

The Waiting Place

When Home is Lost and a New One Not Yet Found

AUTHOR

DINA NAYERI

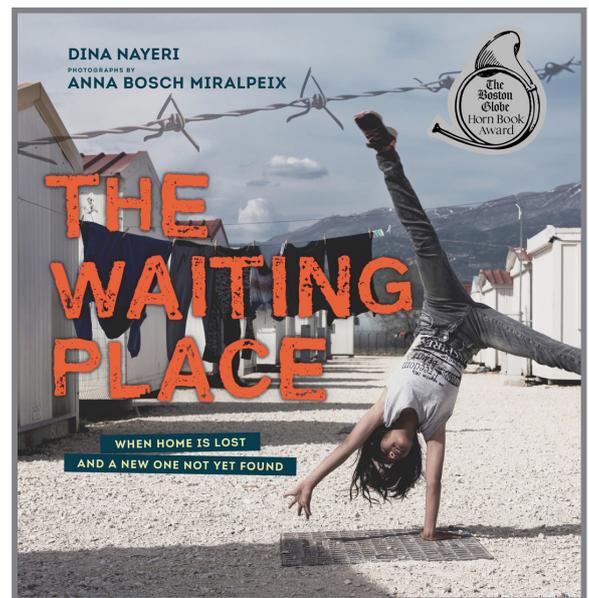
PHOTOGRAPHS BY

ANNA BOSCH MIRALPEIX

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower to Upper Secondary



SYNOPSIS

Every war, famine, and flood spits out survivors.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) cites an unprecedented 79.5 million forcibly displaced people on the planet today. In 2018, Dina Nayeri—a former refugee herself and the daughter of a refugee—invited documentary photographer Anna Bosch Miralpeix to accompany her to Katsikas, a refugee camp outside Ioannina, Greece, to record the hopes and struggles of ten young Farsi-speaking refugees from Iran and Afghanistan. ‘I wanted to play with them, to enter their imagined worlds, to see the landscape inside their minds,’ she says. Ranging in age from five to seventeen, the children live in partitioned shipping-crate homes crowded on a field below a mountain. Battling a dreary monster that wants to rob them of their purpose, dignity and identity, each survives in his or her own special way. *The Waiting Place* is an urgent call to change what we teach young people about the nature of home and safety.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dina Nayeri is a former refugee and the author of the adult title *The Ungrateful Refugee*, a finalist for the Los Angeles Times Book Prize and the Kirkus Prize. Her work has been published in more than twenty countries and in *The O. Henry Prize Stories*, *The Best American Short Stories*, the *New York Times*, and many other publications. Of her work with Anna Bosch Miralpeix for *The Waiting Place*, she says, ‘Each morning we set off, me with my notebook, she with her camera and tripod, to see these brave little people fighting back against the waiting place—the monster that wants to get inside you, to change you.’ Dina Nayeri lives in Paris.

ABOUT THE PHOTOGRAPHER

Anna Bosch Miralpeix is a documentary photographer whose projects include the award-winning *Bubble Beirut*. A graduate of the Institute of Photographic Studies of Catalonia, she is also a teacher and visual project developer. Anna Bosch Miralpeix lives in Barcelona.

STUDY NOTES

- View the cover and title of the book. Identify the following:
 - The title
 - The author
 - The illustrator

- The publisher
- The blurb.
- As a class, brainstorm what you know about refugee camps then use this information to create a mind-map. Use subheadings to help organise the information.
 - Return to the mind-map you created before reading the book. Cross out or edit any incorrect information then add in anything new that you've learnt.
- Is *The Waiting Place* an imaginative, informative or persuasive book? How can you tell? Who is the audience for this book? Visit your school library and find other books on a similar topic. Can you find informative books, imaginative books and persuasive books?
- Together, read through the UNHCR's 'ten facts about refugees' available at <https://www.unhcr.org/cy/wp-content/uploads/sites/41/2019/09/10-Facts-About-Refugees.pdf> —discuss the issues raised in this fact sheet as a class. Which of these facts do you find most surprising? How does it change your ideas about the issue?
- The characters in *The Waiting Place* have had to flee their old homes in order to stay safe. What do you think would be most difficult about leaving your home behind? What do you think people might want to take with them if they only had time to fill one backpack?
- Choose one of the facts in the UNHCR fact sheet. Create a poster to raise awareness of this fact. Try to incorporate as much of the information included on the sheet about this fact as you can.
- Have a wider class discussion about refugees, including why people must flee their homes, and what they might need when they find a new home.
- The pictures in this book are photos taken inside a real refugee camp in Greece. What effect does the use of real photos have on the book? How would it change if it contained traditional illustrations instead?
- Compare *The Waiting Place* to a fiction picture book. How is the language different in each? Why have the authors of these texts chosen this language?
- Look at how the photographer, Anna Bosch Miralpeix, has used camera angles, colour and space to create a particular feeling. Why do you think she chose to take the photos in the way she did? What other ways could the scenes in the book be photographed?
- Take some photos that capture what daily life is like in your classroom. Interview one of your classmates about what school is like for them. How is it different from writing a story? What do you think would be difficult about making a book like *The Waiting Place*?
- Write a book review of *The Waiting Place* stating what you liked and disliked about it, who you think would enjoy it the most and whether you think the information provided is credible. Use persuasive language to make the reader understand your opinion.
- Write a letter to one of the characters in *The Waiting Place*. What would you want to ask them if you were really going to send it? Is there anything you would want to tell them? Use the information in *The Waiting Place* to think about what you would like to say.
- See if you can find another book about the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in your library. How are they similar? How are they different? Do they use the same techniques to inform you of the issue? Why do you think that is?