the astronaut in the story? When does the young girl first think about the astronaut? How does she refer to the astronaut in the end? Why do you think Maham Khwaja chose to use the astronaut in this way?
14. Describe how a puzzle is a symbol of the young girl and her family in the story. Why do you think Maham Khwaja references puzzles throughout the book?
15. How does this story connect with other events in history? In what other countries/time periods have people been treated in similar ways? What were the implications and effects?

Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion. You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. What is one big thought that you have after reading this book? What is your takeaway from this book? What would you tell a friend about this book?
2. What do you think Maham Khwaja's message is to the reader? Think about possible motivations behind the author's intentions to write this story. What do you think she wanted to share with readers?

3. Have students make a text-to-self connection. What kind of connections did you make between the book and your own life? What did you relate to and how did they make you think of your own childhood or growing-up experiences?
4. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books while reading *The Home We Make*? Why did you make those connections?
5. Have students make a text-to-world connection. What kind of connections did you make between the text and/or art in the book and what you have seen happening in the world, such as on television, in a newspaper, or online? What in this book made you think of that?
6. The young girl states at the end of the story, "So even if most days I feel like a puzzle with missing pieces, I always have home with me, helping me fall into place over and over again." What do you think the young girl meant by this? How does she realize this idea over the course of the story?
7. Describe how optimism is a theme in the story. Despite the challenges and obstacles, the young girl and her parents face, they are optimistic at the end of the book. Why do you think the author chose to do this?

Multilingual Learners Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are multilingual learners (ML).

1. Assign ML students to partner-read the story with another classmate. Afterwards, students can create their own drawing to connect with the book's message.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading: 1) Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing. 2) Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about what they think the message of *The Home We Make* is.
5. Have students give a short talk about what they identified with most from *The Home We Make* and why. Did they learn something new that they hadn't known before? How did this story make them think of how they feel about their home?
6. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose ML students to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

7. Consider consulting www.multilinguallearningtoolkit.org/ for more ideas on how to support Multilingual Learners.

Social and Emotional Learning

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4-6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1-3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4-6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of this book.

1. How does *The Home We Make* show positive family relationships? What are the qualities of a positive family relationship? How does the young girl interact with her family? How can family and/or friends provide support for one another during difficult times? Students can brainstorm ideas on chart paper that can be presented and accessible for the whole class. Alternatively, students can create a word cloud and see what qualities come up the most and are the largest (<https://www.wordclouds.com/>).
2. How does the theme of hope play a role in the story? Although the girl and her family undergo trauma and stress throughout their journey, how do they remain hopeful? What kind of language does the author use to make you think that the young girl and her family remain positive?
3. The young girl describes her mother's scent as, "She smells like home." Do you have a scent that you associate with something that you love and gives you comfort? How can smells make us feel certain emotions? Harvard Medicine's "The Connections Between Smell, Memory, and Health" also discusses how smells and memory are connected (<https://magazine.hms.harvard.edu/articles/connections-between-smell-memory-and-health>).
4. After the brick throwing incident, Maham Khwaja writes, "We turn the brick into a candleholder, lighting candles every night, trying to make good out of bad." How does this represent the young girl and her family throughout the book? How does the young girl, Mama and Baba try to make the best out of their situation, despite overcoming tremendous obstacles?
5. Write about the importance of the community center featured in *The Home We Make*. These centers are a big part of helping refugees and asylum seekers start to feel part of a community and find kinship. How does the community center help the young girl and her family? How does it make the young girl feel during this part of the story?
6. Despite their optimism, the young girl responds, "Still, sometimes, Baba gets a sad look on his face, and Mama cries at night. She says she feels like a lost puzzle piece. Maybe I'm a lost puzzle piece too, looking for a place where I fit." How does *The Home We Make* show a range

of emotions? Use evidence from the story.

7. Mama describes the people in blue vests as “angels.” They also encounter other friends during the story. How has someone helped you in time of need? What did they do for you? How did they help you? How did it make you feel?
8. The young girl meets friends and young people at the camp. She enjoys playing with them and meeting new people. How is friendship important? How does being with your friends make you feel? Why do you think this was so critical to the young girl’s wellbeing during her journey?
9. After the brick throwing incident when the perpetrator yelled, “Go home!” the young girl wished that she could. How do you think this reflects how other people who forcibly come to this country feel? How does the family encounter prejudice and racism during the story?
10. What are the coping strategies and techniques that the young girl uses during difficult moments? How does she evolve in her coping strategies throughout the story?
11. Which illustration in *The Home We Make* do you think best shows an emotion? Explain which emotion you think it is. How does the artist portray that emotion?
12. Choose an emotion such as happiness, fear, hope, sadness, and so on. Illustrate or act out what that emotion looks like in *The Home We Make*.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

English/Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **In the Author’s Note, Maham Khwaja writes, “Close your eyes and think about home. Do you see a place? Do you hear a sound? Or smell something familiar? Maybe you think of people you love. Or maybe you feel a certain emotion. Home makes up a big part of who we are, and it’s made of so many precious pieces. If there are times when we lose some of those pieces, or even all of them, we must try to rebuild, never forgetting that home is love, hope, and safety that we all deserve.”** Write a reaction piece after reading this portion of the Author’s Note. What does home mean to you? How does Maham Khwaja write about the

concept of a home in *The Home We Make*? Students can share their writing pieces with a partner, small group, or the whole class, and accompany their writing piece with artwork.

- **Maham Khwaja concludes the story with, “Maybe home is all the little pieces we find and plant like seeds. Maybe *The Home We Make* grows from moments of love, happiness, hope, and wonder.”** Unpack these statements from the young girl. How does the story reflect the concept of home? How does the young girl's home change throughout the book? How does the concept of home not change? How does the young girl make her temporary locations during their journey feel like home throughout the story? Students can write an analytical essay and share their pieces with a partner.
- **Conduct a unit on Lee & Low stories centering the refugee experience including *The Three Lucys* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-three-lucys/>), *Brothers in Hope* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/brothers-in-hope/>), and *Dia's Story Cloth* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/dias-story-cloth/>).** Analyze the differences and similarities among the main characters' actions in these texts. How does displacement play a role in the main characters' lives? What are their refugee experiences like in the three stories? How are the main characters' families important to them? How does hope and optimism continue to inspire and motivate them in their daily lives? How do they demonstrate resiliency despite obstacles in their way? Provide students with a graphic organizer to differentiate the three titles, and then have students write an essay answering the previous questions.
- **Encourage students to write about a childhood memory or something that is meaningful to them about their identities or cultures.** Using inspiration from *The Home We Make*, have students think about what they want to communicate about themselves, their families, and/or their favorite childhood experiences. The young girl reflects on the seashells on her windowsill at home. Do students have something similar near their home that's comforting to them? What do they want to share and why did they pick that thing to write about? Students can share their work with a partner, a small group, or the whole class. Consider creating a class book with illustrations and have the book available to students in the classroom library.
- **Analyze each chapter in *The Home We Make*.** After reading, have students locate the different sections of the book, and create columns for each chapter. Students can use a graphic organizer to plan their essays. Students can write the emotions she experiences there, how she feels about being in this place, how she engages and interacts with her parents, how Mama and Baba feel, and the people she interacts with. After students plan their thoughts, have them write the essay about how the young girl changed over the course of the book, and how each section developed her character.
- **Examine the figurative language used in *The Home We Make*.** Have students go on a figurative language scavenger hunt in *The Home We Make*. Refer to Read Write Think's "Figurative Language Resource Page" as a tool for students to use during their search (http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson79/figresource.pdf). Create a chart with different rows for figurative language terms (i.e. simile, metaphor) and students can fill it in with specific examples from *The Home We Make*. How did the author use figurative language to set the tone of the book? Afterwards, students can experiment

using figurative language in their own writing inspired by the book.

- **In an essay, poem, or other written format, have students share something about their home that's important to them.** What do they enjoy about their home? Is there something that students enjoy about their home, inside or outside, that makes them feel good? Why does it make them feel that way? How does their home make them feel?
- **Have students come up with a list of questions to ask author Maham Khwaja.** What do students want to know about the process behind writing a children's book? How did she come up with her idea to write *The Home We Make*? Why did she want to write a book about this young girl and her family's experiences? Consider contacting Maham and inviting her to your school, library, or other relevant setting for an author visit in person or virtually (<https://www.mahamkhwaja.com/>).
- **Read "The Meaning of Home: A Q&A with Maham Khwaja and Daby Zainab Faidhi" blog post and interview** (<https://www.leeandlow.com/blog/the-meaning-of-home-a-qa-with-maham-khwaja-and-daby-zainab-faidhi/>). Students can answer the following questions after reading the interview: what did they learn about the process behind developing *The Home We Make*? How did the story originate? How was Maham inspired to write the book? How did she use influences from her own life to develop the narrative? What was Daby's process behind illustrating the book? What did she discover during the artistic process? What messages did Maham and Daby want to convey? Students can write their responses about what they learned from the blog post in an essay.

Social Studies/Geography

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **In *The Home We Make*, the young girl and her family were forced to leave their home due to violence and unsafe conditions.** Have students examine how different groups of people have experienced forced migration and answer the following questions: what did they learn from researching these forced migrations? Why were these groups of people forced to move? How did this affect them during the time, and what are the consequences today? How are these instances different from asylum seekers? Students can create visual presentations to document their research findings, and discuss the implications of these forced migrations, the impact on African American and Native peoples, and the way that racism and marginalization had an impact on these forced migrations. These examples include:
 - **Forced Migration of African Americans**
 - *Going Back Home: An Artist Returns to the South* (leeandlow.com/books/going-back-home)
 - Learning for Justice's Teaching Hard History Summary Objective 8 (<https://www.learning-forjustice.org/frameworks/teaching-hard-history/american-slavery/summary-objective-8>)

- PBS' The African-American Migration Story (<https://www.pbs.org/wnet/african-americans-many-rivers-to-cross/history/on-african-american-migrations/>)
- **Forced Relocation and Migration of Native and Indigenous Peoples:** It's important to remember that the termination and relocation acts of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s were only a continuation of the many relocation and assimilation efforts by the US government on Native American peoples since settlers began arriving on the North American continent. After the formal creation of the US government, actions began in earnest to dismantle Native cultures and take Native lands.
- For more information, consult *Indian No More* ([leeandlow.com/books/Indian-no-more](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/Indian-no-more)) and the corresponding Teacher's Guide for additional resources and texts (https://www.leeandlow.com/uploads/loaded_document/775/IndianNoMore_TeachersGuide.pdf).
- **Encourage students to learn more about refugees' journeys and how they are different around the world.** To provide students more context and information about how refugees' experiences vary, have them read the article, "Refugees around the world: Stories of survival" (<https://www.msf.org/refugees-around-world-stories-survival-world-refugee-day>). Brown University's lesson plan, "Refugee Stories: Mapping a Crisis" also provides additional teaching points, ideas, and resources on how to educate students about refugees and their journeys (<https://www.choices.edu/teaching-news-lesson/refugee-stories-mapping/>). As students read the stories, have them refer to the map and point out where these people had to leave and then where they resettled. Afterward, students can reflect on what it was like to hear about other accounts and how refugees' experiences differ all over the world.
- **Have students investigate their families' histories.** Be aware of the sensitive nature of family history and be cognizant of students' needs and abilities to engage with this type of activity before proceeding. Do your students know where their families are from? Did they emigrate to the United States? Did they live in one part of the US and then all move to another part? Did families come here that had no choice but to leave their homeland, due to war? Have your students interview their families, if they can, to get this information. Then set up a world map for them to mark the locations to show the diversity of your students' ancestry. Please note that for some students this may be a sensitive subject, so please use judgment when deciding to have your class take part in this activity.
- **Learn about what asylum means and the differences in terminology** (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/refugees-asylum-seekers-and-migrants/#:~:text=The%20terms%20%E2%80%9Crefugee%E2%80%9D%2C%20%E2%80%9C,there%20is%20a%20legal%20difference>). Have students conduct a research study on what asylum means and the differences between the terms refugee, asylum seeker, and migrant. Why is it important that these terms are used correctly? How is asylum referred to in the book? Have students record these definitions and continue to refer to them when applicable.

Art/Media

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **Have students create an illustration that represents their culture or identity.** Afterward, students may share their artwork with a partner, a small group, or the whole class. What did students learn about themselves during this process? Why did they choose a particular artistic style and items to include in their artwork? What do their images mean to them?
- **Encourage students to examine how Daby Zainab Faidhi uses her artistic style throughout the story.** How did the illustrations impact the students' interpretation of *The Home We Make*? How do her illustrations reflect the themes in the book? Students can write their reactions in an essay, citing examples from the book to explain how the art and text complement each other to add to the story's message.
- **Look at the article, "We never chose this': Refugees use art to imagine a better world"** (<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/gallery/2019/dec/25/we-never-chose-this-refugees-use-art-to-imagine-a-better-world-in-pictures>). Have students reflect on this artwork and what they learned from looking at the photographs. How can artwork help you process difficult things in your life? Afterward, students can create a drawing, illustration, or photo collage about what they learned about the refugee experience in *The Home We Make* and share with a partner, small group, or whole class.
- **Have students illustrate a feeling that the young girl experienced in the story.** What do they want to convey? Students can think about a particular scene that stood out to them from *The Home We Make* featuring the character of their choosing. What kinds of materials do they want to use? Have students share their pieces with a partner, small group, or whole class.

School-Home Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **Encourage students to interview family members about a favorite or impactful childhood memory.** How did that event influence the family member? How did it affect the person's life moving forward? Consider having students, if comfortable, share their findings with a partner, a small group, or whole class.
- **Talk with family and record the things that make them feel proud of their ancestry or heritage.** Have students talk with family members and ask them what things they remember about their family heritage. Ask them to think about traditions, values, and accomplishments. Ask family members how they feel about themselves when they think about the successes or failures in their family ancestry.

- **Have students interview a parent, guardian, or adult mentor about their family history.** Where did they live? Where did they travel? How did they end up where they are now? Where were their family's "origins"? Be aware of students' families and cognizant of the sensitive nature of discussing family history.
- **If applicable, encourage students to share the different refugee experiences with family members.** Have students talk with their families about what they learned from the young girl's experience and share the resources from the Background section of this guide with families for additional research. How can students and families support refugees in their immediate communities? The International Rescue Committee has more information about how to welcome refugees in the United States (<https://www.rescue.org/article/how-helprefugees-united-states-12-ways-stand-welcome>).
- **Have students interview a parent, guardian, or adult mentor about their experiences going through a hardship.** How did this person react to and handle the situation when they were faced with obstacles? What advice do they have for someone who is going through a trying time?



Ordering Information

🌐 General Order Information:

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR

Maham Khwaja is a Pakistani American writer and filmmaker. Maham has worked in feature film and network television production, as well as children's programming, including *Sim Sim Hamara* (Pakistan's *Sesame Street*). Currently, Maham is developing her first feature, *Auntie Express*, a story about a boisterous trio of Pakistani American aunties who run a successful food truck. *The Home We Make* marks her children's book debut. You can learn more about her at [mahamkhwaja.com](https://www.mahamkhwaja.com).

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Daby Zainab Faidhi is a versatile artist and illustrator acclaimed for her impactful work in animation, illustration, art direction, and painting. Her portfolio features contributions to award-winning film projects, including *The Breadwinner*, and most recently, co-art directing *Merry Little Batman* for WarnerBros. Explore her dynamic creations at [zainabfaidhi.com](https://www.zainabfaidhi.com).

Reviews

"Written in verse, [Khwaja's] powerful book captures both the terror of displacement and brief but meaningful moments of tenderness. Never shying away from the harsher details of migration, neither does she reduce the story to its trauma, creating a nuanced tale that will both inform those lucky enough to enjoy geographic stability and feel familiar to those who aren't. Popping with vivid colors, Faidhi's illustrations have a sweetness that tempers the story's bleaker moments. A moving and enlightening depiction of the refugee experience."—**starred review**, *Kirkus Reviews*

"Khwaja's heartfelt verses in some ways reflect her own experiences of moving from Pakistan to the U.S. as a six-year-old. . . . Faidhi's digital illustrations have a cinematic quality to them, not surprising from an animator of *The Breadwinner*. . . . A poignant look at the longing for home." —*Booklist*

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LEE & LOW BOOKS is the largest children's book publisher specializing in diversity and multiculturalism. Our motto, "about everyone, for everyone," is as urgent today as it was when we started in 1991. It is the company's goal to meet the need for stories that children of color can identify with and that all children can enjoy. The right book can foster empathy, dispel stereotypes, prompt discussion about race and ethnicity, and inspire children to imagine not only a world that includes them, but also a world where they are the heroes of their own stories. Discover more at [leeandlow.com](https://www.leeandlow.com).