



# HOPE

A STUDY GUIDE BY KATY MARRINER



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## Introduction

This study guide to accompany *Hope* – a film from Flying Carpet Films in association with Gecko Films, has been written for secondary students. It provides information and suggestions for learning activities in English, History, Politics and Religious Education.

## About *Hope*

### The SIEV-X

The greatest maritime catastrophe off Australian shores since World War Two occurred in 2001. It is estimated that 146 children, 142 women and 65 men lost their lives when their boat sank. The boat has come to be called SIEV-X. SIEV is the acronym for Suspected Illegal Entry Vessel, used by the Australian Defence Force since 2001 for intercepted refugee boats. The X stands for unknown.

On 18 October 2001, a wooden fishing boat departed from Bandar Lampung, Indonesia. The passengers, mostly refugees from Saddam Hussein's Iraq, were in search of somewhere safe to live.

The Australian Government's introduction of Temporary Protection Visas (TPV) in 1999 had ruled out family reunions for onshore refugees. TPVs created a new market for people smugglers – the women and children who were desperate to be reunited with husbands and fathers. In the time honoured tradition of this kind of migration, the men had set out ahead of their families intending

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to send for them once they had been granted asylum. This is why the SIEV-X was crowded with women and children.

At approximately 3pm on 19 October 2001, the boat began to sink in international waters inside the Australian aerial border protection surveillance zone. The Australian

Government still denies that this was the case.

It was not until the next day that an Indonesian fishing boat rescued forty-four survivors. They were taken to Jakarta but refused to disembark until UN officials arrived. The survivors feared for their lives given the well-established rumours that



**THE GREATEST MARITIME  
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OCCURRED IN 2001.**

ALL IMAGES OF KATE DURHAM'S PAINTINGS HAVE BEEN USED WITH HER PERMISSION.

Indonesian authorities were working hand in glove with the people smugglers. Another survivor was rescued later bringing the total number of survivors to forty-five.

Public debate in Australia at the time of the sinking of the SIEV-X, named boat people as ‘queue jumpers’ who were evading the Australian Government’s selection process. Days after the disaster, when the story was reported by the Australian media, then Prime Minister John Howard stated that the disaster had nothing to do with Australia because the boat sank in ‘Indonesian waters’. A report presented to Parliament in early 2002, did not find considerable flaws in the government’s response to SIEV-X. The report did recommend an investigation into the government’s disruption activities, expressed surprise

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that the failure to spot the SIEV-X had not resulted in any reviews of intelligence procedures and called for a renewed prioritization on the safety of lives at sea.

Some believe that the accident was caused by ruthless people smugglers, who wanted to maximize profits by disregarding the boat’s load limit. Then there are those who argue that the boat was deliberately sabotaged to deter the people smuggling trade from Indonesia to Australia. While this theory is only speculation, at the time of the incident the Australian Government, with the assistance of special units of Indonesian police, had initiated

a covert disruption program to target Indonesian people smugglers. There is no proven link between this program and the sinking of the SIEV-X.

Six years after the SIEV-X tragedy, the Australian Government still refuses to release the names of the victims, arguing that to do so may compromise intelligence sources.

## Amal Basry

‘My name [is] Amal – in English it means hope.’

Amal Basry’s Shiite family suffered under Saddam Hussein’s regime. One of Amal’s brothers had been murdered for not fighting against Iran; another was killed in the Gulf War; a brother-in-law was murdered for plotting against Hussein and her husband Abbas had been arrested and tortured.

The family had fled from Iraq to Iran in 1997 but life was still difficult. Iraqi refugees are ‘accepted’ but have no rights as citizens. Australia offered the opportunity for a new future for the Basry family. Abbas travelled to Australia in January 2000 but the introduction of TPVs meant that his wife and teenage sons could not follow him to safety. He spent eight months in the Woomera Detention Centre before settling in Melbourne on a TPV.



When Amal decided to make the journey to Australia, she only had enough money for two fares. Her older son Ahmed, offered to stay behind in Iran. Amal travelled from Iran to Australia, via Malaysia and Indonesia, with her teenage son Amjed.

Amal was one of the forty-five refugees who survived the SIEV-X disaster. She spent twenty-two hours in the water, much of it at night. Amal believes that she survived because she spent the night holding on to the body of a woman who had drowned. While she was in the water, Amal did not know if Amjed was alive or dead. When Amal was rescued she discovered that her son was not among the survivors. Amal convinced the fishermen to continue the search and her son and ten others were found clinging to a small piece of wood.

Amal and Amjed returned to Indonesia where they stayed for seven months while authorities

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decided what to do with them. The majority of survivors were sent to Scandinavia and New Zealand. The Australian Government accepted seven of the survivors.

When Amal finally arrived in Australia, she decided that it was her responsibility to tell people the story of the victims of the SIEV-X. While her status in Australia was not secure, Amal did not let a TPV stand in the way of speaking out.

Amal, Abbas and Amjed were given permanent protection visas in 2005.

On 18 March 2006, Amal Basry lost her three-year battle with breast cancer.

## Steve Thomas

Steve Thomas (below) began his working life with an Honours Degree in Science. He taught in England and Jamaica before turning to formal investigative work with the Commission for Racial Equality in the UK. His documentary career began when he moved to Australia and worked for Open Channel. Thomas has written, directed and produced numerous independent documentaries over the last fifteen years for television and festival release. His documentary credits include *The Hillmen: A Soccer Fable* (1995), *Errands of Mercy* (1998), *Least Said, Soonest Mended* (1999) and *Welcome to Woomera* (2004). He is



currently working as a lecturer in documentary at The Film and TV School of the Victorian College of the Arts.

Thomas met Amal Basry at an exhibition of paintings by artist and activist Kate Durham, in which Durham imagines the sinking of the SIEV-X. The speech that Amal made that evening about her experiences on the SIEV-X convinced Thomas that someone needed to film Amal's story.

The film he made with producer Sue Brooks (director of *Road to Nowhere* [1997] and *Japanese Story* [2003]) is called *Hope*.

### Using *Hope* in the classroom

Teachers may select from the following activities to support students' viewing and close analysis of *Hope*.

### Before viewing *Hope*

- Write a list of all the things that you are free to do.

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- How would you feel if you lost these freedoms?
- People sometimes use the statement 'It's a free country.' What do you think this statement means? Discuss your ideas with someone else, and then write an answer to this question.
- What freedoms do you have because you live in Australia? Do you think Australia is a 'free country'? Discuss your ideas with someone else, and then write an answer to this question.
- There are many reasons why people are forced to leave their homeland as refugees. Refugees are usually fleeing because

of a well-founded fear of specific kinds of persecution related to their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. The persecution is usually a serious punishment or some significant disadvantage inflicted by a government or by individuals or a group that the government cannot or will not control.

- Use the internet and other print texts to define the following terms:
  - Asylum Seeker
  - Refugee
  - Authorized and Unauthorized Arrivals
  - Onshore Refugees
  - 'Illegals'
  - Immigrant Detention Centre
  - Mandatory Detention
  - Temporary Protection Visa (TPV)
  - Permanent Protection Visa (PPV)
- Use Article 14 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights to discuss whether or not 'boatpeople' such as the passengers on the SIEV-X are 'illegals'.
- Use the internet to investigate the nature of everyday life for Iraqi refugees in Iran. As a class, discuss your findings and arrive at an



understanding of why people like Amal, Abbas and Amjed risked everything to come to Australia.

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## After viewing *Hope*

- Allow students to share their personal impressions of Amal.
- What are the central themes of *Hope*?
- Why make such a film? Visit the film's website at <<http://www.hopedocumentary.com.au>> to locate information that will further your knowledge and understanding of the filmmaker's commitment to telling Amal's story and the story of the sinking of the SIEV-X.
- What tagline would you use to promote *Hope*?
- Design an A5 that would be used to advertise *Hope*. Show students examples of these flyers. As a class, discuss the format, purpose, written language and visual language of this type of publication.
- Locate Iraq, Iran, Malaysia, Indonesia and Christmas Island on a map of the world.

Use the information explained in *Hope* to trace Amal's journey from her home to Australia.

## Close Analysis

### SIEV-X

- Visit <<http://sievx.com>>. The website archives primary and secondary source material related to the SIEV-X disaster. The site is maintained by Marg Hutton. Hutton has been independently researching the sinking of SIEV-X since May 2002 and is now a Ph.D. candidate at La Trobe University working on a doctoral thesis on the subject.
- The four year anniversary of the SIEV-X disaster is a chance for Steve Thomas to meet some of the other survivors who were given entry to Australia. Thomas

comments, 'Life goes on, although it's not a matter of forgetting' as he learns of their loss and their decision to move on. What does their ability to start again tell us about the human spirit?

- Use online news services to research the stories of other survivors of the SIEV-X.
- Use online newspaper clippings services to locate cartoons about the sinking of the SIEV-X. One of the most recent cartoons titled '353 Pacific Solutions' by Spooner was published in *The Age* on 12 October 2007. Ask students to use their knowledge of the issue to analyse the way visual language is used to inform, expose and persuade.
- The SIEV-X memorial on



the shores of Lake Burley Griffin features a pole for each of the men, women and children who drowned in the disaster. Every pole depicts an Australian motif or symbol. The memorial was created by groups and individuals from all over Australia. A nametag on the pole identifies the victim. Many of the poles are labelled 'unknown mother' or 'unknown child'.

- The memorial was installed in September 2007 as part of the sixth anniversary commemorations and was scheduled to be dismantled in November. The organizers were granted an extension to keep the memorial in place. Federal Territories Minister Jim Lloyd said the memorial devalues other permanent monuments located in the area. He has called it 'protest art'. The community groups that worked collaboratively to establish the memorial believe that it recognizes a significant event in the history of Australia and is a fitting way of remembering the lives that were lost. They refute

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the claim that the memorial's purpose is political.

- View images of the memorial at <http://www.sievxmemorial.com>. Short videos about the memorial can also be found on YouTube. Read recent news articles about the memorial. Do you think the memorial should be dismantled? Recall other memorials that you may have seen or visited. Why do they exist? Why do we honour such sites? Should we memorialize social injustices and tragedies? Does remembering make us a better and stronger community?

## Amal Basry

- Compile a list of adjectives that describe Amal's character traits. Link these adjectives to

moments in *Hope*.

- 'I lose [lost] something in the ocean.'

'I didn't lose my body. I didn't lose my soul. But I feel I lose [lost] something.'

'I can't forget anything.'

Use these quotations to initiate a discussion of how Amal's life was marked by the sinking of the SIEV-X.

- Spend time as a class discussing:
  - Amal's personal fight to reunite her family
  - Amal's way of coping with the consequences of the SIEV-X disaster
  - Amal's battle against cancer
- 'I asked my god, why am I still alive?'

'So that's why I still talk about the accident. Sometimes I feel I have [a] big responsibility. Because I saw everything.'

We see Amal share her memories of the sinking of the SIEV-X on several occasions. What does *Hope* tell us about Amal's work as an advocate for the victims of the SIEV-X? What does Amal want to achieve by telling her story? How do others react to Amal's descriptions of her experience?

The issue of survival guilt is



common in cases of severe trauma. Where their survival seems to have been largely by chance, survivors often feel guilty for surviving and even claim that it would have been better if they died too. Some survivors either refuse to talk about their traumatic experiences or they feel compelled to talk about it.

- 'I'm a free woman in a free country.'

What does *Hope* tell us about Amal's opinion of Australian democracy?

- 'Am I going to have home again?'

What do we learn about Amal's longing for home?

- Why does Amal want to return to Jakarta? When she does arrive, Amal discovers that she is on a 'blacklist'. Amal continues on to Singapore and Steve Thomas is left to retrace Amal's journey. What do the scenes that show Thomas fulfilling Amal's wishes make you think and feel?

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- Before Amal left for the Middle East to visit her family, she expressed a wish to be buried in Iraq should something happen. On her return, she wanted to end her days in Australia. What does this change of heart tell us about Amal, her perception of Iraq and her sense of Australia as home?
- What does *Hope* tell us about Amal's husband Abbas and her son Amjed?
- What do Amal's home movies tell us about Amal's family?
- What contribution did Amal make to Australian society?
- Read 'Amal Basry's Long Journey Finds Home' by Arnold Zable, published in *The Age* on 21 March 2006.

## Kate Durham

Kate Durham pledged to complete 353 paintings, one for every person who died on the SIEV-X. Her exhibition of the paintings, titled 'And everyone was an optimist' was dedicated to Amal.

- Visit <<http://www.katedurham.com>> to find out more about Kate Durham's work as an artist and an activist. View images of the paintings from Durham's SIEV-X exhibition.
- Visit <<http://www.hopedocumentary.com.au>> to view a video interview with Kate Durham.
- 'You just think there is no more punishment that you could cram into this person's life.'





*How is it that here I am? She's nice to me and yet she – she could feel very resentful, if she wanted, of someone who has never had any serious misfortune in her life – me.*

What does *Hope* tell us about Kate Durham, about her relationship with Amal and about her response to the sinking of the SIEV-X?

- Amal tells Kate Durham, 'Your pictures talk.' Recall and discuss Amal's responses to Durham's paintings.
- Why is Kate Durham's documentation of the SIEV-X story important?
- 'We don't want our artists to be lecturing us about what's wrong with the world. We want to be transported to another world.' This statement is made by a character in Stephen Sewell's play *It Just Stopped* (2006). Do you agree with this statement? What do you think Kate Durham would say in response to such a

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position? Find out more about her role as an activist.

## Production Values

- Use a table to record details about the production values of *Hope*.
- Examine the opening and closing sequence of the documentary. *Hope* begins with Amal walking along an inner-city beach. The documentary ends with information about Amal's family. What are the filmmaker's intentions?
- Steve Thomas narrates the documentary. Discuss the role of the narrator in *Hope*.
- 'I started out making a film about Amal and ended up

making a film with Amal.' What moments in *Hope* confirm this to be the case?

- What part does music play in *Hope*? Given the chance, what music would you use to narrate the story?
- As a class, discuss the challenges of telling Amal's story.

## Analytic Responses

- 'Amal Basry is a courageous woman.' What moments of *Hope* highlight this claim to be true?
- 'Amal never gave up hope.' Discuss.
- 'Amal's story reminds us that refugees are ordinary people who have experienced extraordinary events.' Discuss.
- '*Hope* shows us how we can become a more just and compassionate society.' Discuss.
- As a class, debate whether 'Australia should abolish Temporary Protection Visas.'

## What if?

Read the following scenario to students. Ask students to share their answer to each question before continuing to the next.

- You are an Iraqi refugee living in Iran. Your husband rings



from Australia with the news that his TPV means he cannot send for the rest of the family. What would you do?

- Your husband sends money. You make contact with a people smuggler. There is enough money to pay for two fares to Australia. Who will remain in Iran, you, your twenty year old daughter, your sixteen year old son or your seven year old son? Should any of you go at all?
- You are a refugee. You are about to board a 'people smuggling' boat to travel from Indonesia to Australia. You discover the boat has no radar, few provisions and is overcrowded with other passengers. Do you get on board?

Read the following scenario to students. Ask students to share their answer to each instruction before continuing to the next.

- Your life is in danger. You cannot stay in your homeland. You must travel to a place where you will seek asylum. Write a list of the things that you will take with you.
- You are allowed to take a bag as big as your school backpack. You cannot take anything that doesn't fit inside the backpack. Revise the list that you have already made.
- You are packed and ready to leave. You are told that you can only take one item. What do you decide to take?
- What items do you think would assist refugees to survive a trip over land

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and water and support a successful claim for asylum in another country?

## Writing a Picture Storybook

Your task is to create an original picture storybook.

### Subject

Your picture storybook could tell a story about refugees or asylum seekers.

Or

Your picture storybook could tell a story about one of the concepts that we have explored by discussing the issue of refugees and asylum seekers such as freedom, power and powerlessness, prejudice or acceptance.

What is the subject of your story?

### Audience

Who is your target audience?

What are the reading abilities of this age group?

What lessons or morals may be suitable for this age group?

### Plot

Write the text of your story. Give your story a title.

Submit a synopsis of your subject, plot and audience.

### Layout and Illustrations

What font and size will you use for the text?

What size and shape will the pages be?

How will you create the illustrations?

Will you use colour or will you use only black and white?

Submit the storyboard handout for assessment.

Design a front cover and a back cover.

Write a blurb for the back cover.

### The final production

You will need to decide on the format of your book.

Will you use a spiral notebook or a blank journal? Or will you use individual pages and then bind your book?

Your book will be read by your peers and by primary school students. It must be sturdy and durable.

Remember to leave a generous margin, especially at the spine edge of the page.

Decide whether you want to dedicate the book to anyone.

Include publication details on one of the opening pages of your book.

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## Going Further

- Invite a spokesperson from an organization providing support for refugee communities to speak to the class.
- Learn more about Australia's role as a refugee resettlement country by accessing the Refugee Council of Australia's website at <<http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au>>.
- Research a country's history of migration to Australia as refugees. Prepare a multimedia presentation that explains your findings.
- Visit Melbourne's Immigration Museum in person or online at <<http://museumvictoria.com.au/ImmigrationMuseum/>> to

view exhibitions about refugee migration to Australia and learn more about the cultures that are now part of Australia's social fabric.

- Working in small teams, use online news services and newspapers to locate news stories about people who have sought asylum in Australia. Read the articles and discuss the dimensions of each story. Draw conclusions about the role of the media in influencing community perceptions about refugees.
- Visit <<http://www.multiculturalaustralia.edu.au>>.
- Visit the 'Hotwords' section of the web site. Read the information on the page. Explore the hotwords that are relevant to our study of refugees and asylum seekers.
- Visit the 'Activities' section of the web site. Complete the quizzes.
- Visit the 'e-Learning' section of the web site and view paintings by and about refugees.
- When you have finished exploring this web site use a search engine to find other web sites about refugees and asylum seekers. Make a list of three websites that



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you think are interesting and explain why each web site is worth visiting.

- Visit the school or local public library and borrow a novel that tells the story of a refugee. Write a brief review. Post your review on the school library page of the intranet.
- Hannie Rayson's play *Two Brothers* (2005) is based on the sinking of the SIEV-X. The play offers a contemporary examination of the debates surrounding refugees and asylum seekers.
- In August 2001, then Prime Minister John Howard's turning back of the 400 Afghans on board the *Tampa* divided the country and contributed to his electoral victory in November of the same year. Locate print and electronic media coverage of the incident. Use this information to complete a class investigation.



- Armin Greder's picture storybook *The Island* (2007) is for older children, adolescents and adults. It tells the story of a foreigner who washes up on the shore of an island. The islanders take care of the man but when they realize he is not like them,

their fear creates conflict within the community about the man's place within their society. *The Island* explores xenophobic attitudes towards refugees and migrants.

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