

Refugee journeys – teaching resource

Background

Leading artists have teamed up with the British Red Cross to create a new album based on the real-life stories of refugees and asylum seekers. To create *The Long Road* album, artists paired up with people who had been forced to flee their home and seek safety in the UK.

Spoken word poet Scroobius Pip, Led Zeppelin vocalist Robert Plant, Kindness and many others have contributed to the record.

Scroobius Pip's *Who are you* track was inspired by Ramelle, a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Robert Plant recorded a version of Elbow's *The Blanket of Night*, a song about refugees attempting a treacherous journey to gain asylum in the UK.

Ayman Hirh, a refugee who fled Syria, inspired Kindness' track titled *A retelling*. He said: "I hope that my experience and the album will encourage people to think about the reasons people like me are forced to leave home."

Resource overview

Pick and choose from transcripts of three songs featured on *The Long Road* album to help young people engage with refugee stories.

A set of critical questions open up a space for conversation, discussion and debate and help build young peoples' understanding of the humanitarian impact of the current refugee crisis.

Learning objectives

Young people will:

- Think critically about what makes us who we are and how identity, place and belonging are related.
- Consider how media representations of migration might differ from the first-hand narratives of people who have fled their homes to seek sanctuary in another country.
- Empathise with refugees and asylum seekers through gaining deeper understanding of the reasons why people flee, what they leave behind, the difficulties of their journeys and uncertainty surrounding their arrivals and future lives.
- Consider what actions they could take to make refugees and asylum seekers feel more welcome in their communities.

Suggested age range

14–19-year-olds.

Source material

Robert Plant: *The Blanket of Night*

Kindness: *A retelling*

Scroobius Pip: *Who are you?*

How to use this teaching resource

Young people can read through and/or listen to the lyrics for the songs.

Young people give their initial impressions of them before furthering their thinking about the topic by working through different sets of critical questions.

The critical questions help young people explore the context and lyrics as well as concepts of empathy and identity.

Educators can choose how best to engage their groups with these ideas, through group discussion or individual work or creative learning. Some suggested methodologies are provided below.

Suggested methodologies

- Ask young people to work in small groups; each group takes a song and works through the the critical questions. Groups present their thoughts on the songs and their meaning to the other groups.
- Young people work individually on one set of critical questions e.g. building empathy. They could build a mind map representing their thoughts and ideas, perhaps using different colour pens to look at the challenges and opportunities that refugees and asylum seekers might face.
- Young people could use sticky notes to write the word or metaphors down that particularly struck them, placing them all on one wall and collating similar words or ideas into clusters to create an inspiration wall for their own response to the work.
- Young people could each bring a headline from the media to the session and consider similarities and differences between the key words used by the media and the key words in the songs.
- Some sections such as ‘context’ and ‘taking it forwards’ could be explored through whole group discussion.
- When looking at ‘identity’ young people could draw an outline of a person and in small groups write their thoughts and ideas around the outside, they could build on this by writing responses to the empathy questions on the inside of the outline.

Critical questions

Building empathy

- > What might it feel like to:
 - Have to leave your home, not knowing if you might ever return
 - Not know if you or your loved ones will survive a treacherous journey
 - Arrive somewhere completely foreign to you
 - Be separated from your family members
 - Feel you are not welcome in the place you have come to seeking sanctuary
 - Be stigmatised against because of where you have come from.

- > What might it feel like to:
 - Be welcomed into a community
 - Feel safe from persecution
 - Have somewhere to live
 - Be reunited with your family
 - Be able to get an education and start a life in a new country.

A sense of identity

- > What does identity mean? What factors might define who we are?
- > Consider the word 'belonging'. What does it mean to belong?
- > How might it feel not to belong somewhere?
- > What might help someone to feel that they can belong in a new place?
- > What gives you a sense of identity, place and belonging?
- > What do you feel are the key things about where you live or your culture that helps to shape your identity?
- > How important is it that the album and song lyrics tell individuals' stories. Why?
- > What in these individual stories shapes the identity of the person/people in the song?

Exploring the context

- > What do you already know about refugees and asylum seekers? Where has your knowledge come from?
- > What has shaped your opinions? Family, friends, the media? Do you know anyone from a refugee background?
- > What feelings do you have for people who are seeking sanctuary in the UK?
- > How relevant do you think this album is to events unfolding around the world today?
- > What do you think is the significance of 'The Long Road' – both as a title and concept for an album – what message do you think it sends?
- > What kind of media representations do you see of groups of people who are migrating to different countries?
- > What do you think about these representations?
- > What do you think the thoughts and feelings of those being represented might be?
- > How might an album which uses refugees own words to tell their stories provide an alternative narrative to media representations of refugees and asylum seekers?
- > Why might this be important?

Exploring the lyrics

- > Consider the lyrics in one or more of the songs, what context does it give? Where are the people? What is happening to them? Why might they be in this situation?
- > What are the feelings of the person or people in the songs? Are there a range of thoughts and ideas? Do these feelings or thoughts change throughout the lyrics? How? What language is used? Why might people feel as they do in the songs?
- > What message are the lyrics giving? What impression does each song leave you with?
- > What would you like to say to the people in the lyrics?
- > Are there key words that come through in all the lyrics? Which words or metaphors stand out? How do particular words or metaphors help you understand the feelings of the people in the songs?
- > How do you feel once you have read/listened to the songs? Do you have more questions?

Extension

Ask young people what they think they could do to make refugees and asylum seekers feel more welcome?

Encourage them to consider actions that could be taken within or after school or as part of a community group.

Young people could consider writing a response to the songs, this could be their own song or people or letter of welcome.

They could think about using or building on some of the words or metaphors that stood out for them in the lyrics.

They could display or perform this work.

Related resources

Stigma and migration (10-13)

What makes us who we are? This lesson plan helps young people to think critically about identity, assumptions about migration and the harmful effects of stigmatising behaviour.

<http://www.redcross.org.uk/What-we-do/Teaching-resources/Lesson-plans/Stigma-and-migration>

Refugee week: celebrating contributions to art and culture (14-19)

This resource is built around a timeline and profiles about people who came to the UK as refugees and have made a significant artistic or cultural contribution.

<http://www.redcross.org.uk/What-we-do/Teaching-resources/Lesson-plans/Refugee-week-2015>