

***The Crossing* by Manjeet Mann**

Penguin 9780241411445

***The Crossing* was shortlisted for the 2022 CLPE Poetry Award CLIPPA**

Natalie's world is falling apart. She's just lost her mum and her brother marches the streets of Dover full of hate and anger. Swimming is her only refuge. Sammy has fled his home and family in Eritrea for the chance of a new life in Europe. Every step he takes on his journey is a step into an unknown and unwelcoming future. A twist of fate brings them together and gives them both hope. But is hope enough to mend a broken world?

Overall aims of this sequence:

- To develop the skills of reader response through the use of book talk, close reading and critical reflective study of a selection of poems
- To interpret poems for performance
- To gain and maintain the interest of the listener through effective performance of poems
- To recognise how a poet uses poetry as a voice to express their own feelings and views
- To explore how poetry is presented on the page to enhance our understanding
- To draft, compose and write poems based on personal interests, experiences and emotions using language and form with intent for effect on the reader

This teaching sequence is designed for an Upper KS3/KS4 class

Overview of this Teaching Sequence:

In this personal and emotional narrative Manjeet Mann draws on her observations, research and experience to follow the course of two young people whose lives are ripped apart through circumstances they can't control. The narrative is captured through the voices of Nat and Sammy, but their perspective also provides insights into the characters that surround and influence them – parents, siblings and friends.

This first person dual perspective allows us to be right inside the journey and emotions of these characters. The novel deals with a number of powerful themes including bereavement and loss, economic disadvantage, right wing extremism and the refugee crisis. You will need to be aware of any students who may have faced similar issues in their own lives before exploring this text with a class. This sequence provides the opportunity to reflect critically upon and respond to the ways in which language is used to express, convey, represent, symbolise and signify pertinent points, themes and

©The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education. 2021

You may use this teaching sequence freely in your school but it cannot be commercially published or reproduced or used for anything other than educational purposes without the express permission of CLPE. CLPE is a charity. Support us to continue to provide our free resources that raise children's engagement and attainment in literacy to schools and parents: www.clpe.org.uk/clpe/about-us/donate-support-our-work

messages. Reader response and group discussion prior to personal reflection on poems explored form an integral part of a number of the sessions detailed in this sequence.

Teaching Approaches:

- Reading aloud
- Looking at Language
- Role on the Wall
- Re-reading
- Emotional mapping
- Book talk reflections
- Shared writing
- Free writing of poetry

Outcomes:

- Text Analysis
- Response to provocation questions
- Character study
- Own free verse poem in the style of the text
- Own poems related to themes of belonging, prejudice and hope or that present views and opinions on world issues

Exploring poetic forms and devices:

This verse novel gives an opportunity to explore the following poetic devices as well as being able to explore how poetry works on the page through word and line breaks and contrasting lengths of poems to carry and deepen the narrative:

- Acrostic
- Alliteration
- Assonance
- Enjambment
- Refrain
- Rhyme and Half Rhyme
- Rhythm and Repetition

Cross Curricular Links:

SMSC

- You may wish to broaden the pupils' knowledge of how people across the world suffer are forced to flee human rights abuses, indefinite military service, persecution, violence, conflict and war. You could investigate the material on the websites of [Amnesty International](#) or the [United Nations](#) or the [UN Refugee Agency](#).
- In contrast you can help pupils understand the impact of poverty in the UK by exploring websites such as the [Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#) and [Save the Children](#). The children could map areas of disadvantage across the UK and investigate the pattern of economic

deprivation in its coastal towns, drawing on newspaper articles like The Guardian's '[Seaside towns among the most deprived communities in the UK](#)'

- Pupils could investigate rising homelessness in the UK, particularly looking at how Universal Credit, Zero Hours contracts, lack of affordable social housing, temporary accommodation and eviction rates are impacting families like Nat's and Ryan's across the UK as well as the crisis in migrant homelessness. Charities such as [Crisis](#) and [Shelter](#) share useful information and real human stories behind the statistics.
- You could then investigate the rise of far right ideology in the UK and globally leading to recruitment of young people to extremist groups, particularly in areas of economic deprivation and where racist attitudes towards settled communities, refugees and migrants can be perpetuated. News pieces covering significant events, such as The Guardian's '[Port of Dover brought to a standstill by far right groups](#)' may provide further scope to research and debate this issue as part of SMSC learning.

PE

- Manjeet lives by the coast and is a keen sea swimmer. Pupils might take an interest in swimming or in the benefits it can bring to them as it does Nat. The [RNLI](#) has information and advice to stay safe if engaging in open-water swimming of any kind.

Art

- Manjeet Mann acknowledges the work and support of artist, Aida Silvestri. Pupils could explore her work through her website, especially her exhibition, [Even This Will Pass](#), a body of work depicting the journeys and experiences of Eritrean refugees into the UK which aims to raise awareness of human trafficking and bring to light the different and often horrific experiences of people seeking refuge
- Pupils could extend their learning by developing critical appreciation for art which makes a statement as well as exploring the materials and techniques used to create impact on the viewer before then creating their own artwork on issues that matter to them and that they want to highlight to others.

Links to other texts and resources:

Other Books by Manjeet Mann:

- *Run, Rebel* (Penguin)
- *Small's Big Dream*, illustrated by Amanda Quigley (HarperCollins)
- Manjeet Mann reads *Run, Rebel* as a compelling audiobook which would be an enriching complement to the printed text to engage students and allow them to hear the characters' voices as the author intended.

Other Verse Novels:

- *The Poet X*, Elizabeth Acevedo (Electric Monkey)
- *Clap When You Land*, Elizabeth Acevedo (Hot Key Books)
- *Gloves Off*, Louisa Reid (Guppy Books)
- *Wrecked*, Louisa Reid (Guppy Books)
- *The Crossover*, Kwame Alexander (Andersen Press)
- *Booked*, Kwame Alexander (Andersen Press)
- *Rebound*, Kwame Alexander (Andersen Press)
- *Home of the Brave*, Katherine Applegate (Macmillan USA)
- *Cloud Busting*, Malorie Blackman (Random House)
- *The Girl Who Became a Tree*, Joseph Coelho (Otter-Barry Books)
- *Love that Dog*, Sharon Creech (Bloomsbury)
- *Hate that Cat*, Sharon Creech (Bloomsbury)
- *The Weight of Water*, Sarah Crossan (Bloomsbury)
- *One*, Sarah Crossan (Bloomsbury)
- *Moonrise*, Sarah Crossan (Bloomsbury)
- *Toffee*, Sarah Crossan (Bloomsbury)
- *Weight of Water*, Sarah Crossan (Bloomsbury)
- *We Come Apart*, Sarah Crossan and Brian Conaghan (Bloomsbury)
- *Long Way Down*, Jason Reynolds (Faber & Faber)
- *Locomotion*, Jacqueline Woodson (Puffin USA)
- *Brown Girl Dreaming*, Jacqueline Woodson (Puffin USA)

Links related to Manjeet Mann:

- [Manjeet Mann's CLPE webpage](#)
- [Manjeet Mann's own website](#)
- [Penguin YA book club extended interview](#)
- [Manchester Libraries](#)
- [Branford Boase interview with Manjeet Mann and her editor Carmen McCullough:](#)
- ['Lightbulb Moment' for *The Crossing* on publisher Penguin Random House website](#)

The poetry section on CLPE's website contains a wealth of resources including videos of poets performing their poems and talking about their writing process, which will inspire children in their own performances and writing. This can be found at:

<https://clpe.org.uk/poetry>

Here you can:

- Look up poets by age range or themes, enabling you to access a wide range of poetry to inspire budding poets.
- Find examples of children's work around poetry, including videos of performances submitted for the [CLiPPA School Shadowing Scheme](#).
- Find resources to support subject knowledge around poetic forms and devices.

- Manjeet Mann has a dedicated poet page where you can find her poems and videos: <https://clpe.org.uk/poetry/poets/manjeet-mann>.

Teaching Sessions:

Session 1: Introducing the verse novel as a genre

- Without revealing the title, author or front cover of the text, give the pupils, individually or in pairs, a copy of the first poem in the book, from the title '366 days before' until 'even me' (p.1-2).
- Allow time and space for them to read and respond to the text, text marking with their thoughts, feelings, questions and ideas about the piece in mixed pairs or small groups to share ideas and interpretations. At this point, allow the pupils to reflect as a reader, without telling them to look specifically for poetic techniques or devices, although it is fine if they do this naturally.
- Come back together to reveal that this is the first poem in a verse novel. Ask the pupils if they have read any verse novels before. *What were they? Who wrote them?* If they haven't, ask them what they think a verse novel might be and how it might be different from a novel. Explain that this verse novel is written by award winning author Manjeet Mann, who has previously written verse novel *Run, Rebel*.
- Listen to Manjeet talk about her thoughts on writing verse novels in this [interview with CLPE](#). Consider what she says about verse novels in the clip. When talking about her 'Lightbulb Moment' for *The Crossing* on publisher [Penguin Random House website](#), she reflects on why she wrote in verse rather than prose: "I found writing in verse quite liberating; it was easier to deal with big emotional subjects by getting straight to the heart of the issue and saying more with very little. I also like playing with structure, and I like how verse novels can bring words to life on a page with the use of white space and by playing with key phrases. It forces you to want to speak the words out loud, which I think appeals to the actress in me."
- Explore the concept of the verse novel with the pupils. Do they like poetry? Why or why not? Which poets or poems do they know and like? Do they like reading poetry? Performing poetry? Do any of the pupils write their own poetry? If you have space in the classroom set up a display area with Manjeet Mann's and other poets' verse novels, novels and any poems, collections and photographs of poets mentioned by the pupils. You can also provide a space here for pupils to share their own writing as the sequence progresses if they wish to.
- Come back to the poem shared. Think of how Manjeet uses verse to get 'straight to the heart of the issue' and 'say more with very little.' *What effect did this poem have on you? What is at the heart of this poem?*
- Consider what Manjeet says about how a verse novel 'forces you to want to speak the words out loud' which appeals to her as an actress. *What does she mean by this? Do you feel*

compelled to hear certain words or phrases ‘out loud’? What effect does the verse have hearing it as well as seeing it on the page?

- Now think of how she describes how words can be brought to life in a verse novel ‘with the use of white space and by playing with key phrases.’ *How does the white space help bring the words to life? What is written and what is left unwritten for you to interpret? How does she play with words, key phrases and language – what makes this piece of writing poetic? Can you see any of the poetic devices being used in this first poem, such as alliteration, assonance, enjambment, repetition, opposition, etc.?*
- Allow time now for a deeper analysis, marking up the text with examples of poetic devices such as the repetition and opposition in ‘Everyone is crying but me.’; the repetition and rhythm in the counting; the alliteration in ‘desert-dry’, ‘swallow sand’; the assonance in ‘me’, ‘breathe’, ‘eternity’, ‘face’ and ‘away’, ‘Kate’, ‘mermaid’; the enjambment in lines ‘Seven days, eleven hours, fifty-three minutes and / nine, ten, eleven, twelve... You may also wish to explore the organisation of the verse on the white space and where the line breaks occur and the impact of these on you as readers; the space on the page afforded certain words and phrases, ‘voice’, ‘c r a c k s’, ‘my mum’ as well as the organisation of the passage in which Dad speaks of her and the emboldened words at the start and end, ‘**everyone**’ and ‘**me**’.
- Come back to thinking about Manjeet’s preference for the verse novel as it allows her to deal with big emotional themes. How do you think the story will progress? Collect initial ideas from the pupils to reflect on in the next session. Look at the title – *does this have any significance?*

Session 2: Exploring Character

- Begin the session by reading aloud the first poem again and moving straight on to reading aloud the second poem from ‘**Me** and Mama have lain here on’ to ‘*They will come for you next.*’ (p.2-3). Read this aloud and consider the two characters, Nat and Samuel; what you know about their life and their family, their relationships. *How does this new poem make you feel as a reader? How does it make you feel about the character, Samuel? What do we find out about the relationships and events in his family from this poem? How does it compare to Nat’s family life? Give the pupils a copy of both poems to re-read and text mark with their thoughts, ideas and questions and then explore the language and poetic devices used to create an effect on the reader.*
- Consider the placing of these two poems in succession. Why do you think the author has juxtaposed these two poems in this way? What feelings does this evoke Why do you think Manjeet Mann has chosen to use the same word to end and begin the successive poems? At this point, it would be good to share the Author’s Note at the back of the book. After reading this note, do you have any further thoughts about the narrative that will unfold for both characters and the juxtaposition of these two poems? Do you feel empathy with one character more than another? Why or why not?

- You may wish to broaden the pupils' knowledge of how people across the world are forced to flee human rights abuses, indefinite military service, persecution, violence, conflict and war. You could investigate the material on the websites of [Amnesty International](#) or the [United Nations](#) or the [UN Refugee Agency](#).
- In contrast you can help pupils understand the impact of poverty in the UK by exploring websites such as the [Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#) and [Save the Children](#). The children could map areas of disadvantage across the UK and investigate the pattern of economic deprivation in its coastal towns, drawing on newspaper articles like The Guardian's '[Seaside towns among the most deprived communities in the UK](#)'
- Pupils could investigate rising homelessness in the UK, particularly looking at how Universal Credit, Zero Hours contracts, lack of affordable social housing, temporary accommodation and eviction rates are impacting families like Nat's and Ryan's across the UK as well as the crisis in migrant homelessness. Charities such as [Crisis](#) and [Shelter](#) share useful information and real human stories behind the statistics.
- You could then investigate the rise of far right ideology in the UK and globally leading to recruitment of young people to extremist groups, particularly in areas of economic deprivation and where racist attitudes towards settled communities, refugees and migrants can be perpetuated. News pieces covering significant events, such as The Guardian's '[Port of Dover brought to a standstill by far right groups](#)' may provide further scope to research and debate this issue as part of SMSC learning.

Session 3: Performing Poetry

- Play the pupils the sound clips of the two poems chosen from the book's Audible recording for Penguin Random House's '[Lightbulb Moment](#)' webpage. *Why do you think these two particular poems have been chosen? What is significant about them?* Ask the pupils to read what Manjeet Mann is saying about her inspiration and to consider how these two poems represent some of the human themes this book has and will explore.
- Now listen to the poems again with characterisation in mind. What are they telling us about the thoughts, lives and feelings of the two protagonists – *what do they tell us about Mum and Baba and how Nat and Sammy feel about them? What is the impact of hearing them read aloud and performed by actors?* Think back to Manjeet's reflections on verse novels and look at the whole of these two successive poems on the page (Nat, p.4-6 and Sammy, p.8) *What more does reading them with the eye having heard them with the ear add to our understanding? How have the actors chosen to lift the words off the page? What has been emphasised and how does this connect to the poem on the page, add to the meaning? What is the impact of these poems being written in succession and them sharing the first and last word?*

- Now provide the pupils with the poems to read for themselves, from ‘I should have taken more videos of her’ on p.4 to ‘the night’ on p.42. As they read, ask them to pick out the poems – individually or collectively as a group – that are the most memorable for them and to note what they find out and can infer about the characters of Nat, Ryan, their dad and late mum, and Sammy, his mama, sister Sophia and late Baba from this section of the text. *Which character(s) interest you most? Why? What do you find out about each of the families as a whole? How are Nat and Sammy influenced by their family members, in particular their late Baba and mum? How are they and their family members affected by their grief and loss? What parallels might we draw between the ways in which the characters are thinking or behaving, for instance between the protagonists but also Ryan and Sammy or Dad and Mama? How has the poet achieved this? What impact does it have on us? What is the poet trying to illustrate? How does this relate to your initial thoughts on reading the first two poems?*
- Ask the pupils to reflect more deeply who they feel evokes their sympathy and why. Allow time for the pupils to read closely and text mark the poems exploring what the author has done to make us feel sympathy towards these characters. Explore how sympathy toward a character can be invoked even when their beliefs or actions might repel us. *How is this achieved within individual poems and across time or a sequence of poems?* Explore what the characters know and feel about each other, whether as part of a personal relationship or as a homogenous group. *Would they share our sympathy for a given character at a given time? Broaden the discussion to include society as a whole; does everyone share our views and empathy toward a given character or situation? Why? Why not?* Allow time for the pupils to respond in writing, exploring these ideas with reference to the text.
- Invite the pupils to create a final collection of their most memorable poems and share them with the wider group for discussion. *Why did you choose these? If you were to perform one of your most memorable poems, how might you do this? Would it be best performed individually, in pairs or as a group to help convey the parallels and contrasts in the characters’ lives, thoughts and experiences? How will you pace the performance? How will you use your voice(s) to help tell the story of this moment? Will you use any movement or action?* Give time for the pupils to build up their poems, text marking with performance notes and ideas, practising, editing and polishing to a finished performance. Before 14th June 2022, this could be filmed and submitted for the [CLiPPA shadowing scheme competition](#) to win the opportunity to perform this poem on stage as part of the award ceremony.
- Give time for the pupils to watch, reflect on and evaluate each other’s performances, this could be done in turn in the order the poems come up in the text. *What did each interpretation add to your understanding of the narrative?*
- Finally, reflect on the reading you have done so far. *Are you engaged with the story so far? Why or why not? Did you ‘turn the pages quickly’ as Manjeet said, to find out what happened next? Do you agree with her comments that the verse novel was ‘an easier read’? How did you feel about the ‘space on the page’? Did you feel like you were ‘working harder’ as you were reading to gain a full understanding of what was going on?*

Session 4: Exploring narrative devices – setting and place

- Revisit and read aloud the poems from **'In every room'** (p.40) and then on from **'317 days before'** until **'I didn't realise how easy / it would be to break'** (p.42-61), allowing the pupils to respond initially with their thoughts, feelings, ideas and questions in relation to the settings; those imagined, those introduced and those for which our understanding of them has been further developed. *What does home look and feel like to Nat and Sammy; their family home, their school, neighbourhood or town and the people in it? Which places are special to them and why? Which are unfamiliar?* Allow the pupils time to explore and discuss how each place compares and contrasts and then explore how each protagonist's sense of home as well as actual experience of home is changing as the narrative unfolds.
- Revisit poems like those on page 43 and pages 53-55 (**'We're going to be alright aren't we?'** until **'We wait.'**) or those from **'Horrible'** (p.57) to **'break'** (p.61). Allow the pupils time to look in more depth at these poems together. *How do they look on the page? How does this relate to the time and place being evoked? What is the effect of the length of the poems, the patterns or how they juxtapose? What is left for the reader to do in the space on the page? How does the density or sparseness of the words on the page and the amount of white space impact? Looking more closely, what is the impact of the poet's language choices. Are there any passages, words or phrases that enable us to picture a particular place vividly? What mood or atmosphere do they create? What is the effect of the flashback device?* If the pupils haven't noticed them, you might draw attention to other poetic devices that help the reader to evoke a strong sense of place or mood, such as repetition, opposition and enjambment.
- Lastly, invite the pupils to reflect on what they feel about the settings, both past and present, and the protagonists' feelings about being there and how it is affecting their attitudes, behaviour and well-being by the time we get to the end of this collection of poems.
- Allow time for the children to work in groups to present this trio of poems as a performance. How will they capture Nat's or Sammy's feelings about a particular setting as well as effectively portray the narrative developing across the poems? Give time for the pupils to build up their poems, text marking with performance notes and ideas, practising, editing and polishing to a finished performance, which could again be filmed.

Session 5: Deepening Understanding of Character

- Read on up from **'314 days before'** (p.62) to **'over and over again.'** (p.64), allowing the pupils to discuss the narrative and characters. Give the pupils chance to offer their initial reactions to this last poem – *what questions do they have, what does it add to their perceptions of Ryan?*
- Now give time for them to read the poem back for themselves, text marking with thoughts, feelings and opinions. Offer thinking points: *How much time passes in the narrative from the beginning to the end of the poem? What is the effect of the use of non-linear narrative? How has the poem been presented on the page and how does this help us to understand Nat's and*

Ryan's response and navigation through the unfolding events of those moments? What do we learn about him from his opening line 'Paid work. I just need some paid work, please.'? What can we learn about Ryan's outer behaviour from Nat's observations and the dialogue? What does this tell us about his inner emotional state and character? How do you think Ryan's external persona is different from how he actually is inside? Why might he be reacting so physically or aggressively? Have the pupils had any personal experiences of behaving or feeling like this?

- Encourage the pupils to investigate this question in writing; you could start by building a Role on the Wall for the character of Ryan to prepare for this. Start by drawing an outline of a man, either as a whole group or the pupils can do this individually. On the outside of the outline, using what you know from the text so far, write notes to share how you think Ryan shows his character to others or how others might perceive him, with reference to specific poems or lines that evidence opinions. On the inside of the man, write notes about what you think Ryan is really like on the inside, again evidencing specific poems or lines.
- Read on to 'and buys him a pint' (p.95). Give pupils three talking points related to characterisation to explore and allow them to choose to write about one of these, referring to the text they have just read and reflecting back on the narrative as a whole. The pupils might explore the effect of the reader seeing Ryan through a protagonist lens, and devices such as flashing back to Nat's earlier memories of Ryan in between the current reality, exploring the poem from 'Paid work. I just need some paid work, please.' to **over and over again.**' (p.63-64) or the one on pages 80-81 in which Ryan demonstrates open-mindedness and support for Nat's homosexuality; or the impact of the opposition created in the poem '**We're told that**' to 'how can he? **I think.**'(p.79) as Nat weighs up the explanation for extremism in families like hers; or explore who they feel the narrative is most centred on at this stage – Nat, Sammy or Ryan – and the impact it has when the emphasis shifts or juxtaposes from the start of each section and then throughout the sequence of sections and poems.
- Come back together to share pupils' thoughts and opinions so they can build a full picture across the points. Collate the ideas somewhere where the pupils can reference these in the next session, perhaps as part of the wall display.

Session 6: Developing empathy

- Read aloud the first poem in '283 days before' (p.96-97). *What insights does this poem give about how incarceration and torture by people traffickers is affecting Sammy?* Unpick the language used in the poem to describe his torture and how he is responding to it. Look at his determination to follow his mama's advice ('I know how to love / I know my worth / I know who I am.') and her influence on his response, 'The most important thing / is to continue to **feel.**' *Does Sammy fit the depiction of refugees provided by Ryan, Kevin Smith and right wing extremists like Danny? What more does it tell us about his character, and how the author wants us to feel about him?*

- Read up to the end of the '281 days before' section on page 104, discussing the characters and the events that have unfolded. What insights are we given into Nat's ongoing inner conflict on breaking her promise to her mum to 'always speak up' (p.60-61) from her inaction at Kevin Smith's cruelty and racism towards Fazel to her suspicion of Ryan's guilt? What does she articulate and what does she process internally, regarding her own beliefs and sense of what is right and wrong? What effect do the news headlines have on both her and Ryan? What affect do they have on us as a reader?
- Read up to '**seen.**' (p.153). Explore the power of the shared line '**...but I'm also scared to stay.**' being Sammy's voice being heard directly by Nat. Investigate the build up to this pivotal moment in which one of the characters becomes actual to the other; the portrayal of their parallels in their lives through the early poems - their home and family, their loss, grief; direct parallels between Sammy and Ryan in the poems on page 6 and on page 146; their parental influence, also included in this last poem in which Sammy recalls his father's teaching that he has 'to live fearlessly...use your voice to tell the truth' which mirror's Nat's mum's words; their narrative and emotional journey to this point, brought together in the poems on page 138; their sense of helplessness, frailty, fear and strength in this moment; their hope, belief system and sense of themselves and of humanity, challenged by news headlines, by internet trolls or by dialogue and interactions with other people – like Ryan, Fazel, Tripoli gangs - in poems like those on pages 102-103, 108-109, 117-119 and 147-149.
- Explore the effect of devices and techniques used by Manjeet Mann in these poems that help us to build up our knowledge of both Sammy's and Nat's characters, such as: change in narrative pace; varied length of poems; juxtaposition of experience or viewpoint; repetition and opposition; choice of emboldened word or phrase and other language choices – figurative, sparing, alliterative, assonant; alternative voice and register; enjambment; presentation on the page and use of white space to add meaning.
- Invite pupils to work to create two more Roles on the Wall for Nat and Sammy to display alongside Ryan's which can be further updated.
- Revisit the two poems on page 80 and on pages 102-103 in which Nat interacts with Ryan in the past and him now. Give the pupils the opportunity to compare and contrast the characters' interactions in the poems then perform the dialogue in pairs, in role as Ryan and Nat. Explore the different performance choices they made for each poem and each character and why they made these.
- Invite the pupils to do the same with the poem in which Sammy is interviewed by the film crew (p.151-153). How will the pupils convey Sammy's personality and feelings in this moment? How will they convey their own knowledge of his plight as a refugee as well as that of others they have learned about in the course of their wider research?
- Following research on these topics, the pupils could engage in debate and discussion which you may want to mediate to support them in taking a balanced view and to draw on evidenced facts to support an argument.

- Now skip forward to the moment in which Nat wants to shake Ryan and ask him, ‘When did you get so lost, Ryan?’ (p111). Knowing what we know about Ryan’s journey to this point, what do we think he would say if she were to verbalise this? Given what we know about his past and present relationship with his sister, his internal and external personas, how do you think he would deliver his response to her?
- Based on their knowledge so far, with reference to the text, go through Ryan’s thought process as to how he has come to his beliefs. Draft ideas into their own first person poem in role as Ryan, using the techniques and devices they have seen in the poems so far to portray this moment most effectively for the reader. They might look at poetic devices such as assonance, alliteration, repetition, rhyme and half rhyme or how the poem is placed on the page, for example, separating words to emphasise division, indenting verses to show flashbacks as they have seen in the text. Allow children to draft, work up and redraft the poem to a finished piece.
- Now consider the way in which Manjeet Mann has presented the poems within her verse novel and the opportunities this affords her to present a counter viewpoint, to challenge or reinforce an idea or understanding, or to develop empathy and build connections for the reader. *What might they do following on from Ryan’s poem? How could they add to meaning using Nat’s or Sammy’s voice in the next poem? Which word or phrase would the poems share at the end and start of each one and why?* Again, encourage the pupils to draft, work up and redraft this and their first poem to a finished coherent piece which could be displayed on the wall, performed for the group or printed as a collection to compare and contrast.

Session 7: Exploring Authorial Technique

- Read on to ‘How can I even begin to tell Fazel / about **my brother?**’ (p.157). Invite the pupil’s immediate responses to what they have read. *How does it make them feel? How do they think Nat’s relationships are changing and what is the effect on her? Reflect on Fazel’s statement, ‘Loss is loss, Natalie. / A family can be one person or many people. / This we share.’ What do we think he means by this? How does this make Nat feel? Do you think she agrees? Do you? Why? Why not?*
- Ask pupils to reflect on how Manjeet Mann is trying to show what her characters and people share throughout the book so far, encourage them to draw on evidence in the text and exploring the poetic devices or techniques that she has used to allow the reader to draw comparisons and create connections between settings, experiences, events and characters.
- Revisit Baba’s assertions on page 78 that ‘...humans are created from the same materials that are present / in the stars. We are all just stardust, Sammy.’ Engage the pupils in responding to this through debate and discussion. You could draw comparisons with the popular and longstanding premise that there is ‘more that unites us than divides us’, words taken up by MP Jo Cox – murdered by a right wing extremist - in her maiden speech and in her pro-immigrant stance. *Do they think this is true? Why or why not?*

- Now, read and discuss the statement on Human Rights on the [United Nations website](#).

Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. Human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more. Everyone is entitled to these rights, without discrimination.

- How does this relate to Sammy's world and that of Nat? What do people like those in the book have in common, what unites them? Consider the history of Eritrea, explained by Sammy's Baba in which he explains its invasion first by Italy, then Britain, then Ethiopia (p.6-7). How does this compare with the UK? What makes one migrant the same or different?*
- Explore some of the news headlines in the book and in real life, such as, '**A HERD OF MIGRANTS SWARM OVER DOVER BEACHES**' (p.18) or in real life like those explored in this [article](#). *What is the effect of language choices related to migration such as **herd, swarm, flood, take, surge, invasion** on readers? Nat chose to ignore the article having read the headline. Why? What would the effect have been on Ryan? Why was he vulnerable to this kind of persuasive rhetoric?* Allow time for the pupils to come together to discuss their thoughts and opinions, referencing the texts to support their ideas.
- Using ideas explored in the narrative and drawing on evidence from their fact-checking and research, pupils should write about whether they feel Ryan's attitudes towards refugees and migrants is fair and whether there is evidence to suggest that he is being misled by Danny and newspapers.

Session 8: Exploring Authorial Technique

- Read on to '*Eventually, they join.*' (p.168). Allow time for the pupils to respond to what they have read and how it makes them feel as well as their growing knowledge of the characters as the narrative unfolds.
- Consider the narrative so far and how the structure of this verse novel genre supports our understanding. *What is the effect of counting down from 366 days on the reader? What thoughts and feelings does it evoke in us?* Revisit the text with the pupils to explore how much time has passed in the narrative so far. *Does it surprise you that just over 100 days have passed since the beginning of the novel? Why? Why not?* Look at whether some parts of the narrative have been told in more detail or at more length than others and why that might be; why the poet has emphasised certain moments or assigned particular significance to them. *Where has she left gaps or spaces in the narrative and why? What did we imagine or infer as the reader in these moments?* Finally consider which character has been central to the narrative so far and how this has shifted and why this might be. *What is the effect of a particular character voice starting or ending each section? Why has the poet made these*

choices within the narrative arc so far? Is it evenly balanced? Does one character drive the narrative or affect us more than another? How has the poet achieved this?

- Pay particular attention to the poems that close this section from 'Before, my life didn't seem / to have a purpose.' (p.166). Provide pupils with a copy of this sequence of poems so that they can mark up with feelings, ideas and questions. *Which poems are lengthier, which have brevity and why? What impact does this have on the pace and the way in which we experience and read the sequence of poems? What is the effect of the flashback being placed here? How has indentation been used as a signal to the reader? Look at how the text is punctuated with ellipses or the way in which specific words and phrases have been chosen as the bold font to connect the poems. What is the effect of the last two lines being presented at the top of an otherwise white space on the page? How does this add to their meaning and significance? What will happen next? What do you think these moments tells us about the way in which the narrative is developing and will end for each of the characters? Reflect on the significance of the title, *The Crossing*.*

Session 9: Exploring Events

- Revisit the analogy created by Baba that 'No matter how dark it gets, there are still stars in the sky.' (p.7). What does it say about the big human themes that Manjeet Mann is exploring in this novel, such as hope? Why do you think she named Sammy's best friend Tesfay, meaning hope? How is he significant to the narrative and to Sammy's ability to 'face his fears' (p.53)?
- Read on from '253 days before' (p.169) until the epitaph, 'TESFAY ABEL SOLOMON / 18.6.2000 – 10.11.2018' (p.180). Pause to gather the pupils' reactions to these events. *How are they left feeling after reading this sequence of poems? How has the poet achieved this? What is the effect of the two star-shaped poems describing both Tesfay and Ryan in exactly the same way? Why has the poet chosen stars?*
- Consider the protagonists' emotional state at this moment. What do we think Sammy will be left feeling after the death of his best friend? How does Baba's statement on the constancy of the stars relate now to his experience and the situation he now finds himself in? How does it relate to Nat and to her own experiences in relation to Ryan?
- Read on to 'giving us all **hope**' (p.214), allowing time for response. Consider Baba's statement further in relation to Sammy's rescue, his call with Tesfay's mum, his escape from the Detention Centre, the Turin Christmas, the trucker's kindness and the Calais New Year' to Nat's training sessions, her knowledge of Ryan's crimes, her guilt and silence, moving house, Christmas and her New Year. Pupils could pick one or more characters through which to explore the motivations, actions and reactions related to the idea that no matter how dark it gets, there are always stars in the sky. *What or who is providing light and hope to Sammy and Nat as they navigate their way through these events?*

- Come back together to share opinions on each of the characters explored. You could chart each of their narrative journeys on a graph of emotion to visually represent this. *Is it an upward lift or a mixture of highs and lows? How does each compare at different moments?*
- Finish by reading from '150 days before' and on to 'I'm just waiting / for / **death.**' (p.219) sharing thoughts and reflections on the effect of these poems and Sammy's emotional state.

Session 10: Developing Understanding of Narrative

- Read on from '146 days before' (p.220) until '**distance**' (p.230). Explore the sequence of events that happens in this section of the narrative and what it might mean in the context of the narrative as a whole, exploring the way in which the narrative has now converged geographically as the protagonists cross paths in Calais. *How is this poem different from the others before it? How is it paced? What is the effect of the repetitive refrains, the presentation of the poem and use of white space on the page?*
- Read on from '145 days before' (p.231). up to 'on FB **SabirSjabir.**' (p.233). From both Nat's and Sammy's perspective, explore what we think are the emotions they go through since meeting this section of the text, despite not being told necessarily.
- Look specifically at the dream sequence poem in which both characters' experiences continue to be merged within a single poem. Revisit poems throughout the book so far in which dreams are included, comparing the themes as well as the way they have been presented as if hanging on the page. *How do these dreams deepen our understanding of the characters? How do they help shape the narrative or support our predictions? Come back to discuss what this section of the narrative serves to do. Why do you think it does this and what do you think will happen after this point?*
- Finish by reading on from '144 days before' (p.234) until '**Nat xxx**' (p.262).

Session 11: Exploring the emotional impact of a text

- Read the poem from '102 days before' (p.265), until 'right kind of **human.**' (p.266), exploring Sammy's experiences and observations of the racism and prejudice he and other refugees are suffering. Return to the pupils work on human rights, marking up and making notes around a copy of the poem. *Why do you think the author has included this particular poem at this point in the narrative? How does it make you feel? What too does it tell us about Sammy's character and intellect and how this is in opposition to his treatment as though inhuman?*
- Now read on up to 'What have I done?' (p.282). Give time for the pupils to explore and share their initial reactions to this part of the text. This is a highly emotional part of the narrative and pupils are likely to have strong reactions to the text.
- Reflecting on the whole narrative so far, is this what they expected for Sammy and Ryan? Has either evoked greater empathy or a stronger emotional reaction? Why or why not? Why do

they think the author made the decision to carry the narrative in this way? What would the difference have been if Sammy's application had been accepted and Ryan weren't charged? How would it have changed your reactions to the text? Do they think it would be true to life? Should narrative fiction always end in a 'happy ever after' moment?

- Now read on to 'that's **ok.**' (p.288) then '0 days before' (p.289) without revealing the first poem in this new section. Invite the pupils' responses to this moment. *What do they predict for this day? '0 days before' Nat's swim and what else? What do they anticipate the poet will do with each of the character's narrative at this point? What will this mean for them?*
- Now read on from '0 days before' (p.289) until 'Stretch out my hand **to...**' (p.300). This is particularly emotional and poetic. Give time for the children to reflect on these emotionally before looking at the devices used to make an impact, such as the mirrored language, showing the contrast in each character's experience of their crossing. Read on until Sammy's epitaph on page 303. *Did they think Sammy would be able to reach the UK safely? Why do you think the poet might have chosen this ending for Sammy?*
- Read on to 'what did I **miss?**' (p.305). Go back through the poems in counting down these last days and explore the ways in which the author builds emotion and tension in this part of the text. Focus on the structure and length of poems, how poems follow each other in the narrative, how line breaks are used and the language used in particular poems. *Looking at the text as a whole, which clues were left us as readers in how the narrative would end for each protagonist?*

Session 12: Evaluating texts

- Read on to the end of the novel in which we see Nat coming to terms with her own experiences and showing a more genuine understanding of the reality of young people like Hamid, Fazel and Sammy and his Mama. Allow time and space for the pupils to reflect on the narrative as a whole, their likes, dislikes, questions they are left with or connections they made with the text, personally or in other stories, films or real life events. *What were their most memorable poems or parts of the narrative? Why? What have you learnt about verse novels or poetry that you didn't know before? Would you be encouraged to read more verse novels or poetry after studying this text? Why? Why not?*
- You could introduce pupils to the criteria used to judge the CILIP Carnegie Medal, one of the UK's oldest and most prestigious book awards, awarded by children's librarians for an outstanding book written in English for children and young people. *The Crossing* joins the [Carnegie 2022 shortlist](#).
- Encourage the pupils to explore the elements of the narrative against the same criteria used by the judges of this award:

Style

- Is the style or styles appropriate to the subject and theme and conducive to the establishment of voice?
- Do dialogue and narrative work effectively together?
- How effective is the use of literary techniques and conventions?
- How effective is the use of language in conveying setting, atmosphere, characters, action etc.? How appropriate is that to the theme?
- Where rhyme or rhythm are used, is their use accomplished and imaginative?
- Where factual information is presented, is this accurate and clear?

The plot

- Is it well-constructed?
- Do events happen, not necessarily logically, but acceptably within the limits set by the theme?
- Is the final resolution of the plot credible in relation to the rest of the book?

Characterisation

- Are the characters believable and convincing?
- Are they well-rounded, and do they develop during the course of the book?
- Do they interact with each other convincingly?
- Are the characters' behaviour and patterns of speech consistent with their known background and environment?
- Do they act consistently in character throughout the book?
- How effectively are the characters revealed through narration, dialogue, action, inner dialogue and through the thoughts, reactions and responses of others?

- Come together to discuss whether the students think that this is a text worthy of this award. If the writer asked you what could be improved in the book, how would you have made it better? Would they recommend it to another reader? What would you tell them about it or what wouldn't you tell them because it might spoil the book for them? Or might mislead them about what it is like?

After completing the sequence:

- Pupils could think about their own themes or topics to explore through poetry. Perhaps they have faced fear, grief, courage or hope or helplessness in their own lives in some way that they could explore through poetry or could present a view on a theme or topic of interest or concern to them, as Manjeet Mann has with poverty and the refugee crisis in *The Crossing*. They could work this up into a series of poems that follow the narrative of a situation in the way that Manjeet Mann does in *The Crossing*. If they do this, reflect back on how she creates and shapes characters, builds empathy in the reader and creates emotion and tension.

- You could also focus on single poems that reflect different injustices and world views explored by some of the poets in another CLIPPA shortlisted collection, *Rising Stars: New Young Voices in Poetry* or by poets such as Michael Rosen in *Listening to a Pogrom on the Radio* or *Don't Mention the Children*; Benjamin Zephaniah in *Too Black, Too Strong*; Linton Kwesi-Johnson in *Selected Poems*, George the Poet in *Search Party*; Anthony Anaxagorou in *Heterogeneous*, Dean Atta in *I am Nobody's Nigger* or Hollie McNish in *Cherry Pie* or *Nobody Told Me*.
- Select poems suitable for the age and experience of the pupils and provide opportunities for these to be shared and reflected upon. This could be done through a poetry papering exercise. Here, you select a number of different poems, sharing different poets, styles and forms. Photocopy the poems and pin them up around the classroom or another space for the pupils to find and explore at their leisure. They don't have to read all of them, they can read, pass over, move on and then select one they'd like to talk about with someone else. This encourages pupils to enjoy the experience of simply reading a poem and to relish the uncertainties of meanings and the nature of the knowledge and emotional responses that poems invoke in them as readers. Let them look for connections, ask questions, explore what they like about poems and the language contained within and use this as an opportunity to look at specific forms or devices used within the poem.
- You could model writing a poem based on one of the topics discussed during a shared writing session, talking through the choices that you are making as a writer to bring the experience alive for the reader before allowing time for the pupils to draft their own poems around the themes and subjects of their choice, then allow them to read aloud to a response partner to lift the words off the page, hearing how they sound when performed.
- Give time for response partners to ask the writers questions, discuss parts they aren't sure are working or make suggestions to improve the writing. Think together about how the poem could be presented on the page to enhance the meaning and the reader's understanding linked to their explorations in *The Crossing*.