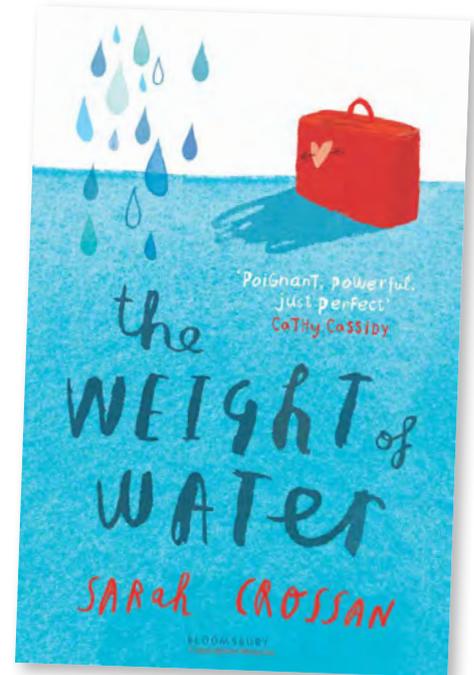


THE WEIGHT OF WATER

By Sarah Crossan



Key Stage 3

ABOUT THE BOOK

Armed with a suitcase and an old laundry bag filled with clothes, Kasienska and her mother head for England. There, life is lonely for Kasienska. At home her mother's heart is breaking and at school friends are scarce. But when someone special swims into her life, Kasienska learns that there might be more than one way for her to stay afloat. *The Weight of Water* is a startlingly original piece of fiction. Most simply a brilliant coming of age story, it also tackles the alienation experienced by many young immigrants. Moving, unsentimental and utterly page-turning, we meet and share the experiences of a remarkable girl who shows us how quiet courage prevails.

TEACHING NOTES

These notes have been created to support students aged 11+ to explore the characters, storyline and issues in this book.

TALKING POINTS

Before reading:

- What clues are there on the front cover or the themes that the novel may explore. Discuss the suitcase, heart and arrow, raindrops or tears, water.
- What do you think the title 'Weight of Water' may mean? This title can be revisited and discussed later after reading.

- Scan through the book and ask the learners what they think about the style it is written in? Can the titles or each poem give any indication of the themes and storyline.

After reading:

- Ask learners to write down any questions, thoughts, feelings that the book has stirred for them. If there are students in the class who have come from other countries, be mindful that this may give rise to more emotional responses based on first-hand experiences. Immigration is an issue this book explores.

THEMES AND ACTIVITIES

- Take all the titles of each poem and list them in order. What story do they tell? Can you glean the story from the titles alone? Use them to tell another story, either poetry or prose.
- Brainstorm all the themes with the class that are explored in the story. Ask the learners to write down the themes. Share these. Are any of the themes linked? Why?
- Discuss each of the main characters in the story: Kasienska, Mama, Tata, Clair, William, the neighbour, anyone else. What role do they play? Sum up each character in two or three sentences.

USING FICTION TO EXPLORE HUMAN RIGHTS

THEMES EXPLORED

- Friendship
- First love
- Courage
- Bullying
- Settling into a new country

HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

- **Article 1:** All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.
- **Article 13:** Everyone has the right to freedom of movement.
- **Article 15:** Everyone has the right to a nationality.
- **Article 29:** Everyone has duties to the community.

OTHER TEXTS WITH SIMILAR THEMES BY AGE PHASE

- *Chains* by Laurie R. King, Key Stage 3 & 4.
- *Ruby Red* by Linzi Glass, Key Stage 4 & 5.
- *Sisterland* by Linda Newbery, Key Stage 4 & 5.
- *The Edge* by Alan Gibbons, Key Stage 4 & 5.

Article 13:

- *The Wall* by William Sutcliffe, Key Stage 3 & 4.
- *Between Shades of Grey* by Ruta Sepetys, Key Stage 3 & 4.
- *Out of Shadows* by Jason Wallace, Key Stage 4 & 5.
- *The Road of Bones* by Anne Fine, Key Stage 4 & 5.
- *The Other Side of Truth* by Beverley Naidoo, Key Stage 2.

Article 15:

- *Between Shades of Grey* by Ruta Sepetys, Key Stage 3 & 4.

Article 29:

- *The Promise* by Nicola Davies, Key Stage 2.

