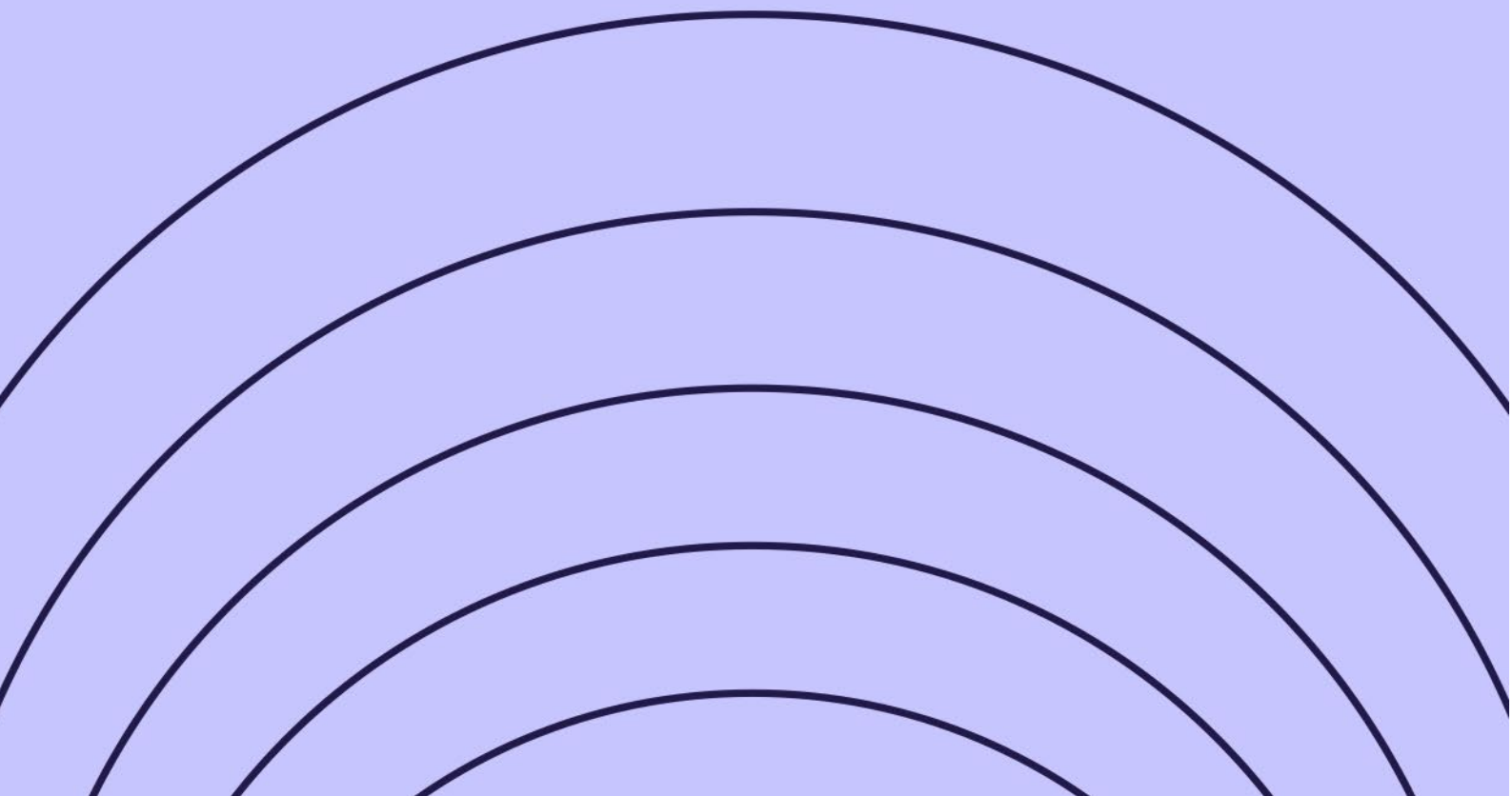




The Crossing Manjeet Mann

This is Lit Book Club Discussion guide



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About this guide

This guide has been created to help you run a book club with your students.

The aim is to help you guide their reading as well as encourage discussion and enjoyment! The purpose of the club is to move away from the 'formal' assessment for GCSE and just read the book through an inquiring and critical lens.

As *The Crossing* is a popular book for young adults, there are many excellent pre-existing guides available. This guide will refer closely to these and provide links and page numbers for you to refer to.

We are extremely grateful to the English and Media Centre, Carnegie and CLPE for access to their guides.

The 2 main guides you may want to print off before reading the book are:

- The Yoto Carnegie /EMC guide [here](#)
- The CLPE teaching guide [here](#). NB - this page takes you to the sign-in page for the guide. You just need to enter your email address to create an account and download the PDF for free.

About the book and author

The Crossing was written by Manjeet Mann and published in 2021.

It was Mann's second book. The novel won many awards such as the Costa Children's Book Award and the Sheffield Children's Book Award. It has also been nominated for many other awards such as the Carnegie Medal.

Please note: This book covers some sensitive issues including mild swearing and explores the themes of racism, homophobia, people-trafficking and grief at the death of a parent. It is advised that teachers read the book before sharing with students. Read this warning to students so they are aware that these are elements which will come up as they are reading.

Possible activities:

1. Encourage students to read about the author and her motivations for writing *The Crossing*. The website *Books for Keeps* has an interesting interview with the author [here](#). The author also discusses the [world of *The Crossing*](#) and [her writing process](#) in two short BBC videos. Ask students to read the interview and watch the videos to get a feel for the book, the writer and her motivations. How does this make them feel about the book they are going to read?
2. This book is often described as a 'verse novel' and, if students have flicked through the pages, they will see how it is laid out as poetry and not a traditional 'prose' fiction book. Discuss this with them and what it makes them feel. There are some useful activities in the [CLPE guide on p.5](#) to introduce the ideas of 'verse novel' with some questions for students.
3. The book focuses on the lives and experiences of Natalie and Sammy and how their very different worlds collide. Ask students to read the summaries of the books in [Appendix 1](#) of this guide. Which one do they think is more appealing and why? Which one helps them to understand the main themes and what is going to happen in the book?
4. Now students know a little more about the book and the author, does this make them feel ready to read the book? Is it important to know these things before you start reading? Ask them to think about what they look at when they are choosing which book to select - how do they decide?

Before Reading

Take some time to talk to your students about the main themes of the book and look at the title/cover to get some context.

Possible activities:

1. A good starter activity can be to ask students to look at the cover of the book and the title. Discuss what they think it might mean? What might the book be about? Do the recommendations from reviewers and the fact that it has won some awards influence them in anyway?
2. The Carnegie/EMC guide also has some starter extracts and questions to ask which will help your students to get a feel for the text itself and the verse. [EMC guide p.6](#)
3. You may also want to use this as an opportunity to bring up the content of the book if you haven't already done so. Remind students what the book is about and the themes/issues it raises. The [CLPE guide p.1](#) lists the issues which are raised and asks teachers to be aware of any students who may have faced these issues in their own lives before reading this book. The [EMC guide p.1](#) also outlines the themes of the book.

Reading the book

This is obviously the main activity and your role is to facilitate the reading as and when you feel you need to. We want students to read at their own pace and enjoy the book away from the 'shackles' of GCSE but also to become more active readers and be able to pick up on themes, ask questions and discuss the book with others.

Possible ways to approach the book and discussing the book in a group setting

1. The EMC guide has an excellent section by section guide to the book. It breaks it down into manageable chunks with questions to ask to help the students unpick the characters and themes. You may want to give these questions to the students at the start of each book club session so they have something to discuss. [Carnegie/EMC guide pp.7-11](#)
2. If you would prefer something more focused to help teach the book section by section, the CLPE guide has detailed teaching sessions which cover areas such as 'exploring character' and looking at poetry/verse novels. [CLPE guide pp. 5-18](#)
3. To help students 'listen' to the verse as they read, the [BBC](#) has some recorded readings of key points in the book from Mann herself. There are also lots of sections of the book being read aloud by Mann on the [CLPE website](#).

After Reading

Although these activities have been placed in this area of the guide, you may want to introduce some of the tables around capturing themes and character progression before students start reading to allow them to take notes. However, you may feel that this will distract them from enjoying the process of reading and would prefer to leave this until after they have read the book for the first time.

Even though some of these after reading activities may feel a little like GCSE in terms of thinking about themes/characters etc, students do not need to think about it in terms of assessment objectives! This is just to help them discuss the main areas of the book and why these are important to the plot, character development and how they made them feel.

Encourage students to talk about what they enjoyed or didn't enjoy about the book. They can be honest and admit that it wasn't something they enjoyed if they didn't - everyone has different literary tastes and this is part of reading for pleasure. Explain how they are not going to feel that every book they read is amazing, but there is likely to be at least something which touched them or made them think, even if the overall story or theme wasn't really something they enjoyed. Here you may want to ask them about what books/genres they might want to read next. Would they like to read more like this book or move onto something completely different?

Possible activities:

1. There are some great activities in the EMC guide asking students for their initial thoughts around the book and asking them questions about the main themes and characters. [Carnegie/EMC guide pp.9-10](#). The CLPE guide also has this at the end of the guide to help students organise their thoughts. They also have a section to help students 'judge' the book against the Carnegie medal guidelines. [CLPE guide p. 17](#)
2. You may also want to come back to the synopsis at the back of this guide and ask students to read them again to see how well they 'match' the book and its content now they have read it. Perhaps they could even write one of their own?
3. The CLPE guide allows students to look at the broader themes of the text and has some interesting links to other subjects such as SMSC, PE and Art. Students may want to read more about the issues raised in the book and there are lots of links for them to access. [CLPE guide pp. 2-3](#)

Writing a review

After students have finished reading and discussing the text, ask them to create a short review to share with Pearson. Encourage students to be creative in how they respond to the book. The purpose of the review is to share personal reactions, and it doesn't need to be a formal piece of writing. Students should feel free to focus on what stood out to them, how the book made them feel, and whether they would recommend it to someone else.

Reviews could take a variety of formats, for example:

- chat or message-style conversation with a friend, talking about the book and why they would (or wouldn't) recommend it
- a short voice note or podcast-style discussion
- video review or informal vlog
- social media-style post or thread
- or a traditional written review, if they prefer

Whichever format they choose, the emphasis should be on honest responses and clear communication of ideas, rather than length, technical accuracy, or formality. Students do not have to be complimentary if they did not enjoy the book — thoughtful disagreement and differing opinions are part of meaningful reading and discussion.

If you would like to use the Pearson templates to help your students write their own review, the teacher guide can be found [here](#) and the student template is [here](#).

Possible activities for writing a review:

1. There are some excellent resources in the EMC guide to help students with this. Encourage them to read the examples in the guide and to think about how they would like to structure their own. [Carnegie/EMC guide p.11](#)
2. Ask students to read some different styles of reviews such as the ones here
 - a. [Poetpri](#)
 - b. [Just Imagine](#)
 - c. [Foyles](#)
 - d. [Storygraph](#)
 - e. [Goodreads](#)

Do they agree with the views expressed here? Encourage students to look at some of the different star ratings on examples in d and e and think about why people may have opposing views to them about the book? Can they see why some may love the book and others don't?

3. There are some excellent GCSE English Language resources around writing a review and how to structure it on the BBC website which you may want to use with students. Or they can use the examples above to help them think about the style and the tone they want to adopt for their review. [BBC Bitesize](#)

Appendix 1

Summaries of *The Crossing*

1. [The Book Trust Website](#)

About this book

Natalie's mum has just died and her world is crumbling. Her father retreats into himself, and her older brother finds an outlet for his emotions in marching with a far-right gang in Dover. Swimming is Natalie's only refuge.

Sammy has fled his home in Eritrea to avoid being conscripted into an endless war. Soldiers have already killed his Baba for not joining up. He has no choice but to leave, to travel to Europe in the hope of a better life. It's an arduous, never-ending journey.

Two teenagers with very different backgrounds and experiences, but each facing tough challenges that have significant effects on their own and others' lives. Somehow, they connect, but will that be enough?

This is a demanding but important read. Yet as it's written in verse, it feels accessible, and the way that the two narratives intertwine is cleverly done. With some swearing in the dialogue, and many bleak events, it's suitable for older readers, of at least 13.

2. [Penguin website](#)

Powerful, compassionate and ultimately hopeful. Observer

WINNER OF THE COSTA CHILDREN'S BOOK AWARD 2021 – a trailblazing novel about two teenagers from opposite worlds; *The Crossing* is a profound story of hope, grief, and the very real tragedies of the refugee crisis.

The sea carries our pain. The stars carry our future.

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?

3. Google AI – AI Overview

The Crossing by Manjeet Mann is a powerful young adult novel in verse following two teenagers—Natalie in Dover and Sammy in Eritrea—whose lives converge through grief and the refugee crisis. Natalie, grieving her mother, swims the Channel, while Sammy flees brutal conscription, both seeking hope. Their stories interlink tragically, highlighting themes of empathy and loss.

Key Plot Points and Characters

- **Natalie (Nat):** A 16-year-old living in Dover struggling with the death of her mother, a former refugee supporter. Her father is financially stressed, and her brother Ryan joins a far-right group. Natalie, a talented swimmer, finds refuge in training to swim the English Channel.
- **Samuel (Sammy):** An 18-year-old Eritrean forced to flee his home after his father is murdered by the authoritarian regime. He endures a brutal, dangerous journey towards Europe to escape forced military service, leaving his mother and sister behind.
- **The Intersection:** Their stories intersect when Natalie sees Sammy on a news report, establishing a long-distance connection. Natalie continues her swimming training, eventually linking her personal loss and charity efforts to the refugee crisis.
- **Themes:** The book explores the refugee crisis, empathy, grief, and the stark contrast between different worlds. It shows that despite different backgrounds, humanity connects us, as Natalie and Sammy both grapple with unbearable loss.

The narrative alternates between their perspectives, creating a fast-paced, emotional story that delves into the harsh realities of those searching for a safer, better life