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By Sita Brahmachari



The Power of Empathy: Standing Up for Refugee and Migrant Rights



Seen



&



Heard

Human Rights Education resource 1

Human Rights Education resource 3

The Power of Empathy: Standing Up for Refugee and Migrant Rights

By Sita Brahmachari

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Seen and Heard: Young People's Voices and Freedom of Expression.

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This human rights education resource is one of a set of five, titled *Seen and Heard: Creative Journeys into Children's Rights*, designed to engage, inspire and support young people through creativity and critical thinking. The full set includes:

- Hear Me, See Me: A Creative Introduction to Children's Rights
- In Our Hands: Exploring Freedom of Expression Through Creative Action in Our Communities
- The Power of Empathy: Standing Up for Refugee and Migrant Rights
- Empowerment Through Solidarity for Human Rights
- Global Citizens Take Action: Creative Protest for Change

All five resources can be downloaded for free at <https://seenandheardproject.eu/hre-resources>

This resource is part of the *Seen and Heard: Young People's Voices and Freedom of Expression* – a European co-funded project that supports the empowerment of children and young people, particularly those at risk of exclusion, to exercise their right to freedom of expression through literature, art, creative protest and human rights education.

The project combines research, mentoring and activism to foster youth participation and amplify their voices in public dialogue. It brings together academics, educators, artists, and policymakers from Malta, Germany and Poland to support children aged 10 to 14 to speak out on issues that matter to them. More information: <https://seenandheardproject.eu/>

Project led by the University of Malta and co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



Foreword

It is a pleasure to present *Seen and Heard: Creative Journeys into Children's Rights* – a collection of creative human rights education resources developed to support educators working with children and young people on key themes such as freedom of expression, migration, child rights, solidarity, creative action and protest.

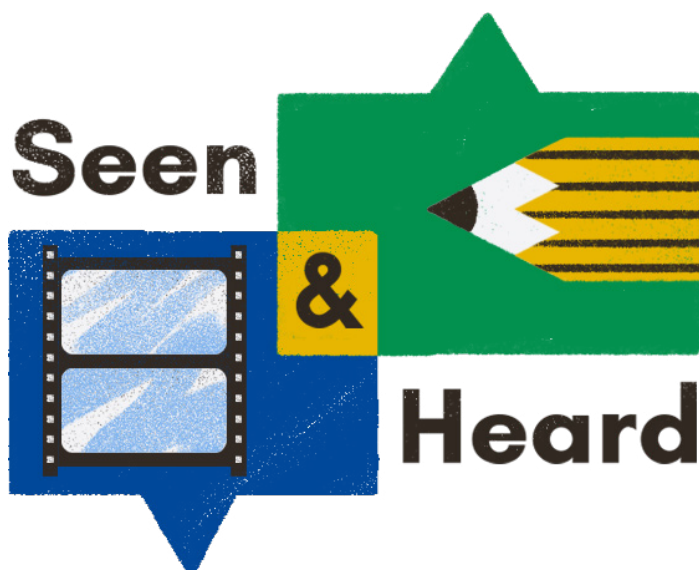
These resources are grounded in a simple but urgent truth: every child has rights – and those rights must be protected. Children are not just future citizens – they are rights-holders here and now. When young people know their rights and are supported to explore and express them, they gain the tools to stand up for themselves and for others.

This set of five resources offers flexible, creative tools to explore human rights through discussion, storytelling, art, drama and reflection – in ways that are both engaging and transformative.

Each activity is designed to take children on a meaningful and imaginative journey into discovering, expressing and defending their rights. We hope they inspire educators to adapt and expand these ideas to suit the needs, interests and possibilities of their own groups. There is no single way to teach human rights – these materials are an open invitation to make the topic your own. Our intention is these activities will support you in creating meaningful learning experiences that leave a positive and lasting impact.

My heartfelt thanks go to Sita Brahmachari, whose longstanding commitment to human rights with young people – in communities, youth theatre, and through her novels – brings these lessons to life with such magic and depth. I am also deeply grateful to Nicky Parker, whose extraordinary editorial hand shaped the materials into something meaningful and usable for every educator. It has been a true privilege to work with you both.

Katarzyna Salejko
Head of Human Rights Education
Amnesty International Poland



Introduction

About human rights education

Human rights education is important at every age. From birth, everyone is entitled to the rights under the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. These international laws are rooted in shared human values, which are, in essence, ideas and feelings that guide how we live well together. Human rights values include fairness, equality, truth and safety.

We all have the right to human rights education. When we know and understand our rights and how they apply in everyday life, we are better able to stand up for ourselves and others. This is just as important for children as it is for adults.

Human rights education involves three dimensions:

- **Learning *about* human rights:** Gaining knowledge about what human rights are, and how they are defined and protected;
- **Learning *through* human rights:** Ensuring that the learning environment and process reflect human rights values – such as participation, respect, freedom of thought and expression. In human rights education, *how* we teach is just as important as *what* we teach;
- **Learning *for* human rights:** Developing the skills, attitudes and values needed to apply human rights in everyday life and to take action, individually or collectively, to promote and defend them.

Safeguarding

As educators we are in 'loco parentis' – acting as trusted guardians for the children and young people in our care. During these workshops, if a student raises a safeguarding concern, follow your school's protocols.

Do all your students know what these protocols are? If not, it might be helpful to talk them through with the whole class in a straightforward and calm way.

Making sure everyone understands who they can talk to and what support is available helps create a safer, more trusting environment for all.

About this resource

These interactive speaking, writing, drawing, crafting, discussion and drama activities focus on a vital human right: the right to claim asylum – and the possibility that every single human being, if placed in a position where safety and home were threatened, might need this right.

Much of what young people see and hear about migrants and asylum seekers is shaped by hostile or negative language. These messages can be absorbed and accepted as truth, often without question.

This resource offers an alternative – encouraging students, their families and educators to shift perspectives, to challenge assumptions, and to step into the lived experiences of those who seek refuge.

Students are invited to walk in someone else's shoes by imagining the journeys of those forced to find safety; carry a torch of empathy; explore the reasons people flee and the support needed to begin again in a new country. These activities also create space for intergenerational dialogue, reflection and shared understanding.

You can work through all the activities as a term-long project, or pick and mix individual activities to suit your available time and students' needs. Each lesson begins with clearly stated learning objectives and resource sheets are provided at the back – feel free to photocopy and adapt as needed for your class.

The methodology underpinning this resource is rooted in the following children's rights:

- Participation
- Freedom of expression
- Equality and non-discrimination
- Education
- Play
- Safe place
- Freedom of thought



Target age range

All activities are suitable for students aged 10 to 14.

Learning objectives

This resource encourages participants to:

- **Explore** why people move or flee their homes and the rights that protect them in such situations, including the right to seek asylum;
- **Develop** empathy for refugees and migrants by engaging with real and imagined experiences;
- **Reflect** critically on how language, media and public discourse shape our attitudes and assumptions about displaced people;

- **Express** their ideas, feelings and knowledge about refugee and migrant rights through creative and participatory activities;
- **Consider** how their own voices and actions can promote dignity, justice and hospitality for others.

Refugee rights at a glance

All children deserve a safe childhood. But, worldwide, 47.2 million children had been displaced due to conflict and violence as of the end of 2023 (UNICEF, 2023)¹. Under international law, all of them, and their families, have the right to seek safety and asylum in another country.

People move for many reasons. It's what human beings have always done in search of a better life, often to escape danger. That danger may be caused by wars, armed conflicts, devastation caused by climate change or persecution. Any of these causes may involve abuses of human rights.

No matter who we are or where we come from, we all have human rights. Refugees, migrants and people seeking asylum also have special protections under international treaties, as well as various regional agreements:

- **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (1948) states that everyone has the right to seek and enjoy asylum in another country to escape persecution;
- **European Convention on Human Rights** (1950) protects the rights of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees throughout their journey and legal process;
- **UN Refugee Convention** (1951 and its 1967 Protocol) protects refugees from being returned to countries where they are at risk of being persecuted;
- **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** (1989) says every child has the right to live in a safe place and be looked after;
- **Migrant Workers Convention** (1990) protects migrants and their families.

Key definitions

Refugee – someone who is forced to flee their home because it is no longer safe – often due to war, violence or climate disasters like floods – and is seeking asylum in another country. There are more than 43 million refugees worldwide (UNHCR, 2024)².

Child refugee – a refugee under the age of 18. There are more than 19 million child refugees worldwide (UNICEF, 2024).

Unaccompanied child refugee – a child who is seeking asylum and is separated from both parents and not in the care of an adult responsible for them. There are more than 153,000 unaccompanied child refugees worldwide (UNHCR, 2023).

¹ For the most up-to-date figures, please refer to UNICEF's official website: <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-migration-and-displacement/displacement/>

² For the most recent data, see UNHCR's Global Trends reports: <https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends>

Asylum – a safe place, often in another country, where someone can live free from danger. We all have the right to seek asylum in times of need.

Asylum seeker – is someone who has asked for protection in another country because of a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm in their home country. This may be due to their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, political opinion, or other threats to their safety and fundamental rights. They are waiting for a decision on their asylum application to find out if they will be legally recognised as a refugee. Seeking asylum is a human right.

Harm or human rights abuses – like violence, persecution or war – if they stay.

Refugee camp – a temporary facility built to accommodate refugees when they have nowhere else to go, offering basic food, shelter and safety.

Internally displaced people – people forced out of their homes but still living inside their own country. There are more than 47 million internally displaced children in the world (UNICEF, 2024).

Migrant – someone who leaves home in search of a better, safer life, often in another country. Many migrants travel with their families and could be in danger if they went back home.

Persecution – cruel treatment of someone just for being who they are – such as being part of a certain faith, culture or LGBTQI community.

Propaganda – when someone tries to influence or twist what you think by using words, pictures or clever designs to make you believe something that may not be true.

Scapegoating – when a person or group is unfairly blamed for a problem they didn't cause, often to shift blame away from those who are actually responsible.

Lesson plans and activities

Lesson 1. Empathy is a superpower

- Activity 1. Empathy is a superpower – speaking, writing and drawing
- Activity 2. Empathy visibility cloak

Lesson 2. The power of words

- Activity 1. Sticks, stones and words
- Activity 2. Migrant, refugee and asylum seeker – what do you think of when you hear these words?
- Activity 3. Navigating language and understanding bias

Lesson 3. The power of arts, crafts and writing

- Activity 1. Wings of change
- Activity 2. Let's talk!
- Activity 3. Draw and write your footprints
- Activity 4. What would you take with you?

Lesson 4. Mapping global classrooms

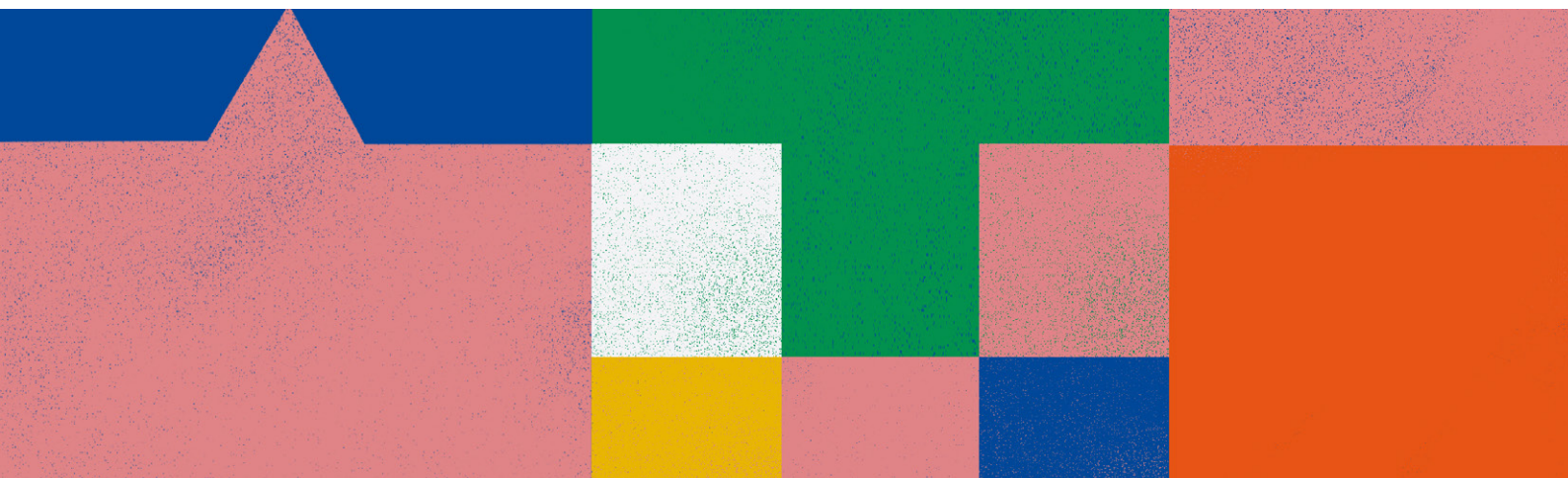
- Activity 1. Moving home
- Activity 2. Classroom migration mapping ceremony

Lesson 5. The power of voice

- Activity 1. Exploring refugee and migrant rights through pictures
- Activity 2. Pack a welcome suitcase

Included in this resource

- Jigsaw of child rights: Simplified 15 groups of child rights (page 29)
- Reading the picture illustrations (page 30)



Lesson 1

Empathy is a superpower

This lesson will help students explore and practise empathy – an invaluable social and communication skill that can enhance understanding of others and how they are feeling. Empathy builds trust, strengthens relationships and helps create a positive, supportive and respectful place, from the classroom and community to the world.



Learning objectives

This lesson encourages participants to:

- Explore what empathy means and how it helps us understand other people's feelings and experiences;
- Describe and reflect on moments when they or others have shown empathy;
- Express empathy through storytelling, drawing and discussion;
- Contribute to a visual empathy display that grows over time and celebrates kindness.



You will need

- Pens and colouring pencils
- Paper

Activity 1

Empathy is a superpower – speaking, writing and drawing



How long will it take?

20-30 minutes



What to do

- Begin by setting the scene and explaining what empathy means. Use the following prompts to guide a short, thoughtful conversation:
 - Have you ever cared so deeply about someone else's story that you cried or laughed out loud? Maybe it was in a book, a film or something you saw happen to a friend.
 - What is that feeling – when someone else's emotions have got inside you?
 - It's called empathy.
 - Empathy is a superpower. It is the special ability to step into someone else's shoes – to see the world through their eyes and feel their emotions.
 - When we feel empathy for someone it often makes us want to reach out and listen, show kindness, and help in some small or larger way, even though we're not in their situation.
 - Our empathy superpower can help us walk in the shoes of other people, see things from a different perspective, imagine what it's like to live their life and feel emotional about another person's story.
- Now ask your students to tell a little story or describe a moment when they felt empathy – or when someone showed empathy to them.
- These can be spoken aloud to a partner or the class or written down.
- Ask each student to draw a picture to illustrate their experience of empathy superpower, whether given or received.

Activity 2

Empathy visibility cloak



How long will it take?

20 minutes (initial set up, with ongoing additions)



What to do

- As the teacher, create an empathy visibility cloak for a classroom display.
- On a large piece of lining paper, draw the silhouette of a child. Extend the bottom of the shape so it 'trails' on the floor like a cloak. Attach it to the classroom wall ensuring the lower part rests gently on the ground.
- Invite students to help decorate the border of the cloak.
- Explain that this is their empathy visibility cloak – a space to make empathy visible.
- Throughout the term, students can add short notes describing acts of empathy they have experienced or noticed. They can draw symbols or write feelings that connect with empathetic moments.
- They can also explore fictional characters (as well as real people) who showed empathy.
- Explain that, over time, this means they will all see how empathy grows in the classroom.



Lesson 2

The power of words

These activities will help students think more deeply about the positive and negative power of language – especially around migrants and people seeking asylum – and reflect on the impact their words can have, intentionally or accidentally.



Learning objectives

This lesson encourages participants to:

- Examine how language shapes perceptions of refugees and migrants;
- Reflect on the power of words to harm or support others;
- Explore and define key terms like refugee, asylum seeker and migrant using their own words;
- Identify and challenge bias and misinformation through dialogue and critical thinking.



You will need

- Pens, pencils and paper
- A safe box (make in advance, on the teacher's desk, for private messages)
- Jigsaw of child rights (page 29)

Activity 1

Sticks, stones and words



How long will it take?

15 minutes



What to do

- Divide students into small groups. Tell them, or write on the board, the traditional saying: *Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.*
- Ask each group to discuss: Is this true? Can words hurt people? In what ways? Can words also help and heal?
- After a few minutes, bring the class back together to share their thoughts.
- Emphasise that words matter – they can shape how people feel, how they're treated and how the world sees them.

Activity 2

Migrant, refugee and asylum seeker – what do you think of when you hear these words?



How long will it take?

30 minutes

Note to teacher

The purpose of this activity is to explore *perceptions* and *stereotypes*, not to judge or question anyone's background or journey. It should only be done if you are confident it will not cause distress or marginalise refugee or migrant students in your class. Before you begin, we recommend speaking with your students to gauge how each of them would like to participate. This allows them to feel valued and empowered.

During the activity, check in individually with any students who may be emotionally impacted by this work. Offer flexible ways to participate (on their own, with a classmate, drawing or writing instead of speaking, or choosing to opt out). Reassure students that they can post ideas anonymously, and make it clear that all voices will be respected and protected. Your role as human rights supporter is crucial.



What to do

- Ask students to take a moment to think about what words or thoughts come into their minds when they hear the terms *refugee*, *migrant* and *asylum seeker*.
- Ask: Where do our ideas come from? News, stories, social media, people we know...
- Explain that maybe these are not all their words and do not reflect who they are – they may be words they have heard in the news or from people in their community. If students are a refugee or migrant, the words might be based on their own experiences.
- Invite students to write the words or ideas on a piece of paper and post them into the safe box (on the teacher's desk). They do not need to include their name.
- Collect all these words and choose some to share and explore.
- Further discussion:
 - What did you notice about the words we shared?
 - Were there any words that felt negative/positive?
 - Where might those ideas come from?
- Tell students they will now build class definitions, starting with *refugee*, *migrant* and *asylum seeker*. Explain that they will work together to create a definition that is in their own words. Refer to *Refugee rights at a glance* (page 6) and have in mind the *Key definitions* (pages 6-7).
- Elicit answers by asking these questions first:
 - Why do some people have to leave their home?
 - Why do some people have to leave their country?
 - Why can't some people return?

Examples of age-appropriate classroom definitions created between children and educators

- A refugee is a person who must leave their homes because it is not safe, but they don't stay a refugee all their lives. 'A' was a refugee but now he's a... citizen.
- Did you know that a refuge is another word for home? My Mum told me.
- Seeking asylum means looking for safety in another country. My family were asylum seekers but now we have refugee status.
- A migrant is a person who leaves home to find work and a better life in another country, sometime because it is too hard to make a living in the place where they came from. Lots of people in our class and our grandparents were migrants.

Activity 3

Navigating language and understanding bias

This activity encourages students to think about how bias and prejudice affect our understanding of others – especially migrants and refugees. It allows the teacher to check understanding of the terms students are using, and discuss and clarify certain ideas or misinformation they may be exposed to.



How long will it take?

20-30 minutes



What to do

- Start with a warm-up conversation. Ask the students:
 - Have you ever felt judged by someone who doesn't even know you?
 - In what ways do people judge each other? For instance, by appearance, accent, clothes, background.
- Explain that these judgements are surface ways of seeing and not always the truth.
 - Pre- means something that comes before. Prejudice comes from pre- judge – it means judging people or situations before we really know them.
 - Our judgements might be based on:
 - Our ignorance – not knowing something or someone
 - What other people have told us
 - Media and social media – can be misleading and may not be true
- Ask them if they know the saying, *Don't judge a book by its cover*. What do they think it means?
- Explain that we need to get to know people and explore each other's stories more deeply than what appears to be on the surface. When we learn more about a situation, when we step into someone else's shoes and understand how it feels to be them (practising our empathy), we can form better informed opinions and overcome prejudice.
- Now move into the activity. Talk about the following words together and what they mean: Prejudice, biased and unbiased.
- Ask: Why might people be biased or prejudiced? Can we change our minds if we learn more about someone's story?
- Divide the students into groups and provide them with the Jigsaw of child rights (on page 29).
- Create three spaces in the room: *positive* (you could mark with a big, smiley emoji); *negative* (big sad/angry emoji); and *neutral* (a thinking/not sure emoji).
- Read out a word or phrase from the list in the safe box (plus others you may think of), explain its meaning, and ask students to walk to the area that matches how they feel the word is generally used or understood.

- After each word, discuss as a group: Why did you stand there? Do you think this word helps or harms? Which child rights might be affected or denied?
- Give time and space for students to show empathy for the situation of their fellow children and think about what they could say or do differently.

Here's an example of a list of words that students might have heard and shared anonymously. Teachers can add to these lists too.

Refugee

Asylum seeker

Migrant

Detention centre

Human rights

Safe passage – 'I was given a route of safe passage, but there are not many of these in the world'

Seeking asylum

Refugee status

Passport

Small boats – 'My brother said people who come on small boats are just criminals'

Trafficker

Unaccompanied refugee

Illegal immigrant

Child labour

Illegal crossing

Immigration

Refugee centre

Refugee status

Right to remain

Exploitation

Welcome

Anti-Refugee

Refugees welcome

Unfriendly

Racism

Sensationalist headlines

Hate speech

Lesson 3

The power of arts, crafts and writing

These creative activities help students understand why and how people are on the move, as well as the challenges they face and overcome. By exploring the experience of migration, students will develop a stronger sense of empathy, justice and solidarity.



Learning objectives

This lesson encourages participants to:

- Reflect on the meaning of 'home' through personal and intergenerational stories;
- Express thoughts and hopes creatively through writing, drawing and poetry;
- Develop empathy by imagining what others might take with them when leaving home suddenly;
- Build shared understanding by comparing journeys and creating 'empathy paths'.



You will need

- Pens, pencils
- Sheets of paper



Activity 1

Wings of change



How long will it take?

30 minutes



What to do

- Explain to students that they will be creating Wings of change – messages about how they would like the world to change for people who have had to leave their homes.
- Give each student a sheet of paper and ask them to draw a wing, big enough to fit a written message.
- On the wing, students should write what they wish would change for refugees and migrants, and what they experience.
- Example messages could include: Safe homes for everyone. Love not hate. No war. Let all children go to school. No more hate speech.
- Once finished, display the Wings for change in the classroom or school. Explain that each wishing wing will help fly all of their support to migrant and refugee children. Remind students that by speaking up, they are helping to protect human rights.

Activity 2

Let's talk!



How long will it take?

10 minutes



What to do

- Ask students what they think the phrase 'Walk a mile in another person's shoes' means. How could walking a mile in another person's shoes (imagining someone else's experience) help to make the world a better, kinder, fairer place?
- Discuss.

Activity 3

Draw and write your footprints

This activity was first created by author Sita Brahmachari during her work with unaccompanied refugee children. It has been successful in helping migrant and refugee children in classrooms feel agency, voice their hopes, and witness their peers exploring concepts of home, belonging and family journeys. The activity fosters empathy, shared understanding, and mutual respect — creating a space where all children can connect through their stories, and where the experiences of child refugees are honoured and heard.



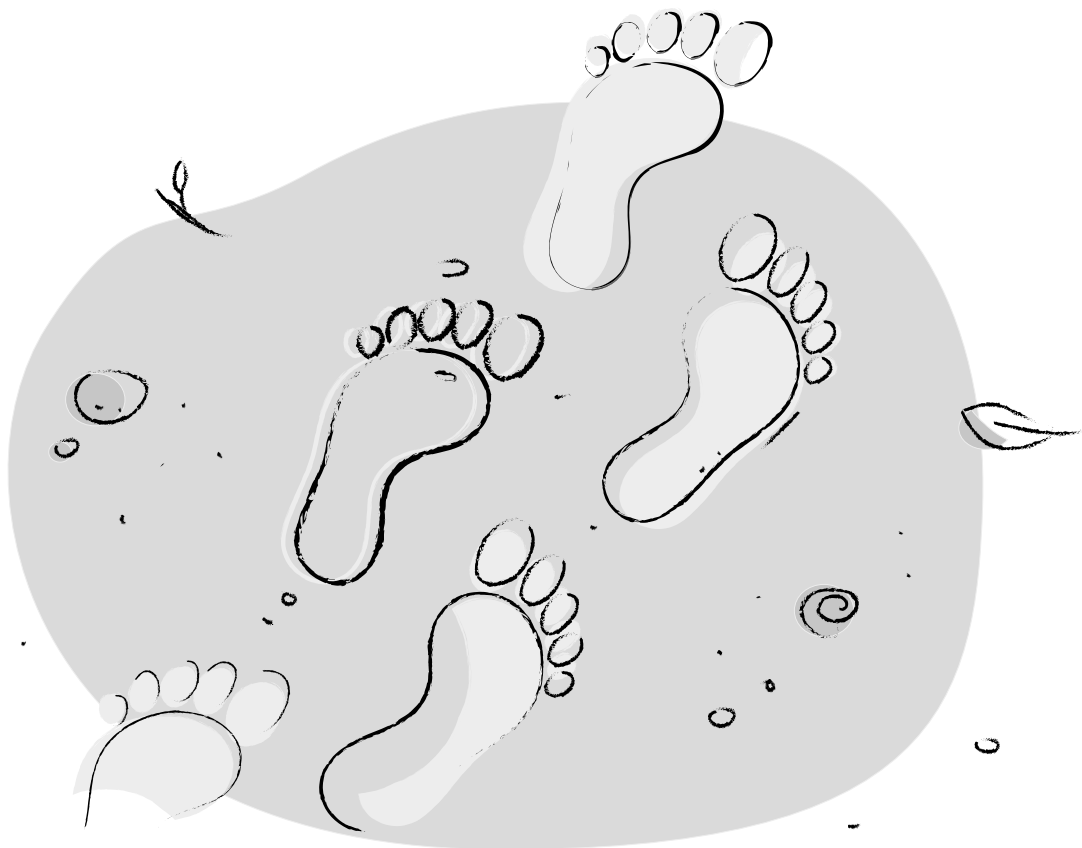
How long will it take?

30 minutes per foot!



What to do

Start by asking the students to draw around their feet and cut out both shapes, left and right. This part of the activity can be done as homework.



Foot 1 List poems!

- Tell your class that one of the footprints is about them and their own journey.
- On this foot they should write a list poem about where they have lived in their life and what home means to them. Ask them to consider what makes a home, in their opinion. They should decorate their footprint and make it beautiful. The second footprint will be used in the next part of the activity – ask participants to keep it aside for now.
- Now ask pairs of students to join together and share what they have written. They should place their footprints side by side to make an *empathy path*.
- Next, in groups of four, students should join together to draw an additional foot together. This is the foot that will form the path of welcome that should run like a river between everyone's feet.
- On this additional foot, ask the students to write and draw all the things they think they would need to feel welcome in a new place or land.
- Place this path of welcome between the personal foot tracks. Have every person walk this path of welcome, reading out the words on these feet.

Example of the start of a list poem

I have lived in lots of places

London, Derby, Hull, Lake District, India

Greece, France

Home to me is

Mum's cooking

Love

Care....

Foot 2 Home talk!

- Invite a parent, grandparent or adult community member with experience of being a migrant or refugee into the classroom, having first checked they are happy to share their story with the children.
- In the class, ask your guest where they have lived in their lives and what home means to them. Have they ever had to move home or school, and, if so, what was that like?
- Ask the children to write this experience as a list poem on the second foot and decorate it with things the person has spoken about, like a suitcase or a hat.

Activity 4

What would you take with you?



How long will it take?

20 minutes



What to do

- Ask your students to imagine that they must leave home and can take 10 things with them. What would their 10 things be? They can choose practical items, but also impractical ones that wouldn't fit in a suitcase, like a piano or the lemon tree outside their bedroom window.
- They must be ready to say why they chose each thing and what comfort it would bring.

Lesson 4

Mapping global classrooms

This lesson helps students explore their personal connections within and across countries and continents. Through interactive activities, they will deepen their understanding of migration and build a greater appreciation for our shared humanity.



Learning objectives

This lesson encourages students to:

- Explore the migratory journeys of their families and communities;
- Recognise that migration is a shared and historical human experience;
- Map global connections between people and places;
- Contribute to an inclusive classroom project that values and celebrates every learner's story.



You will need

- A large sheet of paper
- Drawing pins
- Different colour threads
- Pens and pencils

Activity 1

Moving home



How long will it take?

30 minutes



What to do

- Read aloud the following excerpt from *Artichoke Hearts* by Sita Brahmachari.

On the wall opposite Jide's bed, is an enormous map of the world criss-crossed with green and red silk thread, leading to drawing pins stuck into different countries.

'What are those for?' I ask.

'The red ones are countries I've been to...'

I follow a red string to a place in Africa. 'Is that Rwanda?'

Jide nods.

- Explain to the students that in the story Jide Jackson is a *refugee* from Rwanda. He arrived in London as a baby after aid workers brought him out of a refugee camp and later adopted him. His map is a visual way of showing the places that have become part of his journey.
- Ask students to create a map like Jide's. Working individually or in groups, they should trace their own family's journey – whether that's moving home from one place to another, across regions, or between countries.

Activity 2

Classroom migration mapping ceremony

This mapping activity can be an ongoing, inclusive project – welcoming new students, who can add their family's migratory journeys. It encourages discussion and research into why people move or seek asylum, deepens understanding of global geography and current affairs, and can also be used in literature lessons to chart the journeys of fictional characters.



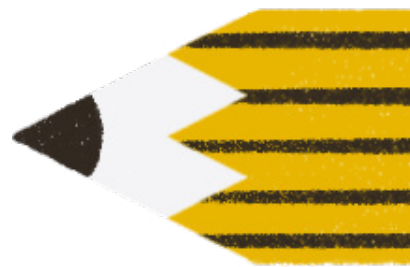
How long will it take?

30 minutes



What to do

- Place a world map on the classroom wall.
- As the teacher, begin by sharing your own story – using pins and threads to mark your family and friends' migratory paths, the places they have lived or travelled from.
- Now stick a pin in the place where you are now and use threads to connect you with your family and friends.
- Invite students up one by one to place a pin where they are now and connect it with a thread to places they, their family, ancestors or friends have lived. Ask them to share a few words about the place, maybe a memory or something they know about it.
- Some students may say that their family has always lived in one place. If so, this is interesting too and please keep the pin there. Explain that the map doesn't just reflect physical journeys; it also shows that by meeting people with global roots and branches, we take journeys of imagination and empathy.
- For example, in *Artichoke Hearts*, Ben Gbemi has always lived in London, but through meeting Jide Jackson and Mira Levenson, and by listening to their stories, he begins to 'travel' in his imagination and through empathy.



Lesson 5

The power of voice

This lesson helps students explore the experiences of refugees and migrants through visual prompts and storytelling. By analysing different scenarios, students will reflect on how human rights are protected or denied, and express their perspectives through role-play, writing and reporting. Additionally, they will create a symbolic 'welcome suitcase' to think about how they can support newcomers to their school or community. This lesson can be delivered as a bigger one-off project or divided into shorter sessions using the creative approaches.



Learning objectives

This lesson encourages participants to:

- Examine refugee and migrant experiences using visual prompts and storytelling;
- Analyse different situations where rights are protected or denied;
- Express individual and collective perspectives through role-play, reporting and writing;
- Create a symbolic 'welcome suitcase' and consider how to support newcomers in their community.



You will need

- Pens and colouring pencils
- Paper
- Jigsaw of child rights: Simplified 15 groups of child rights (page 29)
- Reading the picture illustrations (page 30)

Activity 1

Exploring refugee and migrant rights through pictures



How long will it take?

2 hours (if broken into shorter parts, see time guidance with each activity)



What to do

- Write this quote on the board: 'The child should be brought up in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity.' UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989.
- Using the Reading the picture illustrations sheet either show one illustration to the whole class or divide students into groups of five, giving each group a different illustration to look at.

Read the picture 10 minutes

- Ask students to discuss and decide together what is happening in the picture.
- As a group, they should write or verbally describe what they observe.
- Ask them to check their Jigsaw of child rights sheet. Which rights are not being protected for the children in the picture?
- To help them look closely, they should consider these questions:
 - Who is in the picture?
 - Where might the people have come from?
 - Where do you think they are going?
 - What do their facial expressions and body language tell you?
 - How do you think are they feeling?
 - Do they look safe?

Become truth-telling reporters 20-30 minutes

- Divide the class into groups and explain they are journalists reporting on the stories behind the pictures they've been studying.
- Their task is to write a news report that tells the truth of what they see.
- Encourage them to use the migration-related vocabulary they have learned, including terms refugee and *people seeking asylum*. If relevant, they should explain why the people in the pictures might be seeking asylum.

- Ask them to check their *Simplified child rights* sheet and list any rights they believe are being denied or are at risk.
- Remind them to choose their words carefully to write an accurate, respectful report.
- Each group should also write a headline for their news report.

Focus! 10 minutes

- Ask each student to choose one child or young adult in the picture, shifting from a wide 'camera shot' to a close-up focus on that person.
- They should imagine what this young person is feeling and write words or sentences expressing what they might want to say about their life and the help they need.
- In turn, ask the students to speak their words out loud.
- Next, ask them to write a short poem to the person in the picture. The poem should include reference to one of the child's rights.

Step into the picture 10 minutes

- In groups, ask students to recreate the picture as accurately as possible using their own bodies.
- Each group should choose one narrator to read aloud their news report while the rest of the group holds a freeze-frame that represents the picture.

Debrief and reflection 10 minutes

Ask the students to think about what they have learned and experienced through the activities. This reflection allows them to process their feelings and perspectives, deepen their understanding of the issues, and discuss how they can take action. Use the following questions to guide the debrief:

- How did it feel to step into the shoes of someone in the picture? What emotions did you experience?
- In what ways do the illustrations challenge or reinforce what we know about refugee and migrant experiences?
- Why is it important to protect the rights of children, especially those who are refugees or migrants?
- How can we, as individuals or communities, help protect and support refugees and migrants in our school or country?
- What did you learn about the role of storytelling and journalism in sharing the truth about migration and refugee experiences?

Activity 2

Pack a welcome suitcase



How long will it take

40 minutes



What to do

- Tell the class that all refugee children who travel alone or seek asylum have the right to receive special care when they arrive in a new country. This is vital to help them rebuild their lives.
- Ask students to imagine they are the refugee whose shoes they stepped into in the picture.
Imagine...
 - You have just arrived at a support centre after a long, traumatic journey.
 - You have faced many challenges along the way.
 - At the support centre, you are given a suitcase filled with items to help you start your new life.
- Ask students to make a list of things that would help them find their feet in a new place. These can be real items, like clothes, or abstract support, like language lessons or friendships. Ask students to share their ideas with each other.
- Next, create a communal welcome suitcase for refugee and asylum-seeking children arriving in your class, school or community. You can do this in a number of creative ways. For example, give each student a suitcase template and ask them to write or draw what they would need to feel welcome. Collect and display the suitcases to create a classroom 'welcome wall'.
- Consider bringing in a real, old-fashioned suitcase where students can place their paper suitcases or even meaningful objects – such as teddies they have travelled with, recipes for a welcoming meal, local honey, drawings of local flowers and wildlife, information about local libraries or museums, or letters of welcome.
- This activity can involve family stories from home, add new ideas and items, making this an ongoing project that grows over time.



Activity resources

Jigsaw of child rights: Simplified 15 groups of child rights



Source: Nicky Parker, Amnesty International, *These Rights Are Your Rights: An Empowering Guide for Children Everywhere*, Andersen Press, 2024

Reading the picture illustrations



Illustration 1. People on the move



Illustration 2. Well



Illustration 3. Sewing workshop



Illustration 4. School



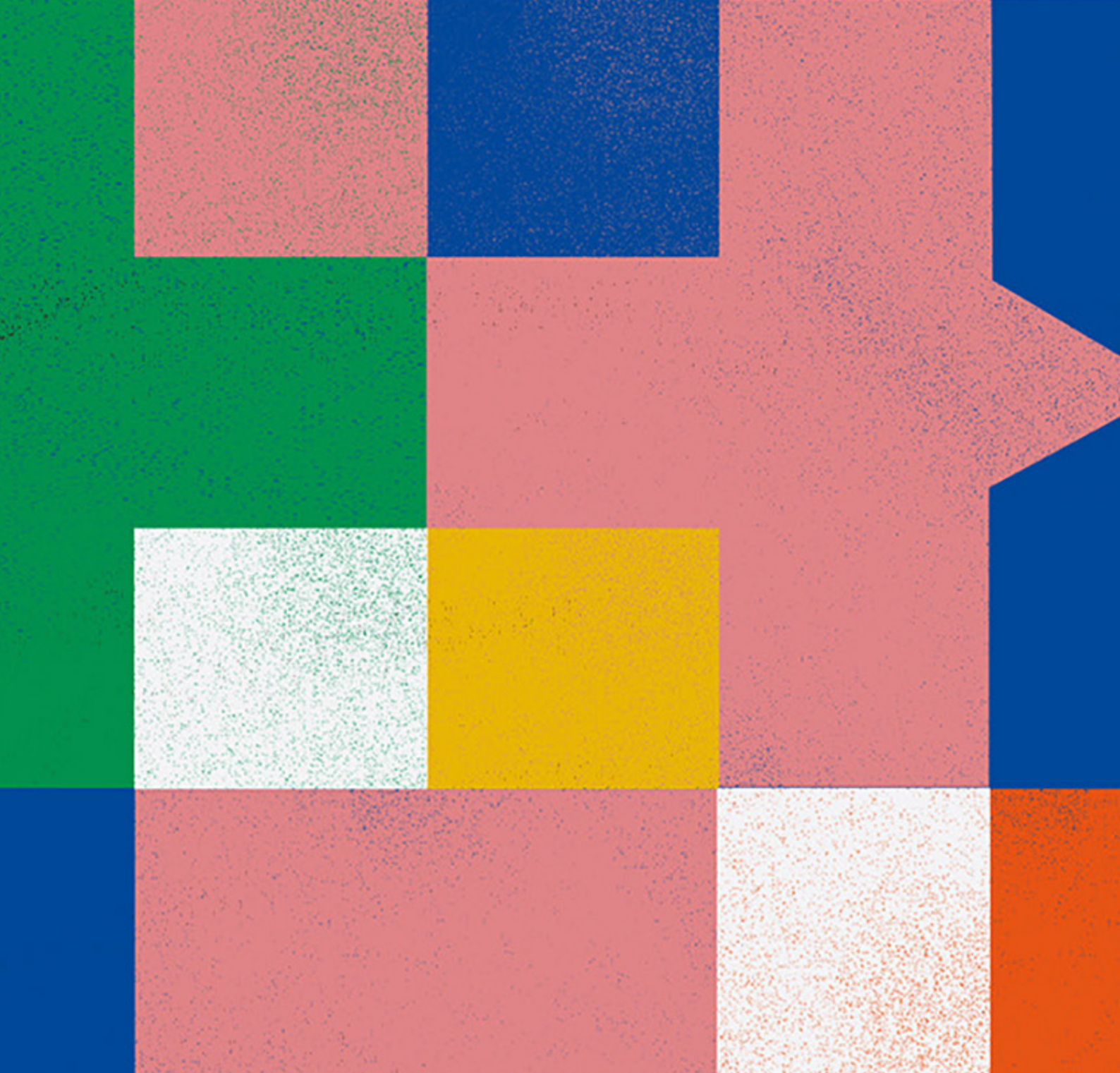
Illustration 5. Evacuation



Illustration 6. Airport

Further resources

- Amnesty International, *An Introduction to Human Rights* (e-learning course). academy.amnesty.org
- Amnesty International, *Protect the Protest* (e-learning course). academy.amnesty.org
- Amnesty International, *Respect My Rights, Respect My Dignity, Module 4: Refugees' and Migrants' Rights are Human Rights*, 2018. [PDF](#)
- Amnesty International, Angelina Jolie and Geraldine Van Bueren, *Know Your Rights and Claim Them: A Guide for Youth*, 2021, Andersen Press.
- Amnesty International Australia, *Understanding Your Human Rights*, 2022. [PDF](#)
- Amnesty International UK, *Refugee Rights Primary Pack*, 2024. [PDF](#)
- Sita Brahmachari, *Artichoke Hearts*, Macmillan Children's Books, 2011.
- Sita Brahmachari, *Phoenix Brothers*, Oxford University Press, 2025.
- Sita Brahmachari, *Read Leaves*, Macmillan Children's Books, 2014.
- Nicky Parker and Amnesty International, *These Rights Are Your Rights: An Empowering Guide for Children Everywhere*, 2024, Andersen Press.
- *Seen and Heard: Young People's Voices and Freedom of Expression* – European co-funded project on young people's freedom of expression. www.seenandheardproject.eu



This resource is part of the *Seen and Heard: Young People's Voices and Freedom of Expression*. More information:
<https://seenandheardproject.eu/>

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