

# The Unexpected Friend

A Guide for Teachers and Parents



**Written by Raya Rahman**

**Illustrated by Inshra Sakhawat Russell**

## THEMES

Environment & Conservation

STEAM

Social & Emotional Wellbeing

## SUB-THEMES

Loss and resilience

Refugee experience

Letting go

# Story Discussion Guide

- Understand the emotional and physical challenges faced by refugee children
- Develop empathy for animals and people in distress
- Recognize that love can mean letting go
- Appreciate the strength of community and emotional support

## Lesson plan

This story helps students reflect on caring for others—humans and animals—and the importance of empathy, healing, and resilience in tough situations. It introduces the refugee experience in an ageappropriate, humanizing way.

## Learning Outcome

### Before Reading:

- What does the word “refugee” mean?
- Can people have to leave their homes?

### During Reading :

- Why does Faisal pick up the injured bird? How does he and his family take care of it?
- What are some signs that Faisal and the bird are both healing?

### After Reading:

- Why do you think Faisal didn’t want to let the bird go?
- What helped him make that decision?
- Have you ever had to say goodbye to something or someone special?

## Activities:

- Art: Draw a picture of the bird flying away and Faisal watching it with his sisters.
- Writing: Write a short letter from Faisal to the bird. What would he say?
- Discussion: Talk about what home means. Where do you feel most safe and loved?
- Social Studies: Learn more about refugee camps—where are they, and why do people live there?

## Expected Outcomes

Children will gain empathy for the refugee experience and understand that kindness and community help us through difficult times. They will begin to internalize the message of one common humanity, recognizing that children everywhere long for safety, love, and friendship.

## Applicable SDGs

- SDG 3: Good Health and Wellbeing
- SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities
- SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

## SDG Explanation

- SDG 3 is reflected in the family's care for Faisal and the bird, highlighting health support in vulnerable settings.
- SDG 10 is connected to the refugee context and the story's emphasis on dignity and equality.
- SDG 16 appears in the values of kindness, empathy, and peaceful coexistence expressed throughout the story.

## ABOUT ZAMASAMA

Zamasama is a nonprofit initiative that curates children's stories from diverse cultures and lived experiences around the world. It gives children a window into other communities—and a mirror that affirms their own, helping children recognize the shared humanity that connects us across differences. Through narratives that gently challenge biases and broaden worldviews, Zamasama helps children see difference not as a barrier but as a bridge. Through the power of stories, we sow the seeds of pluralism that can grow into a more harmonious world for all.