

# Refugee Shabbat 2025 Book and Film Recommendations

## Books

1. [Everyone Who is Gone is Here: The United States, Central America, and the Making of a Crisis](#) by Jonathan Blitzer intertwines a comprehensive history of modern U.S. border policy and involvement in Central America with stories of the lives of real human beings impacted by this cycle of political conflict and violence. Thorough, clear, and humanizing, *Everyone Who is Gone is Here* is a must read for a deeper understanding of what created the current immigration “crisis” and its ongoing impact on the lives of so many looking for safety.
2. [All Your Children, Scattered](#) by Beata Umubyeyi Mairesse, translated by Alison Anderson. A novel spanning generations and continents, *All Your Children, Scattered* explores the long-term impact of violence and displacement years after the Tutsi genocide in Rwanda. This beautiful novel follows three generations of family as they “try to reconnect with one another, rebuild broken links, and find their place in today’s world” (Europa Editions).
3. [The Ungrateful Refugee](#) by Dina Nayeri interweaves her own experiences as a child refugee from Iran with the stories of other refugees and asylum seekers in recent years. In this memoir, Nayeri confronts notions like “the swarm,” and, on the other hand, “good” immigrants, and challenges readers to rethink how we talk about the refugee crisis.
4. [The Refugees](#) by Viet Thanh Nguyen, author of the Pulitzer Prize winning novel *The Sympathizer*, comes a collection of short stories set across Vietnam and California intimately depicting the lives of those impacted and displaced by the Vietnam War. Nguyen deftly explores questions of home, family, immigration, and the American experience.

## Films and Videos

1. [For Sama](#) - Most of what we hear about refugees focuses on what happens after they leave their country of origin. *For Sama* instead shows the desperate struggle to stay. Filming her surroundings in Syria as Aleppo fell into increasing violence and conflict, this documentary shows Waad al-Kateab's life happening – falling in love, getting married, and having children – with the backdrop of war raging in the background. A love letter to her daughter and to her home of Aleppo, *For Sama* captures the impossible

choices people face when having to choose between home and survival. Content note – contains graphic images.

2. [Stranger at the Gate](#) - A story of redemption and the transformative power of compassion, the Oscar-nominated documentary short *Stranger at the Gate* tells the story of a former U.S. marine who goes from planning a terrorist attack on a local mosque to becoming a beloved member of the community thanks to the warmth and love shown to him by a family of Afghan refugees.
3. [Encanto](#) - After conflict and unrest drives them from their homeland, the Madrigal family is endowed with magical abilities that allow them to take care of themselves and their community. When their powers mysteriously begin to fade, Mirabel—the only family member without a special gift—takes it upon herself to restore their magic before it's lost forever. Wrapped up in a colorful Disney musical, at the heart of *Encanto* is the very real fear of being displaced again and how to heal from the trauma of displacement.