

Paper Boat: A Refugee Story

A RIF GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

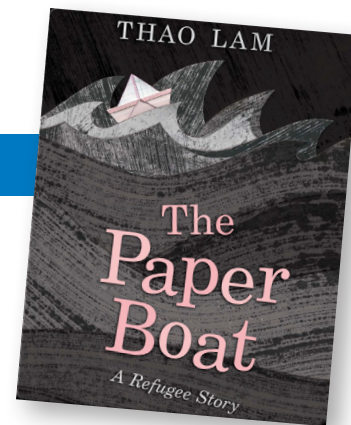
Themes: Compassion, Family, Resilience

Grade Level: Kindergarten to 3rd grade

Book Brief: Told through collage, this wordless picture book tells the story of a family's escape from Vietnam. From rescuing ants from a sugar water trap to following them through the jungle

to a rescue boat, a young girl flees to safety.

Author & Illustrator:
Thao Lam



TIME TO READ!



Before reading, build background: Tell your child that this story is told with pictures, and it is based on a true story. Then, read the fifth paragraph of the Author's Note at the back of the book to your child.

While reading, summarize: As you 'read' the pictures with your child, take turns providing short summaries, like captions, for each illustration to keep track of what is happening in the story.

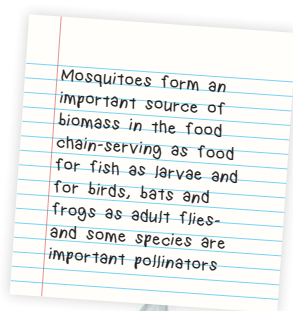
After reading, ask questions:

- How did you feel about reading a story with no words?
- How did the girl feel about the ants in her life?
- Why do you think the author showed only the ants' journey over the sea?
- What was the author/illustrator trying to show on the last page of the story (the city scene)?

RELATED ACTIVITIES

INSECT HELPERS

Although the adults in *The Paper Boat* looked at the ants only as pests, the little girl saw them as creatures to be rescued. Ultimately, the ants helped the girl and her mother find an escape. With your child, pick an insect that seems only like a pest. Then, research the contributions that the insect makes to its ecosystem. Have your child write an ode, an appreciation letter, or even an invitation to the insect.



HOME IS WHERE...

Materials: Paper, crayons/markers/colored pencils

The family in this story is shown in two very different homes. Compare the dining area in the beginning of the book with the dining area at the end and identify the similarities. Then, talk with your child about what objects and foods would have to be on the table to make your own family feel at home anywhere. Draw the scene together.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



OTHER BOOKS ABOUT REFUGEES:

- [A Different Pond \(2017\)](#)
- [Sugar in Milk \(2020\)](#)
- [From the Tops of the Trees \(2021\)](#)