

Graphic Novel 2

Title: *When Stars Are Scattered*

Author: Victoria Jamieson and Omar Mohamed

Question	Response
Who are you? List 5-7 aspects that make up your identity (ex: culture, values, interests, roles, experiences). Then identify 5-7 aspects of the main character's identity. Use evidence from both the text and illustrations. Are you more similar or different? Explain.	Me: • Always hungry • Athlete • American born Chinese • Musician • Humorous Omar: • Refugee • Compassionate • Somali • Mature • Helicopter Sibling I think that Omar and I are more different. First, the big difference between Omar and I is that I actually had a childhood. With Omar he had to grow up faster than I had. He had to take care of his brother, Hassan, who has autism. Also he grew up without a mother and father. Whereas with me I didn't have a sibling to take care of and I had parents. Omar also lived in a refugee camp and experienced what I haven't experienced like hunger. I grew up with things that cost a lot of money like playing piano and becoming an athlete competitively. Omar, on the other hand, did play soccer but it was just for fun. He had to find other ways to entertain himself like going to the "building pit." On page 17 he says "You have to be creative in a refugee camp." I can tell from this that there were not a lot of things to do in a refugee camp. I would say that my life is so much easier than what Omar had.

What emotions did you experience while reading? Analyze what caused those reactions citing specific images, dialogue, or events, and explain why they were impactful.	The first emotion I experienced was shock. When I read about his brother with autism, he basically had to take care of him every day. Then when I learned that he didn't have parents, just a foster mom I felt really bad. I thought, "This kid must have a really hard life." Then I was surprised. Despite all of his stresses, when he was at school he showed that he really enjoyed it. I was surprised that he could find something to be happy about in this camp. Next, I felt joyful for Omar. He started making friends like Nimo and Maryam. They helped him through hard times when he needed them. For example, when Omar quit school to stay with his brother, Maryam came and took care of Hassan and let Omar go to school. Finally, at the end of the book I felt very touched, especially at the last couple of pages. The poem that Maryam wrote for Omar was very deep. She says how everyone has a different background and tells him he has to tell his own story. I think this is important because this connects to the theme of belonging.
Describe a time you felt like you did not belong. How does this connect to a moment in your novel where the character experiences belonging or exclusion? How do your experiences shape the way you interpret the character's situation?	When I was visiting my family in China they would speak fluent Cantonese there. When we all had dinner together I was the only one who didn't know the language. They would flock over to me and speak Cantonese at me. They would ask my mom, "Does she understand Cantonese?" My mom would say, "No she doesn't." But my relatives didn't know that I understood it. Even with that they came over to me and started bombarding me with questions. I look over to my mom, helpless, unable to answer. She just gives me a thumbs up. It sucked when I couldn't communicate with them. With my relatives that do know that I can understand it they always tease me. They say, "Oh, you should learn Cantonese so you can talk with us." That is when I have felt like I didn't belong. Next, the main character, Omar Mohamed. Near the beginning of the book Omar is among some of the kids that don't go to school. He stays home to take care of his brother with autism. On page 16 he says "I've never gone to school. I've always stayed home to take care of Hassan. I'm the oldest, so it's my job to protect him. But I wonder what school would be like." But, eventually he does go to school but he also feels left out there. All of the classes were in English. Since he just started school

	and all the other kids had gone to school for a while now he was one of the only ones who still didn't understand English!
How has your book character changed over time: beginning, middle, end. Cite specific examples from the pictures/text.	The main character in my book is Omar Mohamed. I think he has changed a lot throughout the book. In the beginning of the book Omar is very mature for an elementary schooler and his opinions were very different from when he became an adult. For example, on page 23 Omar says, "How many times have I told you?! We're not going back to America. We're going back to Somalia when the war's over." Also when Omar was younger he would protect Hassan a lot. In the middle of the book Omar tries to quit school to stay with Hassan. On page 107 Maryam, a girl who couldn't go to school any more, basically says that Hassan is becoming selfish. She says that Omar was underestimating Hassan and thinking that Hassan was still a little kid. Then Omar realizes that Maryam is right. He realizes that he is being a "helicopter mom" and still babies Hassan. After that Omar goes to take his exams and passes. Finally in the end of the book we see the most change from Omar. Soon, Omar, Fatuma and Hassan get interviewed to be resettled in the US. After the interview Omar can't stop thinking about the US. Even though he didn't want to go to the US before. They never contacted him in a long time so Omar starts becoming really angry. He starts taking out all his anger on his friends and family. But when he got really mad at Hassan and Hassan ran away, he realized that he did something wrong. After that all his anger subsides. During this time he didn't really think of other people, but now he does.
What key events (turning points) influence this development?	A key event in the beginning of the book is when Omar gets put in school. This helps him grow because not only does he learn academics he also learns to let Hassan be more independent. In the middle of the book I think the turning point for Omar is the interview with the US. He recalls his life in Somalia and feels really miserable. He thinks of his mother and father. The interview with the US was also what caused him to be really angry all the time and realize what he was doing.

What are some of the values of your family? Why are these important to you/your family? (Feel free to discuss with your family). How are your values similar or different to what the family/main character values?	An important value in my family is cultural appreciation. This is very important to my family because when I celebrate Chinese New Year I feel very connected to my family. This matters a lot to me because my whole family, even the ones that are deceased right now have celebrated Chinese New Year. Another important thing in my family is honesty. This is important because my mom says that if you're not honest then there will be bigger consequences for you. If you tell the truth there will still be consequences but probably not as brutal. Our family values are very different from Omar's values. I think that one of the values is family. In the refugee camp the only people you have to confide in is your family. In the book on page 244 Fatuma, Omar's foster mom says, "So yes, Omar. If you love me...you will leave me. You must." This was when Omar had to leave for the United States. When she says this in the illustration Omar cries on Fatuma's lap and he is almost 18. You can tell how much family matters because Omar has spent basically his whole life with Fatuma and now he's choosing to leave.
Choose one theme: identity, assimilation, culture, cultural preservation, immigration, or belonging. Explain how this theme develops across the beginning, middle, and end of the novel. Use specific evidence and explain how the character's experiences contribute to the theme.	Belonging: In the beginning of this book I think that Omar is defined as a lost kid. He grew up with no parents but thankfully he got a foster mom. He has to live in a makeshift camp and take care of his brother with autism. As the story goes on he finds a new home with the camp. He starts creating bonds with people like Maryam and Nimo. Since Omar starts going to school he doesn't worry about his brother as much. He finds a happy place at school and his bond with the camp grows stronger. Finally, at the end of the book their bond with the camp is expanded. Omar chooses to leave with Hassan to be resettled in the US. Even though they are leaving the camp that they have spent so many years in, I think that they feel content with going to the US.

What are 2-3 important questions your novel raises about a real-world issue? Conduct brief research. What did you learn? Analyze: How does this new understanding deepen or change your interpretation of the novel or character?	Topic: Refugee Camps Questions 1. If you're in a refugee camp can you get a job? 2. How expensive is health care? 3. Will they pay for people's travel fees when they get resettled? What you learned: • They can get jobs but it depends on location and laws • Healthcare could be free, donor-funded or kind of expensive • They will pay for the travel fees • They do have to repay them once their resettled • Medical exams are free of charge.
	How does this information help you understand your novel to a new degree? I think this helps me understand this better because the organization that funded the camp Omar was at did all of these things. They gave health care for free and supplied food. I can really tell that the author put a lot of details into the book.
What values, beliefs, or experiences do you think people often associate with being American? Where do you see those represented in your life and in your novel?	I think that people often associate in America that everyone in America is wealthy. In the book <i>When Stars Are Scattered</i> we see a representation of that when Jeri, Omar's best friend says, "My dad's friend's cousin just got sent to America and he sends back money every month. Everyone there is super rich!." I can tell from this that they think in America, you get a lot of money. You do get a lot of money but you have to work hard. Also in America, people, especially from other places, think America is about freedom and they're right. In America you will probably have a lot more freedom than in a refugee camp. At the end of the book this is represented by the poem Maryam wrote. She says, "Shine your story," as one line. This is saying that America doesn't control you and lets you become you instead of everyone being a copy of each other.

