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# Hamzat's Journey: A Refugee Diary

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

3

This is the third book in a series which follows the journeys of refugee children fleeing from some of the contemporary world's conflicts to safety in Britain. The stories, in picture book format, are based on interviews with their real subjects. They are accompanied by illustrations in watercolour and crayon, and occasional photographs. This book is the story of a boy from Chechnya, whose foot was blown off and his leg shattered by a land-mine and who is brought to London by a relief agency to have an artificial leg fitted. At the opening of the book, there are maps of Chechnya and its surrounding states and their position in Europe relative to Britain and, after the story, some information about the country and its conflicts. This short section, although its language suggests an older audience than the book itself, left me only a little wiser about the situation than the occasional reports on the TV news. Rather, the book concentrates on the experience of Hamzat and his family and, aimed at junior school age children ? the age that Hamzat came to Britain ? seems intended to promote understanding and sympathy and, perhaps, to be but the starting point for a discussion of the wider issues. Both the story and the illustrations, probably in deference to the age of their intended audience, treat the subject carefully, and err on the side of the matter of fact and bland, hardly attempting to convey in themselves what you know would be the horrors and stresses of Hamzat's life. Instead, the book relies on the first person narrative and the photographs to encourage its readers' empathy. They will have to imagine for themselves what it really might be like to be Hamzat.

Running Order:

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