

# The **SUNFLOWERS** BABUSHKA PLANTED Educator's Guide



## ABOUT THE BOOK

When Tania was six years old, she and her parents fled Ukraine during World War II. For years they were refugees in Europe, displaced and without permanent residence. Finally, they found safe housing in a refugee camp, but what about home? Day by day, they stitched together new lives, but it wasn't until a memory of Tania's babushka and her beloved sunflowers that the family at last began to rebuild a sense of home.

This true account about debut author Beatrice Rendón's grandmother offers a universal story of hope for refugees around the world.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Beatrice Rendón was born and raised in the Midwest. She grew up hearing her family's stories and how their

resourcefulness and resilience helped them survive. She is a former classroom teacher and a lifelong lover of children's literature. She lives in Minneapolis with her husband and their cat. This is her first book.



## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Originally from Poland, Olga Baumert studied fine art and jewelry-making before moving to the UK and earning a degree in graphic design and illustration. Her art is inspired by great

stories, interactions between people and nature, and open landscapes. Olga lives in Leicestershire, England, where she uses a mix of traditional techniques, including gouache, watercolor, acrylics, and colored pencils, to make her art.

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## BEFORE READING

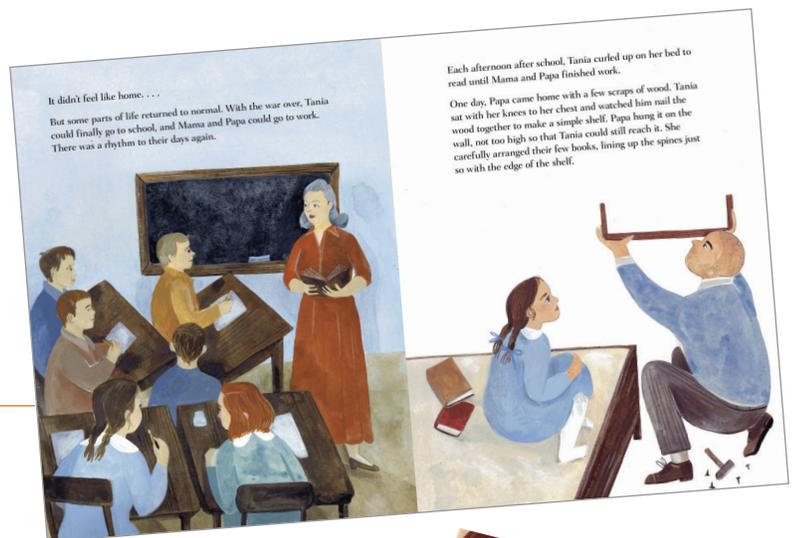
Look at the cover and the title.

1. Have you ever planted seeds? What do they need to grow?
2. *Babushka* is a word for grandmother in Ukrainian, Russian, and Polish. What other words for grandma do you know?
3. Look at the expression on the girl's face. What do you think she might be thinking about or feeling?



## DURING READING

1. How does the illustrator show what life was like for Tania, Mama, and Papa during the war?
2. After the war, the text says, "there was a rhythm to their days again." What do you think the author means by rhythm here?
3. Why do Mama and Papa make things for their home instead of buying them?



## AFTER READING

1. This story begins with a prologue, which is a kind of introduction to a book. In this book, the prologue is about sunflower seeds in autumn. How does the prologue connect to other parts of the story?
2. After the war, Tania doesn't feel at home in the little room until Mama and Papa make a shelf, a sofa, curtains, and some other small touches. Why do you think these changes help make Tania feel more at home? What makes you feel at home in a place?
3. Why do you think Mama chose sunflowers as the image to paint on the curtains?



## ACTIVITY IDEAS

### UPCYCLING PROJECT

- Mama and Papa make their little room a home by using the few materials they have to create something new—like the sofa made by pushing a bed against the wall and adding pillows sewn from flour sacks. Mama’s curtains are fabric scraps painted with egg dye. Your challenge is to create something new out of materials you already have. Ask an adult to help you find things like cardboard boxes, milk containers, used paper, crayons or markers, scissors, and glue. Can you make something useful, something beautiful, or both? A vase for flowers? A picture frame? A card game? Use your imagination!



### MEMORY POSTER

- The sunflowers Mama paints remind the whole family of happy memories of Babushka and their old home. What is something that makes you happy or reminds you of a special memory? Create a poster featuring those joyful or hopeful images and keep it by your bed, your desk, or somewhere else where you spend a lot of time. (Make sure you have an adult’s permission before hanging anything on a wall.) You could also make a poster for someone else—all of us can benefit from a sign of hope!



### MEANING OF HOME

- The characters in this story have to leave home, spend many years away from home, and create a new home. For Tania’s family, sunflowers are an important symbol of home. What does “home” mean to you? Write a short poem describing what home feels like, looks like, sounds like, smells like, or tastes like. Remember that home can be a place, but it doesn’t have to be—it can also be a memory, a feeling, or a person.

