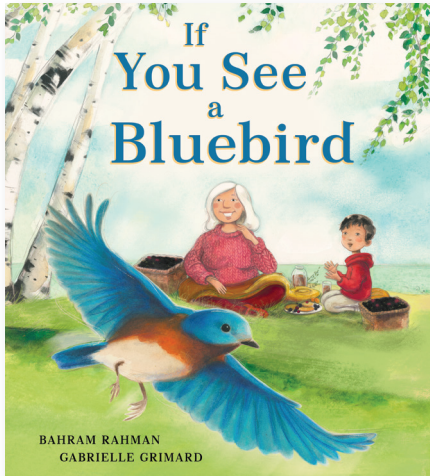


This Teacher's Guide was written by **Larry Swartz**, Larry has been an instructor in literacy as well as dramatic arts at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto for nearly two decades. He is well-known for his use of children's literature to help young people grow as readers, writers, and citizens of the world.



## Story Summary

For young Ali, a former refugee from Afghanistan, “home” is where his family is together.

Although his family is safe in their new country, Ali finds himself wishing he could go back to Afghanistan. A day spent picking blackberries with Nana reminds him of their old house with the mulberry tree he loved, and the day the soldiers came. He recalls their nighttime flight and the crowded buses and airplane that took him to this beautiful but unfamiliar place. When Ali and Nana spot a bluebird, she tells him to make a wish. Ali wishes to go home, but, as he comes to learn, home is not a place. Home is the love his family has for each other.

In *If You See a Bluebird*, Bahram Rahman, author of ALA Schneider Family Book Award Honor Book *A Sky-Blue Bench*, reflects on the experience of former refugees as they learn to adapt and embrace a new country and a new home. Award-winning illustrator Gabrielle Grimard incorporates rich and varied colour palettes to capture Ali's two worlds.

A story of family togetherness that redefines the meaning of home.

**Bahram Rahman** was born in Kabul, Afghanistan, and grew up during the civil war and the first Taliban regime. He came to Canada as a refugee in 2012, and today is a senior policy advisor at the Ministry of Health in Ontario. Bahram's first picture book, Governor General's Literary Award finalist *The Library Bus*, was praised by the *New York Times* for documenting the barriers to education experienced by girls in war-torn countries and their resilience and ingenuity in overcoming them. His 2021 picture book *A Sky-Blue Bench* was an honor book for the ALA Schneider Family Book Award, among many other honors.

**Gabrielle Grimard** transformed her love of design into a career in illustration over the course of her studies at Concordia University and the University of Quebec. In 2018, Gabrielle's picture book *Stolen Words* won the Ruth and Sylvia Schwartz Children's Book Award and was a finalist for the TD Canadian Children's Book Award. *Not My Girl* was a USBBY Outstanding International Book. Her creativity has been applied to children's publishing, advertising, and educational contexts.

Juvenile Fiction Ages 5–8 | ISBN: 978-1-77278-284-4 | Pages: 32

## Reading Level

Fountas & Pinnell: O

Lexile measure : 600L

## BISAC Codes

JUV039250 JUVENILE FICTION / Social Themes / Emigration & Immigration

JUV039050 JUVENILE FICTION / Social Themes / Emotions & Feelings

JUV013030 JUVENILE FICTION / Family / Multigenerational

JUV050000 JUVENILE FICTION / Cooking & Food

JUV002040 JUVENILE FICTION / Animals / Birds

## Learning Expectations:

Students will have the opportunity to:

- Learn about the difference between an immigrant and a refugee
- Understand why some people are forced to leave their country and find a new home
- Tell and write stories about toys that are special to them
- Locate far-away cities and countries
- Identify key vocabulary words and practice their spelling (i.e., compound words)

## Key Vocabulary:

- **Naan:** flatbread with a light and fluffy texture
- **Dew:** drops of water that forms on cool surfaces at night
- **Horizon:** the line at which the earth's surface and the sky appear to meet
- **Patch:** a small area of land where plants or crops grow
- **Kabul:** the capital city of Afghanistan
- **Ghaychak:** a musical instrument; a lute
- **Clutch:** to hold tightly
- **Board:** to get onto an aircraft, ship, or other vehicle



## Preparing To Read:

As a class, come up with answers and questions for the T-chart below:

What We Know About Refugees	Questions About Refugees
I know that...	I wonder...

Explain the following terms to the students:

- **Immigrant:** a person who moves to a country to live there permanently.
- **Refugee:** a type of immigrant who was forced to leave their country to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster.
- **Asylum:** a place of safety or protection, especially for people who have left their country for political reasons

## Before Reading

- Ask the students “Have you ever seen a bluebird?” What are the names of some birds you have seen up close? What is your favourite bird?
- What are some special things you like to do with a grandparent or an older relative?
- Discuss the words ‘immigrant’ and ‘refugee.’

## During Reading

- What special memories does Ali have about his life in Afghanistan?
- What are some bad things that happened to Ali’s family in Kabul?
- The illustrator chooses to show happy times in Kabul using golden colours, why do you think she made this choice?
- What are some hardships Ali and his family encountered when leaving Afghanistan?
- Ali’s Nana explains to him: “If you see a bluebird and make a wish before it flies away, your wish will come true.” Ask: What are some superstitions that you or your family believe in? (Example: opening an umbrella indoors, walking under a ladder, knocking on wood, etc.)
- What did Nana wish for? Did her wish come true? What did Ali wish for? Do you think it will come true?
- What is Nana’s definition of ‘home’? How do we know Ali believes in this explanation of home?

## After Reading

- How do we know that Ali's Nana is a caring woman?
- Ali has happy and sad memories about his life in Afghanistan. Why are these memories important?
- Do you think *If You See a Bluebird* is a happy story or a sad one? Explain.
- Read the following quotation by the poet Rumi that the author ends the book with (located at the end of the author's note): "I'll never live again in the limits of a lake. Next time, the ocean! I'll make the infinite my home." What do these words mean to you? Why do you think the author ended with this?
- Have students work independently to complete the following sentences in response to *If You See a Bluebird*. Once completed students can share their responses with others.
  - Something I learned about refugees...
  - Something I wondered about refugees...
  - An illustration that I found to be the most interesting was...

## Activity #1: Around The World

Students will have the opportunity to:

- Locate cities and/or countries from around the world
- Investigate and record the distance of a faraway city or country

**Material:** World map

Locate the city of Kabul on the map of the world. Explain that Kabul is the capital city of the country Afghanistan.

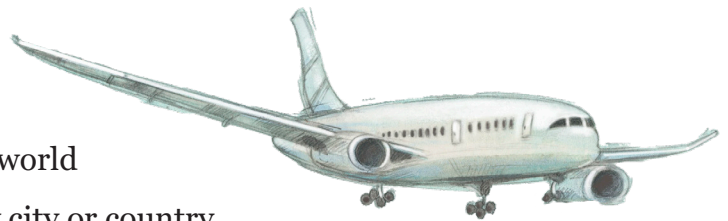
Have students locate a city or country that they, their parents, or grandparents were born in. Locate these countries on a world map. What do they know about these places?

**Extension:**

- Alternatively, which city or country might they like to visit someday?
- Invite students to investigate and list the number of kilometers / miles this place is from their current hometown.

## Activity #2: Show-and-tell / Personal Narratives

Ali wants to take two of his toys in his backpack, but he is only allowed to take one. Ask: Which stuffed animal / toy would you like to keep forever?



Students can write about a favourite toy that they own. Get students to:

- Describe the toy.
- How did you get this toy?
- What is special about this toy?
- What memories do you have about this toy?
- Where does this toy stay in your bedroom?
- Create an illustration of this toy.

**Extension:** Organize a show-and-tell day in the classroom by having students bring in their favourite toy. Students can each tell a story about their special toy.

### Activity #3: Word Puzzle, Compound Words

Compound words occur when two words are combined to form a new word. Draw the students' attention to the word 'bluebird' which is a compound word, as it is made by joining two words together.

Students can solve the following puzzles to spell a compound word correctly.

**Puzzle 1:** Each of these words appear in the picture book *If You See a Bluebird*.

<b>blue</b>	+	<b>bird</b>	=	<b>bluebird</b>
black	+	berry	=	
out	+	side	=	
handle	+	bar	=	
neighbor	+	hood	=	
child	+	hood	=	
tooth	+	paste	=	
tooth	+	brush	=	
under	+	wear	=	
any	+	more	=	
drive	+	way	=	

**Puzzle 2:** Match words in Column A with words in Column B to make a compound word. (Note: the words in Column A can be found in this picture book)

Column A

AIR

HOME

THUNDER

TABLE

STRAW

SLEEP

EYE

EGG

BLUE

Column B

BOLT

BROW

TOP

BERRY

BIRD

LAND

OVER

PLANE

PLANT

Compound Words:

Bluebird

Air

Home

Thunder

Table

Straw

Sleep

Eye

Egg



This guide was created with support from Ontario Creates



ONTARIO  
CREATES | ONTARIO  
CRÉATIF

