

DREAM LAND

by Lily Hyde

Walker Books
(Lower secondary)



This is a compelling story about the Crimean Tatars' struggle to reclaim the land from which they were exiled in World War II. All her life, Safi's parents dreamed of returning to her grandpa's native village in Crimea. But they end up exchanging their sunny Uzbekistan house for a squalid camp where no one welcomes them. The story explores how the struggle threatens to tear Safi's family apart, and asks if this strange land can ever become home.



BACKGROUND

The Crimean Tatars are Muslim and speak a language related to Turkish. Until 1944 they lived in the Crimea, a peninsula on the Black Sea, now part of Ukraine. Previously it was in the Soviet Union. During World War II, Stalin decided to drive the Tatars from their homeland. Many died during deportations to Central Asia and Siberia. Many more died in the first year of exile. For 50 years, many Tatars dreamed of returning home. This became possible in 1987, and by 1995, more than 250,000 Crimean Tatars had returned to the Crimea.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are some of the difficulties that families face in returning to the Crimea? **Possible answers:** No homes and disputes over land, living in shacks, no jobs, no money even for toothpaste, hostility from unfriendly locals eg bus driver, other children, house being bulldozed, police brutality
2. 'Nothing in Crimea was like Grandpa had said.' (p44) What changes do the family find? **Possible answers:** No mosques, Russian spoken everywhere, fountains gone, Medresse in Bakhchisaray has become a psychiatric hospital, village and houses disappeared or lived in by other people
3. What does Safinar miss about Uzbekistan? **Possible answers:** Her sister Lenara, her home and garden, friends her age, school, being accepted

ROLE PLAY

In pairs, create a conversation between Safi and her brother Lutfi about how their experiences in Crimea have changed them.

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Article 9: Nobody has the right to put us in prison without a good reason, to keep us there or to send us away from our country.

Article 13: We all have the right to go where we want in our own country and to travel abroad as we wish.

Article 17: Everyone has the right to own things or share them. Nobody should take our things from us without a good reason.

FOLLOW UP WORK

Find out more:

The author's website has interesting information about how she came to write the book and some of the stories it is based on: www.lilyhyde.com

FIND OUT MORE

Further resources for teaching around human rights can be found at: www.amnesty.org.uk/education