



No Safe Place

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Finalist for the Ruth and Sylvia Schwartz Children's Book Award

Orphaned and plagued with the grief of losing everyone he loves, fifteen-year-old Abdul has made a long, fraught journey from his war-torn home in Baghdad, only to end up in The Jungle -- the squalid, makeshift migrant community in Calais.

When an altercation at the soup kitchen ends up with him accidentally stabbing a policeman, Abdul has to flee, and in desperation he takes a spot in a small boat heading to England. A sudden skirmish leaves the boat stalled in the middle of the Channel, the pilot dead, and four young people remaining -- Abdul; Rosalia, a Romani girl who has escaped from the white slave trade; Cheslav, gone AWOL from a Russian military school; and Jonah, the boat pilot's ten-year-old nephew.

The four of them end up hijacking a yacht and, despite their fear and mistrust, they form a kind of makeshift family. And as the authorities close in on them, they find refuge in an unusual place -- a child's secret cave on the English coast.

No Safe Place Details

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Author : Deborah Ellis

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From Reader Review No Safe Place for online ebook

Dijah Musah-McLean says

The novel NO SAFE PLACE by, Deborah Ellis is an amazing read.

The story takes place in Calais, where Abdul, a young teenage migrant roams the streets. Devastating events have cost him his family, and friends when he lived in his old country. Though now he can escape to a better place, away from all the war and disaster. To England. He meets with a smuggler who claims he can take him and others there on his boat. Where Abdul meets with two other migrants who both possess the same dream of going to England as he does. In chapters, the author describes the past lives of the three migrants Abdul, Cheslav, and Rosalia. Their loss, struggles, and the over-all devastating experiences leading them up to that point. All on their search of a "SAFE PLACE".

I believe that this book shows much strength in many categories. The author of this novel does a good job of explaining the event that is occurring, giving you a clear visual image in your mind, making you feel like you're right there watching the character. The author also describes the expressions of the characters realistically making them seem believable. For example the author describes "he looked at Cheslav as if his opinion mattered very much" page 127. The author is referring to an expression probably lots of us have been given before. And since the topic of the story is very realistic already, the description only seems to make the story better.

In my opinion I believe that this book is truly incredible. The writing style of the author explains every detail of the book. While still at a level that is understandable and realistic. I believe the author chose the best point of view, because it shows the perspectives of all the characters. And while also being able to present the story of their past in a detailed manner. Though I especially like this book because of the genre. This novel is realistic-fiction, presenting actual situations that people can relate to because the aspects of it actually occur in real life. I absolutely loved this novel. And if I were to rate it, I would rate 5 out of 5 stars!!!!

Rll50214_rachelschwartz says

No Safe Place shares Abdul's journey from Iraq to England. Abdul, a fifteen year old Iraqi, is an orphan whose father and brothers were killed in Iraq by American bombs in 2003. Two years later, his mother was driving him and an orphaned neighbor, Fatima, when two men shot and killed her for driving a car. The story begins in Calais, where Abdul gets caught in a riot while attempting to get food. He stabs a policeman and starts to run.

Eventually, Abdul begins his voyage out of Calais and gets on an illegal boat taking immigrants out of the country. Over the course of the ride he meets many immigrants, including Jonah, Cheslav, and Rosalia. Eventually, they discover that their boat is filled with hidden heroin, and that their journey was, in part, a drug smuggling operation. Later, Abdul and the three other children are the only ones left on the boat and encounter two men with a yacht. They steal the yacht, and set out for England.

Interwoven into the action is Cheslav, Rosalia, and Jonah's stories. You learn about how they got to the boat and their backstories. Eventually, the boat approaches land along the coast of Cornwall, England. Once they disembark from the yacht, they meet Gemma and get to know her in her secret cave. Gemma and her mother take the teenagers in, care for them, and do what they can to help them complete their journey.

I loved this book and couldn't put it down! I think this book would be a great fit for middle school or high school students. It teaches a lot about stereotypes and the way people from other backgrounds are perceived by the world. The book could also be used within the context of history to teach about the Iraq War

(beginning in 2003), and other European countries and cultures. I also think that the book has a strong message of friendship, and how to be reliant on one another. I would highly recommend this book to adults and students, and I thought it was great!!!

Rll52014_mollyharris says

This work of realistic fiction by Deborah Ellis tells the story of three young people who are trying to illegally cross the border from France into England. Their backgrounds are culturally mixed: Abdul is a fifteen year old Kurdish boy from Baghdad, Chreslav is fourteen year old from Russia, and Rosalia is a fourteen year old Roma girl who struggles to identify with a "homeland", as she has moved so frequently. Each of these young people is escaping from something, and their stories are revealed through flashbacks. In between the flashbacks, Ellis focuses on the present, during which these young people are stranded on a boat, hoping to make it safely to England.

Ellis is an excellent storyteller and she paints a clear picture of each of the characters with vivid descriptions and dialogue. This book deals with many themes, but perhaps the most dominant is self-identity. Each of the characters struggles with the juxtaposition between the way they see themselves and the way that they are seen by others. For this reason, this book would be a great starting point for a discussion about labels and stereotypes and how we see ourselves vs. how others see us.

A great book dealing with difficult and important themes.

Levi Erdmann says

The plot of this novel is very interesting. It starts off with a boy named Abdul who wants to cross into England and be free. His entire family is dead and he is forced to stay with his uncle who treats him badly. He ends up running away and has to eat in a homeless shelter on his way to Iraq. He gets to the border of the Mediterranean Sea and pays a smuggler to get him to England. He and 4 others load onto a small skiff and try to go to England. They knock the smuggler out of the skiff and are alone. They find an American yacht and toss the few people on it overboard. Cheslav, Rosaile, Abdul, and Jonas all make it to England in the yacht without getting caught by the coastguard. In between the story, it flashes back to each of the immigrants' childhoods and how they ended up where they are and every character's story is very unique and is very shocking when they tell it. For example, Cheslav originally attended a Siberian military camp and then he got transferred to play the trumpet at large military events. The four immigrants eventually end up in a small village and stay in a furnished cave and live there for about two days. Then Abdul leaves to go to Arsenal's arena and to Penny Lane to drop off a medallion that his friend Kalil had given him.

My personal opinion on this book was that I've never actually read a more realistic book. You learn the life of a modern day illegal alien and their journey to get to the country they want. I liked this book because of how suspenseful it was and all of the action that is in the book. Reading a book in the perspective of a person in poverty is a real mind changer on what you have because I am in the middle class and I have the basic essentials and more while Abdul didn't have any of that. The one thing that really hit me was when he didn't get to eat for days at a time and his showers were going to a library and washing himself in the sink.

I would recommend this book to a person in high school because of some of the content in it is a little inappropriate for younger kids. It has a lot of action which is why I think guys would like this book a lot. Also if you like a little bit of sadness and some heartwarming moments, this novel has a few of those.

Deborah Abela says

Deborah Ellis has a style that is simple and direct but when you have read her stories, you feel as if you've been transported to a rich but often dangerous place that thankfully a lot of us will never know. No Safe Place revolves around three children on the run. Abdul from Iraq, Cheslav from Russia and Rosalia is Roma who doesn't have a country to call her own. All three have escaped brutal childhoods with inexplicable cruelties and are now on the run to a better life. They meet in Calais late at night on a smuggler's boat, bound for England. The smuggler is ruthless, the night is dark and frightening and not everything will go to plan. Will they make it to England and what will happen if they get there? Deborah Ellis has spent many years talking to kids from war-torn countries, collecting their stories and retelling them in brilliantly accessible style. It's a brutal but honest retelling of not only what these three kids face, but many kids all over the world meet daily.

Autumn Chrunik says

4.5/5 stars!

My only issue with this book was at the end when we find out Abdul's whole story. I felt the part about his friend (and himself I'm assuming) being gay was just thrown in there because it wasn't really alluded to at all throughout the book. I found that annoying since it was just dropped in there. Other than that great story!

Erin Dwan says

No Safe Place is an important book. Ellis offers a glimpse into a world that we as a society are otherwise oblivious to. This book places a name and a face to the countless middle-eastern children whose lives the war destroyed, these people who are all but hopeless.

Enter Abdul, a fifteen year old with just a dream and a gold medallion. His story, as are those of the other children he befriends on his way to England, is riveting and horrifyingly real. Ellis' depiction of life in Calais provides a brutally true-to-life description of the difficulties illegal migrants struggle with today. I appreciated how shockingly honest the first part of the book was, but I was a bit disappointed with the ending. I questioned the likelihood that three teenagers and a small child could so easily outsmart two grown men, thus stealing and eventually sinking their yacht, but I let it go.

This isn't what spoiled the book for me, though. To be completely honest, the ending sucked. It was like a magical fairy-tale ending, very uncharacteristic of the rest of Ellis' work. Although the ending was disappointing, I still enjoyed the book a lot. It's a great read, and I believe that this book is very important and eye-opening. No Safe Place is vital in today's world, and it calls attention to the people who need it most.

Lesley says

Amazing book! Definitely a page turner; I couldn't put it down, and yes, I finished this book in 2 days. "No

"Safe Place" is about a young boy named Abdul, without parents, trying to find a safe place to live. He goes on many different adventures and meets new people. I definitely recommend this book to people who find it difficult to read since this book is so easy to read while being extremely amusing.

Raj P says

Abdul is 13 years old and has been in the United Kingdom as a immigrant. Abdul came to the United Kingdom because his country is in war with the United States. After coming to the UK he meets a girl from Russia named Cheslav's. There was another girl from UK named Rosalia. They all saved each other's lives at least once. They all were in the same troubles and sometimes came to death.

In the book No safe place by Deborah Ellis I liked the parts where Abdul, Cheslav's, and Rosalia always helped each other and had each other's back. They also always told the truth to each other even though how bad it is.

I did not like the part when Abdul travelled around half the world by himself and then has to live on the streets then living with his family in his little home. Now he has to get his own food and home. He will need to stay alive by himself and that will be really hard.

If I had to rate this book out of 10 it would be a 7. It was a good book but could be better.

John Mueller says

No Safe Place

Personal Response

I think this book, for the most part, was kind of confusing. It had a lot of jumping around from the past to present and from the present to the future. There was a lot of narrating throughout the whole story with little to no plot.

Plot summary

So this story is practically about a boy named Abdul who is on a quest to find his mom. Abdul is in a time of war where the Russian militia gets boys to fight. It was a very confusing story because it never stayed the same time tense always jumping around. He was in Russia and wanted to leave to go to England but never had enough money. When he had enough money he got on a ship but while on the ship there were troubles along the way. The man driving the ship was very disrespectful and got thrown into the sea then someone died. They managed to find a yacht with people living on it they snuck on but were soon held at gunpoint then they managed to abandon the old ship with the men on it. It took them a while but they eventually found land they ventured into a cave and a girl found them they lived with this girl and her mother for some time. Abdul got annoyed by the other people staying there and ventured off to try and find his mother.

Recommendations

I would rate this probably a 3 out of 5, because one, it is not the wording in the book that makes it confusing, it is the way it jumps around from past to present, and from present to future and vice versa. I would recommend to most people that are into I guess into survival or mystery. This book is not a bad book to read but it does not have the best plot I personally would not have read this book if I knew the plot before I read

the book, but that's just a little of my opinion about this book.

Anna Ryan-Punch says

This review originally appeared in Viewpoint: On Books for Young Adults.

Deborah Ellis' *No Safe Place* follows the fortunes of four refugee children who are thrown together in their desperate bid to escape horrific circumstances. Abdul, 15, has been orphaned by the war in Iraq and is living rough in France while he tries to secure illegal passage to England. His life in Calais is violent, dangerous and miserable; he survives on the one meal a day provided by charity and guards his precious roll of English banknotes by wrapping it in plastic and forcing it up his bottom. When Abdul gains a place aboard a rickety people-smuggling boat, he meets Rosalina (a Roma girl), Russian boy Cheslav, and Jonah, the British smuggler's nephew. The children are hardened by their circumstances and fiercely suspicious of each other, but when a storm and a struggle aboard the boat suddenly puts them in charge of their own destinies, they realise that they will have to work together in order to survive.

The story is told mostly told from Abdul's point of view, interspersed with flashback chapters where the reader learns the events that have brought each character to their current desperate existence. Rosalina was sold by her family to 'work' for two men, the work turned out to be prostitution. Cheslav was abandoned at a young age by his mail-order-bride mother, dumped at an orphanage and later forced into a brutal military school. Abdul's father and brother were killed in a bomb blast, and his mother later shot in front of him for the 'sin' of driving a car.

Best known for her Breadwinner Trilogy, Deborah Ellis specialises in unflinching portrayals of children whose lives have been torn apart by war and desperate poverty. The lives of these forgotten people are unbelievably horrific and *No Safe Place* often makes for very difficult reading:

"My son and I are going to make our way to Paris, on foot if we have to – what's another long walk? We are going to the Eiffel Tower, or to that fancy garden with the flowers, or to the place where the president lives. I will get some gasoline, and I will pour it over my son and myself. Then I will tell him how much I love him. I will hold him close to me, and I will light a match."

Abdul wasn't shocked.

It is not just the events themselves that are appalling, but also the way the children have adapted to accept the violence and death as something normal (especially given the fact that while the characters are fictional, their experiences are fact for many). Ellis' often sparse writing elegantly reflects the matter-of-fact attitude of her characters – the more shocking events are often simply detailed and this only serves to enhance their horror: ...more men came in. She kept up her fake cough, coughing as close to the door as possible so the men would be sure to hear her.

They left her alone that night.

She coughed all through the pleading and screaming and crying of the other two girls. She coughed while the parade of men laughed and slapped and grunted and drank. She coughed and thought about her great-grandmother fighting off the Nazis.

She knew she would not be left alone another night.

Ellis creates strong, smart characters that make for satisfying reading. The resourceful and fierce Rosalina quickly became a favourite of mine. Her escape from prostitution is one of the most exciting and rewarding sequences in the book (plus her reaction when Abdul later expects her to do his washing is priceless).

I find the age recommendation on the back of this book (an uncorrected proof) to be problematic. My copy recommends it for ages 11-14, but I believe both the age of the protagonists (14-15) and the distressing detail of many of the events places it firmly in the middle-upper secondary readership. Perhaps some more mature younger readers would be able to manage, but I think many upper primary/lower secondary readers would

find the more graphic scenes difficult to cope with:

They each held a machine gun. They pointed their guns at Abdul's mother.

"Only whores drive!" one of the men shouted.

Then they opened fire.

Abdul flung himself down on the seat, over the top of Fatima. He clawed the air, trying to grab his mother to pull her down out of the range of the bullets.

There was shattered glass everywhere. The guns were loud and seemed to go on and on.

And then there was silence. The guns stopped shooting. Abdul heard the car doors slam, tires squeal and cars drive away.

"Mama? Mama!"

His mother's face was a mass of blood and pulp.

Little Fatima, leaning against his mother, was silent and still. There was a bullet hole in her head.

Abdul began to scream. He screamed and screamed and tried to shake his mother back to life.

While No Safe Place is a gripping read that tells an important story, the violence, tension and desperation are so unrelenting that more sensitive readers may find it too much. The moments of humour and relief are few, which may well reflect the lives of these displaced children, but for the reader it makes the book very hard-going. Perhaps the saddest part of this story is that while the children are so desperate to reach England, as illegal immigrants, their difficulties won't end once they reach it. While Ellis' conclusion is moderately hopeful, it also realistically acknowledges that for these children, there still really is no safe place.

Jean says

Deborah Ellis has a gift for telling the stories of children who are living in difficult, dangerous situations. In this one she tells the story of four young people, thrown together by chance, trying to escape from Calais to a better life in England. Throughout the journey we learn their stories and the circumstances of their lives that brought them to the breaking point. Ellis focuses on Abdul as the main character. He has been orphaned and has escaped from Baghdad and the horrors of war and religious tyranny. As he boards a boat with others waiting to be smuggled into England, he meets Rosalia, a Roma, who is also orphaned and is escaping a life of white slavery. And there is Cheslav, an angry young Russian who is escaping from the Russian Army. Also on board is the smuggler's young nephew, who is English and is an orphan as well. These four young people must make the perilous journey from France to England and from their past into an unknown future. A very well-written and engrossing story. The ending is uplifting but probably unrealistic. But it is enough to give some hope that maybe there is a safe place somewhere for unwanted young people.

Izzy says

No Safe Place by Deborah Ellis is a great action, adventure book. Three teenagers go on a journey trying to get to England, but they have to cross the English Channel. In this book the author puts you in their place, homeless teenaggers looking for a place that they can live, and a better life.

Three teenagers Abdul, Rosalia, and Cheslav go on an adventure to England but somehow meet each other along the way. They all have the same problem, they need to cross the English channel for different reasons so they work together, and find a way to get to England. They pay someone almost all their money to give them a boat ride to England but should they have trusted him?

A cool thing the author does in this book is at different chapters she tells how the three teens get to where they are now. So throughout the book you will learn what happened in Abdul, Rosalia and Cheslav's childhood. This book is non-stop action from the beginning, first it starts off talking about Abdul, then when he meets the other two it starts telling you what happened their life. Even though it talks about Rosalia and Cheslav, whenever the three of them are together the author always writes about Abdul's point of view.

I can only think of one bad thing in this book, whenever the author changes chapter she sometime talks about one of teens childhood, and when she does that she doesn't have a chapter title saying that. So every time she switches chapters you never know what part the author is going to talk about.

In conclusion this book is fantastic! I think everyone should give this book a shot, I rate this book a 4 out of 5, so if your looking for a good book to read this should be one of your first choices, and it's not that long.

Joey Melisi says

no safe place is about a boy who is around the age of 15 or 16 and lives in Pakistan and he wants to cross the sea to go to Britain or London, So what he did was pay for a boat ride to Britain and during the trip the driver got into a fight with a person on the boat so he threw him off and then the and the passengers threw him off as then the boy was in charge and they came across a yacht where they killed the men on the yacht and took it over and so they landed in Britain where they met a small girl so showed them around and they then went on there ways.

Zach says

Im reading no safe place By Deborah Ellis it is about three outlaws who meet trying to start their new lives. I do not know how she came up with the book but it was fantastic!

My opinion is that it was a fantastic read I loved how the book would flash to their lives as kids and how they got there. All three of the main characters were wanted by the cops but when stuck on a boat heading to their new lives they got to know their painful backstories Abduls was on pg 47-52 Rosalies was on pg 91-112 and Cheslaves backstory was on pg 123-152.

I think one of the books weaknesses is that there is not non stop action or adventure. The books strength is that you get to see their lives as kids and how they got to where they are now.

I loved this book because it is three outlaws trying to start a new life after their family was killed or left them to die but instead they got up dusted themselves off and started a new life together.

As a recap no safe place by Deborah Ellis is a fantastic third person book that I hope you read!
