

## ***The Beekeeper of Aleppo* Introduction**

*The Beekeeper of Aleppo* tells the story of a Syrian family residing in the country's capital when violence erupts in 2011. Readers see recent events unfold through Nuri's eyes and join his family on their long, arduous journey toward safety.

*"Where there are bees there are flowers, and where there are flowers there is new life and hope."*

*"I wanted to set forth the idea that among profound, unspeakable loss, humans can still find love and light - and see one another."* - Christy Lefteri

### **Background Information**

In March 2011, pro-democracy groups in Syria staged demonstrations to voice their frustrations with Syria's authoritarian government and its president, Bashar al-Assad. The demonstrations were part of a larger series of protests known as the Arab Spring. Assad and his military responded to protests in Syria swiftly and violently. The resulting civil war has led to the displacement of more than 13 million people. 11 years later, fighting continues, and many areas within Syria are still unsafe. We will discuss this ongoing conflict in class, and further background information is also available through [Catholic Relief Services](#).

### **Reading Questions**

1. Before reading this book, how familiar were you with the conflict in Syria? How much did you know about the experiences of Syrian refugees?
2. Describe Nuri, Afra, and Sami's lives prior to the war. What do they most enjoy? Why does Lefteri include this part of their stories?
3. How does Nuri become a beekeeper? What draws him to this career? What obstacles does he face?
4. What happens to Firas? To Sami?
5. How do Nuri and Afra make the decision to leave Syria?
6. How do Mustafa and Nuri communicate throughout their travels? What is the significance of their correspondence?
7. There are many haunting moments throughout Nuri and Afra's journey. Make note of those that stand out most to you, and be prepared to discuss.
8. There are several important symbols in this novel: among them are bees, marbles, keys, and legos. Annotate repetition of these items and others as you read, and be prepared to discuss their significance.
9. Afra is a talented artist. How does the loss of her eyesight impact her work?

10. Describe Mohammed and his role in Nuri's life.
11. How do Nuri and Afra manage to leave Greece when so many others cannot?
12. Lefteri makes clear from the beginning of the novel that Nuri and Afra eventually get to England. What impact does this structural decision have on readers?
13. The trauma Nuri and Afra experience leaves both characters deeply scarred. Describe their resulting struggles and the ways in which their shared experiences both limit and strengthen their relationship.
14. In what ways does *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* present hope amid bleak circumstances? How do the bees themselves fit into the message of hope?
15. Lefteri spent the summers of 2016 and 2017 in a refugee camp in Athens, and her experiences there inspired this story. Why might she have felt compelled to share what she saw and learned? How might this novel contribute to greater awareness/assistance for refugees?