

## Background Readings

### Understanding *A Long Walk to Water* by Linda Sue Park

A review of the book from the Indiannapolis Public Library website:

"Part of this story is about a boy named Salva. He lives in Sudan, a country in Africa, during a Civil War that happened there in 1985. The other part of this story is about a girl named Nya and takes place in Sudan right now.

When we say "The Civil War" here in America we are referring to our own Civil War that happened 150 years ago. The Civil War in Sudan was only 25 years ago. During the War in Sudan many people were killed, children were made orphans and families were separated. In order to get to safety many people WALKED to Ethiopia or Kenya.

When you are reading Salva's part of the story you hear about how he slept on the ground at night and could hear lions hunting around him: *Marial was gone - vanished into the night. He would never have wandered away from the group on his own. His disappearance could mean only one thing. Lion.* (page 40)

Salva even has to cross a river infested with crocodiles. Some of the people do not make it across the river. On the other side of the river is a desert...which the people also have to walk across. Can you even imagine surviving a journey like that?

Nya's part of the story is about how she walks twice a day, EVERY DAY to a pond to get water. Nya carries the water in a plastic jug and balances it on her head to walk home. That's what she does every single day; once in the morning and once in the afternoon. The pond is so far away from her home that she has no time to do anything else. No school. No playing. Just walking - carrying water to keep her family alive.

*A Long Walk to Water* shows you how Salva's story and Nya's story are related even though they take place 25 years apart.

There are parts of the book that are hard to read and very, very sad. Some parts are scary. In the end, though, this is a book about really good things. It is about people looking after each other - even if they are strangers to begin with. It is about trying hard and doing your part and it is about hoping for something better.

The really great thing is that *A Long Walk to Water* is based on a real boy named Salva - you can see his picture with the author on the book jacket. (He's grown up now.) At the end of the book there is a letter to you from Salva that I think you'll like to read. The best thing he says is, "*Stay calm when things are hard or not going right with you. You will get through it when you persevere instead of quitting.*" (page 117) Those are pretty powerful words when you realize they come from a kid who survived a situation much, much more difficult than anything we will probably ever face."

### Civil War in South Sudan and "The Lost Boys"

The Lost Boys of Sudan are a group of thousands of young Sudanese boys and men that were forced to flee their homeland due to civil war. The African country of Sudan was in a civil war from 1983 to 2005. The conflict was over religion,

natural resources, and power. That war was fought between the mainly Muslim Arab north and the mostly non-Muslim, non-Arab south. The Northern army waged brutal attacks on southern villages. Most of the boys of these villages were taking care of cattle when their villages were attacked so they were not harmed. However, they were forced to flee.

The majority of the boys lost their families in the conflict and were only left with each other. Their perilous journey took them throughout war-torn Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda where they not only dodged bullets, but also the wildlife, the heat, and the hunger of the journey. After years of wandering and living in refugee camps, the stories of the boys reached the United States where various charitable organizations helped thousands of boys to enter the United States.

*Excerpt from: "Life and Death in Darfur: Sudan's Refugee Crisis Continues," Current Events, April 7, 2006, 2. Copyright © 2006 by Scholastic Inc. Reprinted by permission of Scholastic Inc.*

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## **Worldwide Water Crisis**

Some 1.1 billion people worldwide lack access to water, and a total of 2.7 billion find water scarce for at least one month of the year. Inadequate sanitation is also a problem for 2.4 billion people—they are exposed to diseases, such as cholera and typhoid fever, and other water-borne illnesses. Two million people, mostly children, die each year from diarrheal diseases alone.

Water affects everything - education, health and poverty.

Many people have to walk for hours just to collect enough water for the day. Often, the water that they collect is contaminated with germs that can cause very serious illnesses or even death. The work of collecting water usually falls to the women and children of the family. The time that is spent walking to collect water is not only a dangerous time for them, but is also time that is not spent learning to read and write, making an income, or caring for the younger children in the family. The placements of water wells within villages would mean the villagers would spend only 15 minutes to collect their water and the water that they do collect would be clean and safe.

Access to clean water transforms the lives of these villagers improving education, income and health.

*"Water Facts: Facts About Water And Sanitation - Water.org." Waterorg. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 June 2016.*