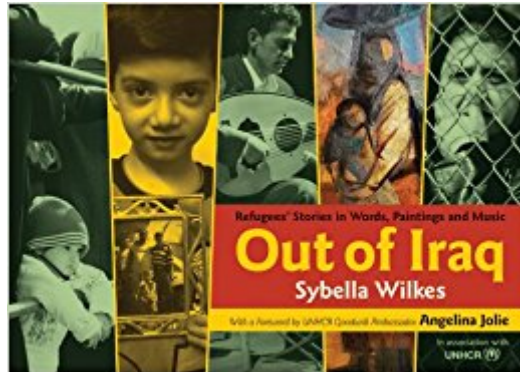




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# Out Of Iraq: Refugees' Stories In Words, Paintings And Music



## Synopsis

"Somehow she has managed to write a book that is both emotional and complex, but one that children are drawn to. . . . This is an important book. It gives us all a better understanding of the lives of refugees and, with that, a better understanding of the world in general." —UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador Angelina Jolie — Since 2006, hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees have fled to other countries—particularly neighboring Syria and Jordan—where many of them are still waiting for the time when they feel it is safe to return home. This book provides, in words and pictures, what life was like in Iraq before they left, why they were forced to flee, and how they feel about life as a refugee. Their stories are set against background information about Iraq, Saddam Hussain's rule, the invasion, and the subsequent civil war. The role of the United Nations High Commissions for Refugees (UNHCR) is outlined, and ideas for using the book in the classroom are also included.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 70 pages

Publisher: Evans Brothers; 1 edition (July 9, 2010)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0237539306

ISBN-13: 978-0237539306

Product Dimensions: 12 x 0.5 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds

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Age Range: 11 and up

Grade Level: 5 and up

## Customer Reviews

Gr 5-9—Wilkes, who works with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in Syria, juxtaposes stories from refugees with summaries of Iraq's recent history. She does not minimize the brutality of Saddam Hussein and his political supporters from his ascendancy to power in 1979 until his downfall. However, most of the book is devoted to the aftermath of the U.S.-led invasion in March

2003. The resulting destruction, displacement, civil war, and sectarian violence caused thousands of Iraqis to flee to neighboring countries. Among those Wilkes interviewed are a musician, journalist, clown, teacher, and artists. Readers also hear from children and young adults, including members of religious minorities. The tales of abduction, death, and harrowing escapes are not easy reading. Yet, the stories also highlight people's determination to survive and their desire for access to education and a return to a stable family life. Photos of refugee camps and some of the individuals profiled further personalize the accounts. Numerous paintings by children and adults range from depictions of peaceful times in the past to invasions, bombings, and the exodus of refugees. The work of UNHCR in resettlement is explained, and suggestions for how to use this book in a classroom setting are given. The departure of U.S. combat troops may reduce news coverage in the United States, but thousands of Iraqis remain displaced. This book puts names and faces to sound bites and statistics and offers a perspective not available in other resources.â Kathy Piehl, Minnesota State University, Mankato (c) Copyright 2010. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Wilkes, an officer of the UN Refugee Agency, intersperses a mix of artwork and brief testimonials from Iraqi refugees in Syria and elsewhere with simply written historical background on Saddam Hussein's reign, the course and effects of the first Gulf War, and subsequent pacification efforts, as well as looks at conditions in refugee camps and UN-sponsored relief efforts. Steering away from explicit detail, the refugee contributorsâ "most of whom are teenagers or adultsâ "offer heartrending accounts of being driven from their homes and lives by violence and threats of violence, then working to keep their families together and their hopes for the future alive. Illustrated with a mix of portrait photos and a few paintings in childlike or abstract styles, and capped by suggestions for related classroom activities and a short resource list, this book will serve as both an effective consciousness raiser for middle-grade students and a strong lead-in to Deborah Ellis's powerful *Children of War: Voices of Iraqi Refugees* (2009). Grades 5-8. --John Peters

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