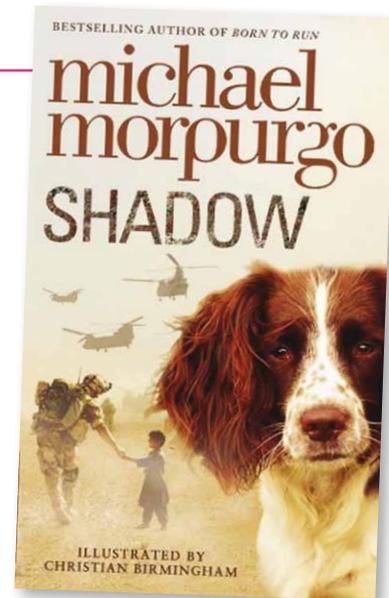


# SHADOW

by Michael Morpurgo

Harper Collins Children's Books  
(Lower secondary)



*Shadow*, set partly in Afghanistan, partly at Yarl's Wood immigration removal centre in the UK, is the story of Aman, an Afghan boy fleeing the horror of war. Told in his own words, it traces how Aman befriends a western dog which appears outside the caves where he lives with his mother. When Aman and his mother decide to make a bid for freedom, the dog, which Aman has called Shadow, will not leave them. Soon it becomes clear that the destinies of boy and dog are linked.

## BACKGROUND

The Taliban took control of Afghanistan in 1996. They imposed very strict rules, based on their interpretation of Islam. They ruled until 2001, when international forces invaded after the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre. Since the invasion, many Afghans have experienced insecurity and poverty.

When people escape persecution in their own country and arrive in the UK, they can apply for asylum. If it is granted, they will be allowed to stay here freely. If it is not, they may be sent back to their original country. This decision can take a long time, during which they may be held in a place like Yarl's Wood. In January 2011, a UK court ruled that detaining children in such centres was illegal.



# IDEAS FOR THE CLASSROOM

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## ROLE PLAY

In pairs conduct a radio or TV interview with one of the people involved in the case: Sergeant Brodie, Matt's grandfather, Uncle Mir or one of the children involved.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

### 1. Why did Aman and his mother flee Afghanistan?

Possible answers:

- Fear of the Taliban
- Ill-treatment because they are Hazara
- Killing of Aman's father and grandmother
- Mother being tortured in prison
- Their home being wrecked
- Extreme poverty

### 2. How did Shadow help Aman and his mother?

Possible answers:

- Companionship
- Trying to protect grandmother when police come to the cave
- Showing them the way while they were escaping
- Keeping their spirits up after everything is stolen
- Warning about the bomb
- Link with Sergeant Brodie which leads to them being allowed to stay in the UK

### 3. Aman said 'Some people here [ie. England] like dogs better than they like children. Actually, I think if I was a dog, they would not shut me up in here like this.' (p71) Do you think there is any truth in this?

### 4. Do you think Aman and his mother should have been granted permission to stay in the UK?

## UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

**Article 7:** The law is the same for everyone. It must treat us all fairly.

**Article 12:** Nobody should try to harm our good name. Nobody has the right to come into our home, open our letters, or bother us or our family without a good reason.

**Article 14:** If we are frightened of being badly treated in our own country, we all have the right to run away to another country to be safe.

**Article 26:** We all have a right to education and to finish primary school which should be free. We should be able to learn a career or make use of all our skills. Our parents have the right to choose how and what we learn. We should learn about the United Nations and about how to get on with other people and to respect their rights.

## FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

Find out more:

- You can listen to Michael Morpurgo talking about how he came to write this story here: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZsGSoMPoB0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZsGSoMPoB0)