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Meltem's Journey

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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This is the fourth in the series, 'Refugee Diaries', all intended for older junior school children. It follows Meltem and her family's journey, fleeing persecution in Turkey, via Germany, to eventual settlement in England. Eventual is the operative word here. For, while the supporting information at the back of the book explains the situation of the Kurds in Turkey and why Meltem's family were forced to leave their home, most of the book is concerned with the difficulties of their search for asylum in England: movement from city to city, racist harassment, bureaucratic insensitivity, family break-up, incarceration in Yarl's Wood Asylum Centre, and an attempted forced deportation by aeroplane (thwarted because the pilot refused to fly with a severely distressed child aboard). Meltem's experiences resulted in her being hospitalised for depression, and only with the intervention of the Children's Commissioner was her family granted the right to stay, seven long years after arriving here. Meltem's childhood of snatched chances of a normal home and school life is retold clearly as if in her own voice, without a trace of resentment or self pity, by Anthony Robinson. Both his text and June Allan's illustrations emphasise the strength that Meltem draws from family and friends as much as the ordeal that they have been through and, like the previous books, the story ends on a positive note, although it cannot do for all such families. The book succeeds in its encouragement of understanding and empathy for Meltem and other refugee children. What it does not do is explain the reasons for the treatment they receive in this country.

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