

From One Reader to Another

An invitation to read internationally

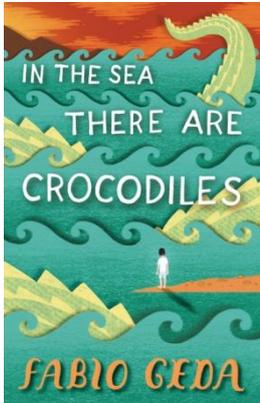
To celebrate the tenth anniversary of its Writers in Translation programme, English PEN is teaming up with The Reading Agency and Free Word to invite book groups to read and discuss titles from the World Bookshelf, a unique online showcase of the most exciting contemporary literature available in English translation.

There are over 100 books on the World Bookshelf but here is a suggested reading list to get you started:

- *The Yacoubian Building* by Alaa Al Aswany (Egypt, Arabic)
- *Dreams from the Endz* by Faïza Guène (France, French)
- *Arab Jazz* by Karim Miské (France, French)
- *Compartment No.6* by Rosa Liksom (Finland, Finnish)
- *The Lady from Tel Aviv* by Rabai al-Madhoun (Palestine, Arabic)
- *Vango: Between Sky and Earth* by Timothée de Fombelle (France, French)
- *The Devil's Workshop* by Jachym Topol (Czech Republic, Czech)
- *In the Sea There Are Crocodiles* (for younger readers) by Fabio Geda (Italy, Italian)
- *Bronze and Sunflower* (for younger readers) by Cao Wenxuan (China, Mandarin)
- *How the Soldier Repairs the Gramophone* by Saša Stanišić (Bosnia-Herzegovina, German)
- *The Lights of Pointe-Noire* by Alain Mabanckou (Congo, French)
- *The Goddess Chronicle* by Natsuo Kirino (Japan, Japanese)
- *Allah Is Not Obligated* by Ahmadou Kourouma (Ivory Coast, French)
- *The Iraqi Christ* by Hassan Blasim (Iraq, Arabic)
- *Morning Sea* by Margaret Mazzantini (Italy, Italian)
- *Sworn Virgin* by Elvira Dones (Albania, Italian)
- *A Perfect Crime* by A Yi (China, Mandarin)
- *The End of Days* by Jenny Erpenbeck (Germany, German)
- *The Sound of Things Falling* by Juan Gabriel Vásquez (Colombia, Spanish)
- *The Whispering City* by Sara Moliner (Spain, Spanish)

Share your thoughts about these books by leaving a comment on the website or by getting in touch on Twitter: @englishpen, @readingagency, @FreeWordCentre

In the Sea There Are Crocodiles by Fabio Geda



In a book that takes a true story and shapes it into a beautiful piece of fiction, Italian novelist Fabio Geda describes ten-year-old Enaiatollah's remarkable five-year journey from Afghanistan to Italy where he finally managed to claim political asylum. Enaiatollah's ordeal took him through Iran, Turkey and Greece, working on building sites in order to pay people-traffickers, and enduring the physical misery of dangerous border crossings squeezed into the false bottoms of lorries or trekking across inhospitable mountains. A series of almost implausible strokes of fortune enabled him to get to Turin, Italy, and meet Fabio Geda, with whom he became friends. The result of their friendship is this unique book in which Enaiatollah's engaging, moving voice is brilliantly captured by Geda's subtly simple storytelling.

About the author

Born in Turin in 1972, Fabio Geda is an Italian novelist who works with marginalised children. He writes for several Italian magazines and newspapers, and teaches creative writing in the most famous Italian school of storytelling (Scuola Holden, in Turin). *In the Sea There Are Crocodiles* was his first book to be translated into English.



About the translator

Howard Curtis translates from French, Italian and Spanish. His translation of *In the Sea There Are Crocodiles* won the 2013 Marsh Award for Children's Literature in Translation.



For discussion

1. Overall, do you find Enaiatollah's story uplifting or heartbreaking? Is any of it hard to comprehend?
2. If Enaiatollah's story was published as a non-fiction memoir, do you think your opinion of the story would be different? Would you have approached it differently?
3. Despite the novel being split into sections named after the countries Enaiatollah has lived in, he says that he 'doesn't want to talk about places. They aren't important'. If place and belonging mean nothing to Enaiatollah, what do you think drives him and his journeys? Is it freedom, friendship, safety?
4. Discuss Enaiatollah's relationship with time – e.g. the episode with his first watch and the fact that he doesn't know his true birthday. Is time relative or constant?
5. Discuss Enaiatollah's use of language, particularly his similes which sometimes draw on his homeland ('tall as a goat') and sometimes from his newer experiences (references to baseball and McDonald's). How do our experiences affect the way we use language?