

# The Day War Came

by Nicola Davies

For Voices

This story has been broken down into a performance poem for a classroom of children, to be read/spoken or dramatised as preferred.

## Part 1

**Voice 1:** The day war came there  
were flowers on the window sill  
and my father sang my baby brother  
back to sleep.

My mother made me breakfast, kissed my  
nose

**Voice 2:** and walked with me to school.

That morning I learned about volcanoes.  
I sang a song about how tadpoles  
turn at last to frogs.  
I drew a picture of a bird.

Then, just after lunch, war came.

**Voice 3:** At first, just like a spattering of hail,  
a voice of thunder...

then all smoke and fire and noise that I didn't understand.

It came across the playground.  
It came into my teacher's face.

**Voice 4:** It brought the roof down  
and turned my town to rubble.

I can't say the words that tell you  
about the blackened hole that had been my home.

All I can say is this:

**All:** war took everything,

**All:** war took everyone.

I was ragged, bloody, all alone.

## Part 2

**Voice 5:** I ran. Walked over fields and roads and mountains  
in the cold and mud and rain;  
rode in the back of trucks, in buses;  
went on a boat that leaked and almost sank;  
then up a beach where shoes lay empty in the sand.

**Voice 6:** I ran until I couldn't run  
until I reached a row of huts  
and found a corner with a dirty blanket  
and a door that rattled in the wind.

**Voice 7:** But war had followed me.  
It was underneath my skin,  
behind my eyes,  
and in my dreams.  
It had taken possession of my heart.

**Voice 8:** I walked and walked to try to drive war out of myself,  
to try to find a place it hadn't reached.  
But war was in the way that doors shut when I came down the street.  
It was in the way the people didn't smile, and turned away.

**Voice 9:** I came to a school.  
I looked in through the window.  
They were learning all about volcanoes,  
singing and drawing birds.

**Voice 10:** I went inside.  
My footsteps echoed in the hall.  
I pushed the door and faces turned  
towards me but the teacher didn't smile.  
She said, Voice 10: "There is no room for you,  
you see. There is no chair for you to sit on.  
You have to go away."

**Voice 11:** And then I understood that  
war had got here too.

### **Part 3**

**Voice 12:** I turned around and went back to the hut, the corner  
and the blanket, and crawled inside.

It seemed that war had taken all the world  
and all the people in it.

**Voice 13:** The door banged. I thought it was the wind – but a child's voice spoke.  
"I bought you this," he said "so you can come to school."  
It was a chair.

**Voice 14:** A chair for me to sit on and learn about volcanoes, sing and draw birds.  
And drive the war out of my heart.  
He smiled and said, "My friends have brought theirs too,  
so all the children here can come to school."

**Voice 15:** Out of every hut a child came  
and we walked together,

on a road all lined with chairs.

**All Voices:** Pushing back the war with every step.

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