



## Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Define testimony
- Explain what it means to be a refugee
- Build on their ability to take on multiple perspectives
- Understand important themes when learning about refugees such as freedom, dignity, resilience, and perseverance

# Making a New Life: The Courage of a Refugee

## Pre-VFT Activity

Students will prepare for the *Making a New Life: The Courage of a Refugee* Virtual Field Trip by exploring the complexity of who refugees are, how people become refugees, and the valuable lessons everyone can learn by working to understand how others experience the world and events that shape their lives. Students will begin by identifying what it means to be a refugee and then take part in a perspective-building strategy that helps them reflect on the power of empathy, asking questions, and connecting with issues that are shaping the world around them. Through the activities, students will continue to build their understanding of the power testimony has to amplify the voice of others, create connections between people and groups, and empower individuals to be positive changemakers.

## Target Audience

Grades: 3-5

## Pre-VFT Procedure

1. As class begins, share with students that today they will be learning more about the experiences of refugees and how the stories of others can have an important impact on how we see the world and interact with others.
2. Next, make sure that each student has a copy of the **Refugee Write Around** handout.

**Note:** *Discussing topics about the refugee experience with younger students might seem challenging because of the complexity and sensitivities of displacement and its impact. To support the discussion and prepare students for the stories in the Virtual Field Trip, use this strategy to encourage students to share what they know, questions they have, and connections they can make.*

3. During the **Refugee Write Around**, students will first work independently to create connections they might have to

## Materials

- Refugee Write Around
- Refugee definition
- Unveiling Stories prompts
- [Fatima Mirzakhail Video](#) (1:30)

the term “Refugee.” Within the circle, students can write down a few of the following connections that come to mind:

- Similar words that come to mind
  - An image that represents the word
  - Questions that you have
  - Where you have seen the word or examples in books, TV, movies, etc.
4. After students have had a few minutes to write down their thoughts, pull the class back together and invite students to share out some of the connections they made. You can do this by writing or projecting a version of the Refugee Write Around on the board.
  5. As students begin to share out, encourage them to build on the thoughts of one another and then discuss what they collectively shared about their understanding and connections to the term “Refugee.”
  6. Next, project the following definition for refugee on the board, “*a person who has been forced to leave their country to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster.*” Ask students to now consider how their connections relate to the definition and if there are any new connections they would like to share. This might also be a time to help contextualize examples used in the definition like war, persecution, and natural disasters.

**Note:** *please also consider that your school or class may have new arrivals/refugees and this topic may be sensitive and need extra preparation and support.*

7. Share with students that there are many reasons why people or groups are forced to leave their homes and live in new places. These events can be scary, and it is important to consider how refugees demonstrate great strength and resolve in the face of adversity as they leave behind their homes and begin life in new places.
8. Next, project the **Unveiling Stories** prompts on the board and have the Fatima Mirzakhail video ready to play. Share with students that they are going to use the prompts as discussion starters to better understand Fatima’s testimony, or story. Explain that a testimony is also a kind

of story in which someone reflects on a life experience, often with the benefit of distance and time, and shares what that experience means to them.

9. During Unveiling Stories, students consider the multiple perspectives in age-appropriate ways with topics associated with the refugee experience, especially ones that uplift and counter traditional narratives.
  - Why does the story matter?
  - What is the impact on others?
  - What is the impact on the world?
  - What is the untold story?
10. After the video is over, invite students to share a few ideas that they had for each of the prompts. As students share out, encourage them to think beyond summarizing what they saw and heard. This is an opportunity to dig deeper by asking questions about the lives of refugees and challenge misconceptions that might exist.
11. As students wrap up their discussion, share that they will now watch the *Making a New Life: The Courage of a Refugee Virtual Field Trip* to learn more about refugees and hear other compelling stories from the past and present.

## Post-VFT Activity

Following the *Making a New Life: The Courage of a Refugee* Virtual Field Trip, students will debrief what they saw in the VFT and make connections to how they can actively support refugees. First, students will independently reflect on the testimonies that were shared within the VFT. This section will also consider ways young people can get involved to show acceptance and respect for refugees and take action to help raise awareness, provide relief, and protect the human rights of refugees.

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## Target Audience

Grades: 3–5

## Materials

- Testimony Reflection handout
- Informing Others handout

## Post-VFT Procedure

1. As the VFT ends, begin with a small-group discussion that gives students a moment to debrief on the virtual field trip and the testimonies they witnessed. Encourage students to discuss with their peers any thoughts, questions, or emotions that are top of mind. As students chat, invite them to share new things they learned or connections they made. These new thoughts can be added to the Refugee Write Around that was used in the Pre-VFT activity.
2. Next, provide students an opportunity for self-reflection and the chance to connect what they just watched to their own lives. Distribute one **Compare and Contrast** handout to each student and allow students a few minutes to write independently. It may be helpful to model similarities and differences in the testimonies using the Venn diagram.

3. Bring the class together for a full-class discussion around the reflection they just completed. Facilitate the discussion with the following questions:
  - Which story do you think had the most impact on you? Why?
  - Why do you think stories are so important to us?
  - What did these stories help teach you about the courage of refugees?
  - How can stories like these help get others to care about the problems refugees face?
4. Next, gather students into groups of 2-3 and distribute the **Informing Others** handout to each student. Explain that now the class has considered the power of stories and learned more information about the refugee experience, they will design a way to share with others what they have learned.
5. Explain the activity to students: They will work together to create a Public Service Announcement (PSA) (in a video, radio broadcast, poster, or other available and approved format) that encourages students at their school to better understand issues facing refugees. To support students, consider reviewing the following questions as a class:
  - Who is your audience? What is the best way to communicate with them? What information do you want to share about refugees so that others can be better informed? How will you share it?
  - What resources do you have to create your message?
6. Next, review the other handouts with students and answer questions they have about the directions. Provide class time for students to work on their PSAs. Additional time may be needed, particularly for more complex projects.
7. When all groups have completed their PSAs, consider the following extension ideas to expand student learning if time permits.
  - Have them present their work to the whole class. Have seated groups work together to informally provide feedback. Remind students the goal is to help each other create effective PSAs, not to criticize.
  - Encourage students to use their classmates' feedback to improve and finalize their PSAs.
  - Discuss with school officials how the students' PSAs can be shared with the student body at the school. Help students launch their PSA campaign.
  - Debrief the activity and how it changed their perspective by learning from the stories of others. If possible, collect feedback from the student body and share it with your students.

## National Frameworks and Standards

### The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework:

D2.Civ.10.6-8: Explain the relevance of personal interests and perspectives, civic virtues, and democratic principles when people address issues and problems in government and civil society.

D4.7.6-8: Assess their individual and collective capabilities to take action to address local, regional, and global problems, taking into account a range of possible levers of power, strategies, and potential outcomes.

D2.Civ.14.6-8: Compare historical and contemporary means of changing societies, and promoting the common good.

D2.Civ.10.9-12: Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interest and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.

D2.Civ.14.9-12: Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights.

D4.7.9-12: Assess options for individual and collective action to address local, regional and global problems by engaging in self-reflection, strategy, identification, and complex causal reasoning.

### Common Core English Language Arts:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.5: Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

**The Willesden Project** is a global initiative that expands the reach of Lisa Jura's story of survival, resilience, and triumph as she struggles to come of age separated from her family during World War II, as originally shared by her daughter, author and concert pianist Mona Golabek, in *The Children of Willesden Lane* books and musical performances. [Learn more at The Willesden Project.](#)



**REFUGEE**



**Refugee:** A person who has been forced to leave their country to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster.



- Why does the story matter?
- What is the impact on others?
- What is the impact on the world?
- What is the untold story?

# Stories Comparison



STUDENT HANDOUT

**Directions:** In each circle, write the name of the speaker and things that are unique to their story. In the center, write the things that they have in common.

A Venn diagram consisting of two large overlapping circles. The left circle has a label 'Name: \_\_\_\_\_' next to it. The right circle has a label 'Name: \_\_\_\_\_' next to it. The overlapping area in the center is empty, intended for students to write commonalities between the two stories.

Reflection Questions:

- Which story do you think had the most impact on you? Why?
- Why do you think stories are so important to us as humans?
- What did these stories help teach you about the strength of refugees?
- How can stories like these help get others to care about the problems refugees face?

# Informing Others



<p><b>Our Message</b> What is the most important thing you want people to know?</p>	
<p><b>Our Audience</b> Who do you think should hear your message?</p>	
<p><b>Information we want others to know</b> What are important parts to include?</p>	
<p><b>How will we get the attention of our audience?</b> What format will you use?  What are appropriate things you can do to make sure people pay attention to the message?</p>	

## Poster Sketch

Use the following block to layout your poster title, information, images, and designs.

# Storyboard for Video



STUDENT HANDOUT

1	2
Image: _____ Text: _____ Text Sound Effects: _____ Music: _____	Image: _____ Text: _____ Text Sound Effects: _____ Music: _____
3	4
Image: _____ Text: _____ Text Sound Effects: _____ Music: _____	Image: _____ Text: _____ Text Sound Effects: _____ Music: _____
5	6
Image: _____ Text: _____ Text Sound Effects: _____ Music: _____	Image: _____ Text: _____ Text Sound Effects: _____ Music: _____