

2017 Carnegie Medal shortlist Talking Points

Title: **The Bone Sparrow**

Author: **Zana Frallion**

Publisher: **Orion**



THE SET-UP: HARSH REALITIES?

Subhi is a member of Burma's Rohingya people – how much did you know about them before reading this book?

How was camp life described in the book – did anything about it surprise or shock you?

How fairly are Subhi and the other asylum seekers treated?

REASONS FOR HOPE?

Which characters actually show Subhi some kindness?

Where does Subhi himself get hope from? He still expects a happy ending, a better life – is his optimism helped by the fact that he's a child, do you think?

What is the role played by imagination in Subhi's hopes?

SUBHI

One might expect Subhi to be depressed and resentful – but what's he like, actually? Is his character surprising?

What's his relationship to his mother and sister like? And what's the point of his rubber duck in the book?

How do you feel about what happens to his friend Eli? Why do you think the author has Subhi witness such a thing?

Are there some things about the world that Subhi understands better than all the adults around him?



The CILIP Carnegie
& Kate Greenaway
Children's Book
Awards

STORIES AND DREAMS

It's only in Subhi's dreams that he can escape from the camp – where does he go?

Subhi's mother used to tell stories of life back in Burma; how important a role do these stories play in Subhi's life now?

Do you think the author has a message for us about the power that imagination and stories can have?

JIMMIE

The only time we really leave the camp is to see Jimmie's story; how effective are these parts of the book?

The book is primarily a story about a sad situation, with serious political implications – so why is this story about a positive friendship included?

What's the significance of Jimmie's bone sparrow, which gives the book its title?

POLITICS AND ACTIVISM

Why do you think the author felt the need to write this book?

Do you think the book is intended just to reflect the real world, or actually to change it? Do you believe stories can change how people think about the world?

What does the author's note at the end of the book add to your understanding of the issues it confronts?

Do you think young readers are particularly well suited to understanding and empathising with these kinds of story?

Is there a tension between wanting a story like this to end happily and wanting it to end realistically, or is it possible to achieve both?

AND FINALLY...

Does this Carnegie-shortlisted book deserve to win? Why, or why not?



The CILIP Carnegie
& Kate Greenaway
Children's Book
Awards

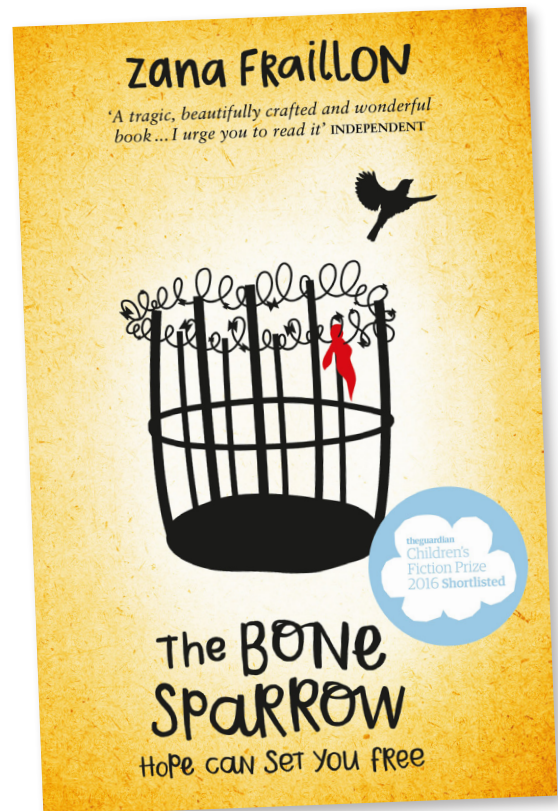
THE BONE SPARROW

by Zana Fraillon

Orion Children's Books

Shortlisted for the 2017 Carnegie Medal
and the Amnesty CILIP Honour

'Simply and innocently told... this important and timely novel brings to life the risks people are willing to take to make their voices heard and the resilience of the human spirit. The credible ending offers hope but no easy happy ending' – Judging panel



Everyone has the right to seek asylum in another country if you are being persecuted in your own country.

Article 14, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

ABOUT THIS BOOK

This moving book explores what it means to live as a refugee. Nine-year-old Subhi, a member of the Rohingya people of Burma, was born in a detention centre in Australia and has only known guards and fences. He meets Jimmie, a local girl, who finds a hole in the fencing. Their friendship gives them courage.

‘*Because this country won't have us. Not ever. They're sending us to a country that can't even look after its own people.***’**

Eli

HUMAN RIGHTS THEMES IN THIS STORY

Freedom, dignity and equality; refugee rights; the right to a home, family, education and identity; the right to safety and protection; the right to protest; the right to own property; the right to healthcare.

YOU CAN TALK ABOUT...

Friendship and family

- Jimmie and Subhi were born into very different worlds but what do they have in common? (Feeling unwanted, powerless, using stories to discover the world, grief)
- Having mothers who are absent – how does this affect Subhi and Jimmie?
- How are their respective families dealing with issues of loss?
- When have friends helped you through hard times?

Courage

- Who do you think has the strongest character – Subhi, Eli, Queeny or Jimmie? Who shows the most courage? Which one would you become friends with and why?
- At the end, Subhi is going to testify about the riot to the outside world. What do you think will happen?

Identity

- ‘This here is just one big cage of invisible people who no one believes are even real.’ The idea that people are ignored and forgotten by the outside world keeps cropping up in the book. Can you name some examples?
- ‘Most people have their Boat ID as their number. Maá is NAP-24 and Queeny is NAP-23. But I was born here so I have a different ID. DAR-1, that’s me.’ How do you think it feels not to have a name?

The refugee centre

- Why does Subhi refer to himself and the other children as ‘Limbo kids’?
- How does the description of life in the Centre make you feel? What would you change? Discuss examples of poor treatment and denial of rights.
- Jimmie takes photos to show Subhi what her life is like on the Outside. What human rights is she enjoying?
- Does this book make you think differently about what you’ve heard about refugees?

Taking action

- Subhi says: ‘For years I didn’t get it. That we aren’t wanted in this place or in Burma, or in any other place. I didn’t get it that we aren’t wanted anywhere.’ Who should be responsible for giving Subhi and his family a new home and making them feel welcome?
- When human rights researchers and journalists visit the Centre, conditions are improved and a façade of respecting people’s rights is created. What happens when they go?
- What do you think the ‘Human Rightsers’ should do?

Being heard

- The book highlights how actions can change things for the better. Discuss the different acts of kindness, solidarity and protest. Can you think of actions that have changed things for the better in your life?
- Why is the right to be heard important? How would you feel if you couldn’t express your opinions?

ACTIVITY

Make a parcel to send to Subhi and the other children in the centre to make them laugh and give them hope. You could include messages, duck jokes, cartoons, stories and treasures.

RESEARCH

Find out about the Rohingya people, a minority Muslim group of about 1.1 million people in Burma. Include what has caused so many to become refugees, where they have fled to and how they’ve been treated.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 150,000 people, mostly Rohingya, are displaced in Rakhine State, with most living in camps and shelters.

Source: Amnesty International Annual Report 2016/2017

We are all born free and equal

The atrocities of World War II sparked a determination to protect the rights of all human beings, everywhere. On 10 December 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The preamble says it must be shared, learned by children and be a part of all our lives.

For a simplified version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights go to www.amnesty.org.uk/udhr

For more free educational resources from Amnesty International go to www.amnesty.org.uk/education



Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

