

Refugee Boy – Kemnal Keys – Spring term

One

Part one of the play summary:

Scenes 1-10: The play opens with a short scene between Alem and his father (Mr Kelo). They are looking at the stars. The next scene is much noisier in contrast and shows the confusion and fear of Alem as he learns that his father has gone. We then see Alem in a children's home and are introduced to Mustapha who is much more outspoken than the innocent and trusting Alem. In the next scene, Mustapha introduces Alem to Sweeney who bullies and abuses him. Mustapha is also afraid of Sweeney and does not defend his new friend as Sweeney forces Alem to call himself *Refugee Boy*. We are then transported to Eritrea and the violent treatment of Alem's family by a soldier. We hear Mr Kelo's pain at being driven from his home followed by Alem running from the care home. The next scene is a calmer, more domestic scene as Alem is in a foster home with the Fitzgeralds and their daughter, Ruth. Scene 7 repeats scene 1 but adds some more detail around the relationship between the father and son. Scene 8 is a scene at the Fitzgerald's house, and it is revealed that Ruth says the name 'Themba' in her sleep. Scene 9 focusses on Alem's day in court around his foster care and scene 10 allows us to learn more about Mustapha and his troubled family life.

Skills and script craft:

Thought tracking: A technique where a line is said directly to the audience in order to give an insight to their inner thoughts and feelings.

Direct Address: Speaking directly to the audience and addressing them as if they are there and can be seen in the room.

Stage Directions: indications and instructions in the script that tell the director what should be done and said.

Pauses in speech: Finding moments to pause and break down script in order to convey characters motivations clearly.

Character Motivations: The character's aims and intentions during the scenes and how we achieve this through our use of skill as actors.

Characters

Alem: Protagonist of the play. Young boy who has been separated from his family in order to seek refuge in the UK. Represents hope and bravery in the play.

Mustapha: Mustapha is one of the friends Alem makes in the care home that he is sent to. He uses humour as a distraction.

Mr Kelo – Alem's father. He sends Alem away for safety, but communicates with him via letters throughout the play.

Sweeney – Another child from the care home who is racially and physically abusive towards Alem. He represents insecurity.

Themes and how they link to character and contexts

Belonging and home: This theme is linked to Alem and his family. They are refugees, so have been driven from their home. They leave in fear – *We left everything behind...out of the country*. Alem feels like he does not belong in the UK and is badly treated and bullied - *I am not a runaway. I am not a refugee boy*'.

Family and Friendship: Although Alem's father leaves him in the UK, he loves him and cares about his safety and Alem is loyal to his family and is desperate to be back with them. Alem finds friendship with Mustapha and Ruth who helps him campaign for asylum. Mustapha believes in friendship as he has a difficult family life – *Friends are like the family you make*.

Fear and violence: The play is littered with noise – many of the stage directions are '*bang, bang, bang*' which jolts the audience and shows how Alem lives in fear of violence in both the UK and in Ethiopia. Alem is also bullied and gets into fights in the UK with the other children from the care home – all of which are caused by their own sense of fear and uncertainty.

Marginalization and identity: Alem is a young boy who is trying to forge his own identity in a new country. There are many scenes where he is learning new language and slang from the other boys in the care home and trying to fit in. The play highlights how many people in society are judged by their race or their beliefs.