



HC: 978-0-8234-3427-5 / E-book available

KIKI AND JACQUES

by Susan Ross

GRADES
3–7

Common
Core State
Standards

About the Book

Preteens prove that cultural differences can be overcome in this middle-grade novel about a native New Englander and a Somali girl who form an unlikely and supportive friendship.

Twelve-year-old Jacques is facing a difficult family situation and pressure from an older boy to join in some illegal activities. At least Jacques can look forward to the soccer season, where he's a shoe-in for captain. But the arrival of Somali refugees shakes up nearly everything in Jacques's Maine town, including the soccer team. So Jacques is surprised to find himself becoming friends with Kiki, a cheerful and strong-minded Somali immigrant. Despite their many differences, they are able to help one another triumph over problems with friends, family and growing up.

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Literature/Language Arts

Vocabulary—Ask students to write down unfamiliar words and try to define them, taking clues from the text. Some of the French terms used in the story: *Ici en parle Français* = French is spoken here; *lapin* = rabbit; *tres beau* = very handsome; *comment ça va?* = How's it going?

Realistic Fiction—This story is a work of *fiction*, meaning that it did not actually happen and comes from the author's imagination. Even the town of Lakemont, Maine, is fictional. However, the story is based on actual events that the author experienced in Lewiston, Maine, when Somali refugees began arriving in the early 2000s. Make students aware that this type of writing is called *realistic fiction*—it's not really true, but it *could be true*, since it's based on actual events. **CCSS RL.5.9**

Character Profiles—Ask students to choose a character from the story and create a complete profile for them from their own imagination. What's important to them? How do they look? What are they wearing? How do they usually act? What do they like or dislike? Since there are no illustrations in the book, creative students might want to draw their own illustration to accompany the profile they have created. They can then present their profiles to the class. **CCSS RL.5.3**

Geography—Ask students to locate Lewiston, Maine (the author's hometown), and Somalia on a globe or in a world atlas. Have them consult the

scale of the map, and do the math to compute how far the Somali refugees had to travel in order to arrive in Maine. Have them also compare the two places in reference to climate, topography, food, population, religion, entertainment, etc.

Questions for Discussion / Writing

The following questions can be used for discussion with the whole class, in small groups, or as prompts for writing. **CCSS L.5.1-3; W.5.1,8; SL.5.1; RL.5.3**

Expectations—Jacques's dad and grandmother each have expectations of him. His dad wants him to excel at sports, and his grandmother wants him to be helpful in her store. What expectations do members of your family have for you? How do you deal with them? What happens when you may be unable to do exactly what they want? Explain how your own and Jacques's reactions might be the same or different.

Friendship—There are many friendships in the story: Jacques/Sammy; Jacques/Lucy; Jacques/Kiki; Grandmère/Mr. Silverstein and others. Describe what is important to you in a friendship. How do you think Jacques and Kiki help each other throughout the story? Do you think Jacques and Mohamed or Jacques and Yasin finally become good friends? Why or why not? Which character in the story would you choose for a friend? Why?

Dealing with people who are different—As the story progresses, the attitude of everyone in town regarding the Somali families changes from basically negative to mostly positive. How do you think this happens? Who do you feel is responsible for these changes? How do Jacques's actions lead toward changes in attitude? Describe how this story might make you react in another way when you meet people who are very different from you.

Bullying—Two of the characters, Boucher and Duane, could be called the bad guys in the story. How would you have dealt with each of them? What ideas do you have for your school or your community for dealing with bullying?

Immigrant Experience—Ask students to describe how one of the Somali kids might have felt being transported to Maine, or how they might feel if they were suddenly transported to Somalia. Were there any similarities between Jacques's relatives and Kiki's family when they each migrated to Maine? Have there been recent immigrants from other countries in your community? Describe how you and your community have reacted to them.

Online Resources

Somali Refugees in Maine—www.pbs.org/pov/raininadryland/special_01.php provides a descriptive narration of the experiences of people in Lewiston, Maine, when Somali immigration began in 2001.

Civil War in Somalia—www.kidzworld.com/article/7478-somalia presents a brief history and links for students on the civil war and unrest in Somalia, which resulted in thousands of Somalis fleeing to the United States and other countries.

French Migration to Maine—www.francomaine.org/English/Pres/Pres_intro.html presents a brief history of the migration of French people from Quebec into Maine.

Bullying—www.stopabully.ca/teacher-resources.html presents a wealth of links to resources for students and teachers who wish to tackle the issue of bullying.

Multicultural Understanding—www.tolerance.org/lesson/my-multicultural-self is a resource for teachers who want to provide detailed lessons in multicultural understanding for their students.

Baati Dresses—Use Google Images to view many photos of the colorful baati dress as worn by women and girls of Somalia.

Sambusa—www.mysomalifood.com/somali-sambusa/ presents a recipe for Sambusa, which Kiki gave Jacques to taste in the story.

Classroom Activities prepared by Sandy Schuckett, school library consultant.

About the Author

Susan Ross lives in Connecticut. She was born and grew up in the Lewiston, Maine, area. Susan was inspired to write this story by incidents in her childhood hometown when refugees from Somalia began to settle there in the early 2000s. *Kiki and Jacques* is her first novel.

Sports—There have been many pieces of fiction in which sports have played an important role in solving problems between people. Why do you think it is that when people play on a sports team they can often forget their differences? Describe any situation where this has ever happened in your own life, either to you, yourself or to a relative or family member.

Research

Soccer Stars—Some students may be interested in finding more information on the international soccer stars mentioned in the story: Pelé from Brazil and (Lionel) Messi, an Argentinean who plays for Barcelona. True fans may have other favorite players they'd like to research. **CCSS W.5.2, 4, 7-8**

Civil War in Somalia—Students may use print or electronic resources to learn more about the country of Somalia, and what caused the Civil War that resulted in so many Somali refugees. (See Online Resources below for a link to a starting point.) **CCSS W.5.2, 4, 7-8**