

What does it mean to be a refugee?

Imagine a life whereThere's no place to live. No food to eat. No water to drink. You have to beg for food and there are no schools. Imagine living in the middle of a war. How terrible life would be!

Perhaps all your family has been killed. Maybe your father was dragged away by terrorists or beaten in front of you. Maybe you are all alone and being looked after by some kind strangers, who... just like you have nothing. It's winter; you have no shoes or warm clothes to wear.

Imagine someone telling you about a wonderful place called Australia.

Where....every child goes to school. Everyone has a place to live.

There's running water and Food to eat.

A place where there is no war. A place where you can say and be anything you want.

Then one day you have to leave your country very quickly. You are offered a place on an old rickety boat.

You have a chance to go to Australia and leave behind the war and terrible ways of your country.

You have to suffer cramped conditions, sickness and dangerous seas for many days.

People may drown if the boat sinks, but you take the chance.

Finally you reach Australia, a big ship comes to greet you. You're there at last. Australia the land of your dreams.

But wait..... your dream isn't what you hoped. No money, no visas and you're not wanted in that land of plenty.

First stop is the detention center. Months or years of waiting to be allowed to settle in your land of dreams.

At least you are safe and have food and water, BUT you are not free to do as you like.

You want to work or go to school and get on with your new life, but you are not allowed to go anywhere or do anything.

You just have to wait and wait and Wait.

One day you will be told if you can stay or if you have to go back.

That's what it means to be a refugee!

By Nathan Petersen

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