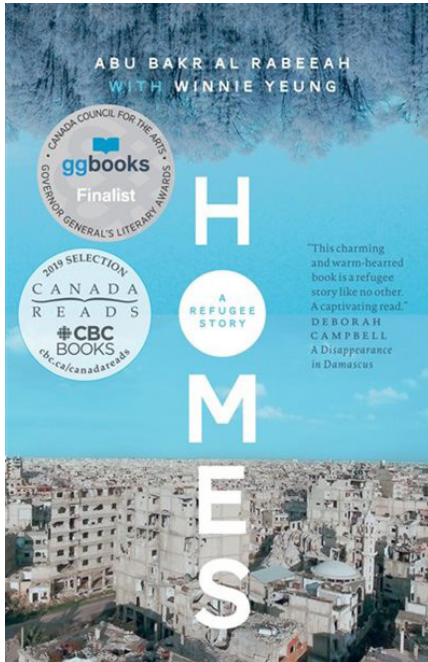




# ShelterBox

BOOK CLUB NORTH AMERICA

## Homes: A Refugee Story Abu Bakr Al-Rabeeah and Winnie Yeung



In 2010, the al Rabeeah family left their home in Iraq in hope of a safer life. They moved to Homs, in Syria — just before the Syrian civil war broke out.

Abu Bakr, one of eight children, was ten years old when the violence began on the streets around him: car bombings, attacks on his mosque and school, firebombs late at night. Homes tells of the strange juxtapositions of growing up in a war zone: horrific, unimaginable events punctuated by normalcy — soccer, cousins, video games, friends.

Homes is the remarkable true story of how a young boy emerged from a war zone — and found safety in Canada — with a passion for sharing his story and telling the world what is truly happening in Syria. As told to her by Abu Bakr al Rabeeah, writer Winnie Yeung has crafted a heartbreaking and hopeful book that provides a window into understanding Syria.

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### About the Author: Winnie Yeung and Abu Bakr al Rabeeah

Abu Bakr al Rabeeah (left) is a high school student in Edmonton, Alta. He published his first book, Homes, in 2018 with Winnie Yeung. The book is a memoir of al Rabeeah's experiences as a young boy in Syria in the midst of civil war. He and his family moved to Canada in 2014.

Winnie Yeung (right) has been an English teacher for over ten years. Homes is her first book and received extensive critical acclaim. It was shortlisted for both the Governor General's Literary Award for Nonfiction and the Writers' Trust Shaughnessy Cohen Award for Political Writing. Homes was also a finalist on CBC's Canada Reads.

When she is not teaching, writing, or reading, Winnie likes to spend her days cooking, baking, and playing with her black pug, Zoe. Edmonton, Canada is her permanent home, but her writing retreat/ tiny home (named, The Mini Winnie, of course) is on Vancouver Island.





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## Meet Abu



Abu lost his home when it was destroyed by heavy shelling at the start of 2020. He has been living in a camp for displaced people in the Syrian countryside with his family ever since. A few months later he received ShelterBox aid items which included tarpaulin, a kitchen set, blankets and solar lights. A month after he collected the items he spoke with the ReliefAid team –

our trusted partner in Syria.

“Before Ramadan, I was working and helping people build the camp that I talked about. I used to work from eight in the morning until five o’clock in the evening, but now we are working in the evening only.”

“The materials [From ShelterBox] will help us a lot, especially the kitchen set and soap, as they are very important to us. The kitchen kit is very important to prevent the transmission of infection.”

“My hope is that the Syrian problem be resolved as soon as possible, and every displaced person return to his home all over Syria.”

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## ShelterBox in Conflict Zones

ShelterBox has responded to displacement due to conflict many times in the past, from responses in Iraq and Chad. We are currently deployed to camps in Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Ethiopia addressing shelter needs of refugees. Upon arriving to displacement camps, families often stay in large collective centers or have no shelter until private family tents can be provided, if they can be provided. ShelterBox sees a future with no family left without shelter after conflict and will continue to work to reach even more families who have been displaced.



## Discussion Questions

Q1: What surprised you about the descriptions of growing up in a warzone?

Q2: As Abu Bakr and his family began to settle into their new life in Canada they faced lots of challenges, including many conflicting emotions. What parts of this journey were predictable or surprising to you?

Q3: While this is Bakr's story, written from his point of view, it is authored by Winnie Yeung. What responsibilities does Winnie have, as an author of creative non-fiction, to honour Bakr's voice?

Q4: If you were to create the score or soundtrack to Abu Bakr's story, what genre of music would you use and why? What specific songs would you use to highlight the mood of certain passages?

Q5: How does the story, told through Bakr's (a child/teens) perspective, differ from a news report or documentary? What does the 'narrative' style add to our understanding of the war in Syria?

### For More Learning and Content



These Discussion questions were written with help from Rob Gray and Winnie Yeung herself. Winnie has an abundance of teaching and learning resources on her website for you to use whenever you'd like!

[WinnieYeung.ca](http://WinnieYeung.ca)