

Story Summary

It is 1981. In the middle of the Pacific Ocean, a fishing boat overloaded with 60 Vietnamese refugees drifts. The motor has failed; the hull is leaking; the drinking

water is nearly gone. This is the dramatic true story recounted by Tuan Ho, who was six years old when he, his mother, and two sisters dodged the bullets of Vietnam's military police for the perilous chance of boarding that boat, hoping to gain safety and a new life in a new country.

Additional Resources

Pair this book with:

My Beautiful Birds by Suzanne Del Rizzo,

A Brush Full of Colour: The World of Ted Harrison

by Margriet Ruurs and Katherine Gibson



Tuan's family, reunited in Canada

Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch's award-winning books for young people include *Last Airlift*, a Red Cedar Information Book Award winner and OLA Red Maple Honour Book. Its sequel, *One Step at a Time*, won the OLA Silver Birch Non-Fiction Award. Her YA novel *Dance of the Banished* was a Junior Library Guild Selection for 2015. In 2008, in recognition of her outstanding achievement in the development of Ukraine's culture, Marsha was awarded the Order of Princess Olha. She lives in Brantford, Ontario. www.calla.com

Tuan Ho escaped Vietnam at age six in 1981 among thousands of other boat people refugees. Through author Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch, he has told the story of how he, his mother, and two sisters survived five days adrift on the ocean with dwindling fresh water before being rescued by a U.S. aircraft carrier. Joining the rest of his family in Canada, he went on to attend school in Toronto and is now an accomplished physiotherapist. Tuan and his wife Edae have two young daughters, Madeline and Emily.

Brian Deines is a fine artist and the award-winning illustrator of over 20 children's books, including *A Bear in War*, *Bear on the Homefront*, *The Road to Afghanistan*, and *On a Snowy Night*. *Dragonfly Kites*, part of a trilogy written by Tomson Highway, was shortlisted for the Governor General's Award for illustration and the Ruth & Sylvia Schwartz Children's Book Award. A graduate of the Alberta College of Art, Brian lives in Toronto, Ontario with his wife and daughter.

www.briandeines.com

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Themes

refugees, war, courage, perseverance, compassion

BISAC Codes

JNF053240 – JUVENILE NONFICTION / Social Topics / Emigration & Immigration

JNF007020 – JUVENILE NONFICTION / Biography & Autobiography / Historical

JNF038020 – JUVENILE NONFICTION / People & Places / Asia



Curriculum Connections

This guide contains a read-aloud guide and four robust follow-up activities.

Activity	Main Subject Area	Specific Skills and Topics
Read-Aloud	Reading Comprehension	Visualization, prediction, similes, metaphors
Tuan's Journey	Social Studies	Mapping, research, diversity, global citizenship
Image Impact	Media Literacy	Camera angles and distances affect message
I can't give up	Character Education	Courage, perseverance
Multi-colored Skies	Visual Arts	Using an element of design (color) to convey a feeling

THE READ-ALoud

Written in the present tense, from a child's perspective, replete with rich sensory descriptions and stunning oil paintings, *Adrift at Sea* provides an immediacy and intimacy that will draw students into the story. Teachers can choose the guiding questions that best suit the age, grade, and experiences of their own students.

Learning expectations:

Students will

- Use comprehension strategies (visualization and other sensory images, prediction, inference, making connections)
- identify elements of style (similes and metaphors)

You Will Need:

- *Adrift at Sea*
- A list of the five senses on chart paper or on the board

How to Proceed:

Before Reading

Read the title, subtitle, authors and illustrator. Make sure everyone understands what "adrift" means. Invite students to look carefully at everything on the cover. After a moment, ask:

"What do you see?" (boat, sea, sun)

"Do you have any predictions about this book?"

"What might "with Tuan Ho" mean?" Explain that Tuan Ho has told his story to author Marsha Skrypuch, who then wrote it down, and that he is, in fact, the Vietnamese boy mentioned in the subtitle. "So, is this fiction, or is it a true story?"

"The authors provide many sensory descriptions to help us create images in our minds." Draw students' attention to the list of five senses and invite them to imagine the sights, sounds, smells, feelings, and tastes described in the story. You will later prompt them to do this at different times.

During Reading

Be sure to read the dedication page and show the photographs there.

First spread: “What is the setting here? How do you know? Whose voice is telling the story?”

Second spread: After they have had a chance to see the painting, draw students’ attention to the list of five senses. Invite them to close their eyes and create sensory images as you read the pages. After reading, ask, “What did you smell? What did you feel? What did you see? Who did you not see? What did you hear?”

Third spread: “What does ‘caren’ mean? What is a skiff?” (Don’t tell them what a skiff is. They can confirm their prediction on a future page.)

Fourth spread: “How does the author’s choice of font size help us understand the words ‘Soldiers shout. My heart pounds’?”

Fifth spread: “What is a skiff? Were you right?” “Imagine you are Tuan. How do you feel when strangers crawl in? When you realize your sisters, aunt, and cousins are missing? When your mother is not yet on the boat and the boatman pushes off?”

Sixth spread: After reading this page, simply pause and let the enormity of the situation sink in.

Seventh spread: “Brian Deines has painted this picture so that the viewer is looking up from below. Why might he have done that?”

Eighth spread: Before reading the second paragraph, invite students to close their eyes and create sensory images, and to imagine trying to fall asleep under those conditions. Draw attention to the metaphor “the lullaby of slapping waves.”

Ninth spread: “‘My throat is like paper’ is a simile. What does it mean?”

Tenth spread: After viewing the painting, invite students to close their eyes and create sensory images while you read.

Eleventh spread: “Why might people not volunteer to help bail the boat?”

Twelfth spread: Compare the wide-angle of this image with the close-up perspective of a previous spread (e.g. the tenth). “What is the illustrator trying to communicate to the reader by doing this? How would it feel to be six years old and find yourself in a situation where even the adults are frightened?”

Thirteenth spread: Whether you discuss the tragic events of this page beyond reading it will depend on the age and experiences of your students.

Sixteenth spread: “Why doesn’t Tuan understand the American sailor?”

Seventeenth spread: Invite students to keep their eyes open but to be ready to create another sensory image (this time, taste), as you read this page. “What does ‘The sailor beams’ mean? Why is the sailor happy? Have you ever felt good after helping someone?”

After Reading

Invite responses from students. Honor their observations, questions, and feelings. Write down their questions on chart paper to begin to shape further investigations into the topic of refugees. Unless your students are quite young, you will want to read the historical background provided at the end of the book, and discuss it as it relates to the curriculum for your grade.



TUAN'S JOURNEY

In this activity, students will trace Tuan's journey from Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam to Toronto, Ontario, Canada. This will provide a springboard for a number of curriculum-related Social Studies investigations. Teachers can choose the one that is most suited to their grade-level curriculum.

Learning Expectations:

Students will

- understand that many people have come to our country as refugees.
- grow in their role as global citizens and in their awareness of global communities
- develop an appreciation of diversity
- demonstrate empathy
- explore rights and responsibilities of self and society
- trace their own family's journey to this country or, in the case of indigenous students, explore the changes experienced by their own family and community over time
- compare communities around the world
- identify international organizations and accords to which our country belongs (e.g. the UN). Investigate the actions taken by such organizations and our country's participation in them, especially with respect to refugees.
- on a world map, locate current areas of unrest leading to refugee situations, as well as the refugee camps and the countries to which refugees relocate.
- plan a project in response to a current global issue (refugees, disaster relief, global health, etc.)

You Will Need:

- a globe
- a large world map
- data collection sheet (included)
- news sources (television, radio, internet, newspapers)
- photographs of people in different countries (countries identified in first three activities)

How To Proceed:

1. First on a globe and then on a large world wall map or interactive digital map, identify your own community and Ho Chi Minh City. Using the information at the end of *Adrift at Sea*, have the students mark the path of Tuan's journey from Ho Chi Minh City to Toronto. Icons of a truck, a boat, and a plane could be used to show his modes of transportation on the various legs of his journey. This is a good time to point out various map features that are appropriate to your grade such as cardinal directions, legend, how land and water are marked, how font is used differently for cities, towns and countries, etc.
2. Find out if there is a Vietnamese Association in or near your community. Invite a member to come and speak to your class about their culture or about how they came to this country.
3. Using the attached data collection sheet, students will use primary sources (e.g. parents, grandparents) to trace the journey of their own family (even if it's entirely within this country). Have them mark the journey on a small world map (with care-giver's help if necessary). They can present their findings orally and use photographs, timelines, or other visual aids to enhance their presentation. They can add their family's journey to the large world map. An alternate assignment for students whose families have been in their current location throughout living memory is to create a family tree or a timeline of significant family events. They have still had a journey, but it has been through time and experience, rather than across lands and oceans. Spend some time comparing the journeys of the students' families with Tuan's journey and with each other's, encouraging a spirit of appreciation of their diversity as well as looking for similarities.



4. Study recent and current refugee situations. Read *My Beautiful Birds* by Suzanne del Rizzo. Encourage students to watch the media (online, television, radio, newspapers) for stories of refugees and share them with the class. If your community has welcomed refugees recently, allow your students to tell how they were involved. Add to the world map the countries of origin, locations of refugee camps, and paths to the displaced people's new homes, if known. If any of your students were themselves refugees, be sensitive to the rawness of this topic for them, but allow them to talk about their story or culture if they wish.
5. Investigate the location, climate, physical features, homes, and lifestyles of the various countries you have marked on your map. Discuss how proximity to the equator affects climate and how various factors affect the way people meet their survival needs. Look at photographs from the different countries. What can you learn about how people live from these photos? How would their lifestyles have changed when they came to this country?
6. What does it mean to be a global citizen? Review the information in the afterword of *Adrift at Sea* that describes the involvement in 1979 of the UN and western countries in the resettlement of the Vietnamese refugees. Research the UN and other intergovernmental organizations, as well as NGO's, and how they responded to recent situations such as Syria, Myanmar, South Sudan, or natural disasters. Research current events to find out about any immediate humanitarian crises around the world and how our country or your community is involved in assisting. Have a class meeting to create a plan of action to become involved in a current relief effort (e.g. have a used toy sale to raise money to send to an NGO for hurricane relief; learn some words in the language of refugees who are coming to your community; have a multicultural food fair and give the proceeds to an organization that helps refugees; arrange for a speaker from a relief organization to speak to your class; write letters to government leaders either supporting or opposing the government's stand on a particular humanitarian issue).



IMAGE IMPACT

In *Adrift at Sea*, illustrator Brian Deines uses a variety of viewing distances and angles in his paintings. These contribute to the mood and message portrayed on each page. Students will experiment with using a variety of camera angles and distances to portray a certain mood or message as they produce a media text using a tablet or digital camera.

Learning Expectations:

Students will produce media texts for specific purposes and audiences with a particular focus on varying the camera angle and distance to enhance the mood or message.

You Will Need:

- *Adrift at Sea*
- A collection of print or digital photographs from different camera angles and distances
- Digital cameras or tablets (ideally, one per student)
- Paper and Bristol board, glue, and writing materials (optional)

How To Proceed:

1. Review some of the illustrations in *Adrift at Sea* that show different angles and distances. For example, the moderate distance of the first spread allows the illustrator both to show Tuan, and to communicate several things about Tuan's culture, including clothing, house style, and daily activities. Thus, both the main character and setting are introduced, even without reading the text. The next spread is a close-up and conveys a mood of intimacy between mother and son. The seventh spread, from a low angle, effectively conveys the very real danger that Tuan could fall off the plank into the ocean. The next spread, from a high angle, takes in the crowded conditions on the boat. The twelfth spread, from a very large distance, conveys the utter isolation and hopelessness of a single disabled boat on a broad expanse of ocean. Have the students identify how viewing distance and angle can affect the mood and message of a painting.

2. Have the students identify camera distance and angles in a collection of print or digital photographs, and describe how the message or mood is affected.
3. Tell students they will be producing a media text using different camera angles and distances. Have students "Think, pair, share" to decide on a purpose and audience for their media text. You could provide a list of topics that would be consistent with your grade curriculum for them to choose from. For example, they might wish to create a series of photos to explain playground safety to a younger class; make a poster illustrating a litter problem and their plan to address it; or produce a digital text explaining the features of the local community.
4. Enlist additional adult supervision and have the students move around inside or outside the school, or go together into the community. Have students take many photographs, keeping in mind their purpose and audience. Encourage them to photograph each item several times, from a variety of angles and distances. For a playground safety series, they could stand on the ground and photograph their friend above them on the monkey bars. For a litter poster, they could photograph candy wrappers down low and close up, from a "bug's eye view."
5. Give students time and assistance to choose and format the photos they will use, and to print and mount them if necessary, or create a digital slideshow. Give them additional time to plan, write, and practice their oral presentation, and then present their media text to their chosen audience.



I CAN'T GIVE UP

Tuan remembers his father's last words to him: "Be brave, Tuan." Later he tells himself, "I can't give up now." Students will learn their own capacity for courage and perseverance in this activity.

Learning Expectations:

Students will learn about others who have demonstrated courage and perseverance, and then practice showing courage and perseverance themselves.

You Will Need:

- *Adrift at Sea*
- Other books about courage and/or perseverance
- An approved venue that is designed to, or likely to, develop these character traits. For example, climbing wall, ropes course, swimming lessons, obstacle course, fitness circuit, mock Olympics, etc.

How To Proceed:

1. Get approval and permission to take your class to a venue such as those listed above. If that is not possible, create a challenging circuit in your schoolyard or plan to participate in an event such as the Terry Fox Run at your school.

2. Show the cover of *Adrift at Sea*. Ask if anyone remembers Tuan's father's last words to him. Find the words in the book, "Be brave, Tuan." Ask if they know another word for bravery. Write "Courage" on the chart or board. Read the part where Tuan is about to climb onto the rescue ship. "I am afraid I will be too weak... But I can't give up now." Prompt students to come up with the word "Perseverance" and write that on the board with "Courage". Ask students when they might have to show courage or perseverance.
3. Read other books about people who showed courage and/or perseverance (e.g. *Terry Fox, a story of Hope* by Maxine Trottier; *Henry's Freedom Box* by Ellen Levine; *The Night Lion* by Sanne Dufft; *When the Rain Comes* by Alma Fullerton)
4. Have the students make posters encouraging courage and perseverance and put them up around the school.
5. Do the planned field trip or on-site event. Encourage the students to show courage and perseverance as they meet the presented challenges. If your school celebrates character traits at assemblies, be watchful for exemplary instances of courage or perseverance that you can highlight.

MULTI-COLORED SKIES

Children often stick to familiar colors in their pictures—green for grass, blue for sky and water. But in *Adrift at Sea*, Brian Deines incorporates red, orange, gold, tan, yellow, blue, purple, and pink into his sky and sea. In this activity, students will explore how color enhances a message, and practice using a variety of colors in their own artwork.

Learning Expectations:

Students will

- express their feelings and ideas about works of art
- interpret works of art and identify the moods or ideas they convey
- produce 2-dimensional art works
- use color in a non-representational and expressive way to communicate ideas

You Will Need:

- *Adrift at Sea*
- *A Brush Full of Colour: The World of Ted Harrison* by Margriet Ruurs and Katherine Gibson
- Other works of art in which non-representational color is used to convey ideas
- Heavy art paper
- Paint and brushes
- Markers in many colors (optional)

How To Proceed:

1. Say, "Think about the color of the sky. Think about the color of the ocean." Hold up *Adrift at Sea*. "What color are the sky and ocean in this painting? When might the sky and water be those colours in real life? (at sunrise and sunset)." Look through the book, having students identify any other instances of non-blue sky and water. "Why do you think Brian Deines chose to use these colors?" Students may say it is to identify the time of day, which can be correct, but prompt them to examine the other effects the color (especially sky color) has on the message, for example, to communicate that the family is trying to avoid being seen leaving, to emphasize how hot, parched, and thirsty the people feel, to illustrate the tragedy of the burning boat, or the happiness of being saved.
2. View and discuss other works of art in which unexpected colors are used. *A Brush Full of Colour: The World of Ted Harrison* by Margriet Ruurs and Katherine Gibson is filled with such works. Others can be found online or in calendars.
3. Have students create tempera paintings. Begin by having them recall an outdoor event that was filled with strong emotion. Brainstorming a list can help students with their ideas. It might include a birthday party, a sleigh ride, a horse show, or a baseball game, but could also include sad or scary events that they may have experienced, such as falling off a bike or looking for a lost dog. They will draw the event on the art paper, using pencil, but they should first think about the distance and angle they will use. Encourage them to include any people, buildings, animals, vehicles and other objects that are important to the event. Remind them that they can achieve a close-up effect by making their objects so large that they "fall off" the edges of the paper, or a far-away effect by making the objects small. They can change the angle by placing objects higher or lower on the paper. Have them add a horizon line. Provide tempera paints in primary colors, black, and white, and small trays for mixing. Invite them to think about what colors would best represent the emotion of the event they have depicted and use those colors to paint the sky, right down to the horizon line, carefully

painting around their objects. Encourage them to mix different tints of a color, or mix different amounts of two primary colors together to get just the right color. As in the sample art works, the sky can have multiple colors. Continue in a similar way for the ground (or water, if applicable). Once the sky and ground are dry, the objects can be carefully painted (or, if the objects are small, colored in with markers—especially for younger students). Encourage students to make a title for their paintings and display them proudly.

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Name: _____

Data Collection Sheet: My Family's Journey

Use this sheet to record your family's journey, either to Canada or within Canada. Since you have many different ancestors, they might have had different journeys, so there is room to record more than one. You don't need to record them all, but you may ask for another sheet if you wish. If your family has lived in the same community for as long as anyone knows, ask your teacher for the data collection sheet "My Family's Story."

You will use primary sources. That means you will ask real people for their stories, or you will look at the letters or diaries of real people who lived in your family in the past. Ask your parent or caregiver to help you.

Whose story is it?	Where did they come from and when?	The story of how they got here

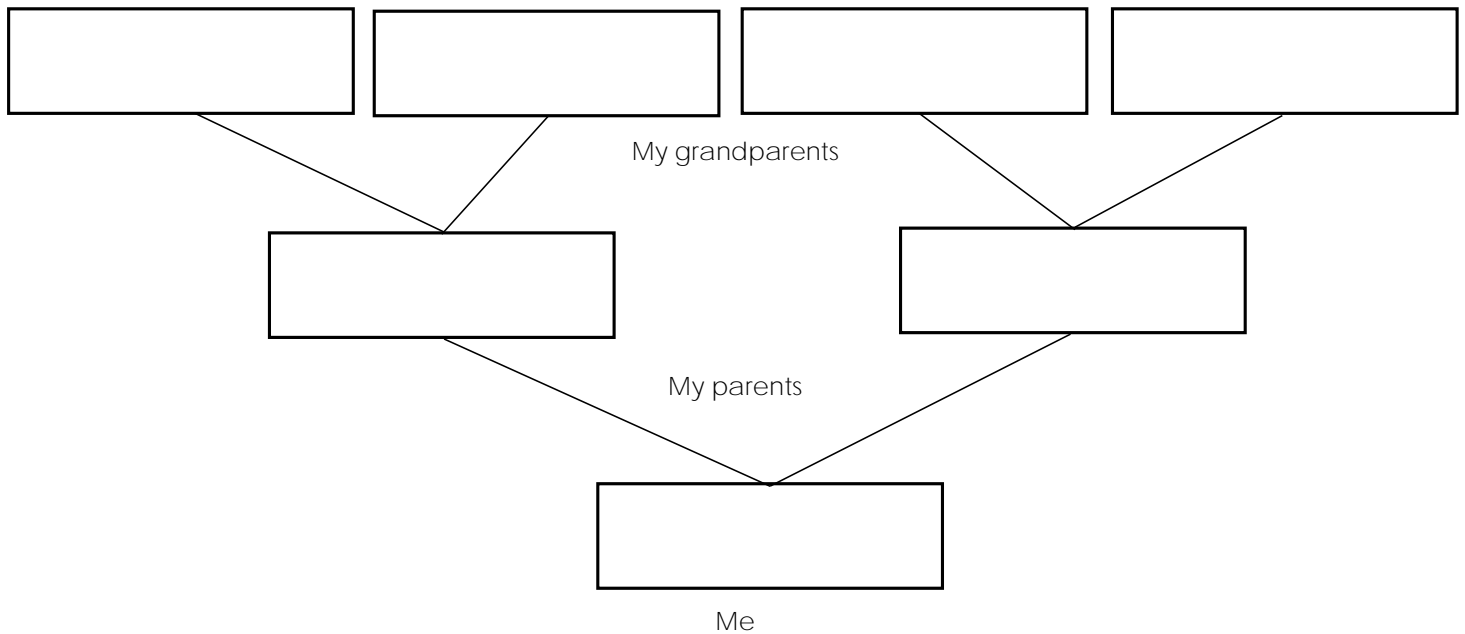
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Data Collection Sheet: My Family's Story

Use this sheet to record your family's story, if they have lived in one place (here) as long as anyone knows. Since you have many different ancestors, they will have had different stories, so there is room to record more than one. You don't need to record them all, but you may ask for another sheet if you wish. If your family has moved here from another place within Canada or outside of Canada, either recently or long ago, ask your teacher for the data collection sheet "My Family's Journey."

You will use primary sources. That means you will ask real people for information, or you will look at the letters or diaries of real people who lived in your family in the past. Ask your parent or caregiver to help you.

Family Tree



Whose story is it?	When they were born; dates and details of other important things that happened in their lives.