

WHERE?



HOW FAR?



USBORNE  
LIFT-THE-FLAP

# Questions and Answers

ABOUT

# REFUGEES

REFUGEES  
WELCOME

WHO?



WHY?



NOTES FOR GROWN-UPS



## NOTES FOR GROWN-UPS

**Amanda Batcheler from the Refugee Council has provided some supporting information for teachers, parents and carers, to provide a fuller picture of the refugee situation in the UK and explain why it's important to involve children in the conversation.**

### WHY DO WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT REFUGEES?

Because sadly the refugee crisis is only getting worse. In November 2022, UNHCR (the United Nations Refugee Agency) estimated that global forced displacement had reached 103 million people, including 53.2 million internally displaced, 32.5 million refugees, 4.9 million asylum seekers and 5.9 million other people in need of international protection.

Historically, the press has tended to report negatively about refugees and asylum seekers, with the knock-on effect of influencing the opinions of the general public. Often press reports fill people with fear and anxiety. Some fears may be real and practical, but certainly not insurmountable, and there are many positives to welcoming refugees into our country.

### BUT DO CHILDREN NEED TO KNOW ABOUT REFUGEES?

Yes! There are now children from refugee families in most schools across the country and tragically they are often subjected to bullying, rejection or racism. This may be simply because they are different, or because of ill-informed, negative attitudes surrounding refugees.

It is important to help children embrace our differences and acknowledge that we all have something to offer to our society. Life would be very boring if we were all the same! One good question to ask may be, "What's your favourite takeaway food?" The answers will be varied, but the point is that, without migration we would not have access to the vast array of multicultural foods that we are lucky to enjoy.

It is also important for our young people to understand and empathise with the plight of refugee families and the traumas, dangers and upheavals they've been through. We are fortunate to live in a country without war or persecution. However, it is not so long ago that the people of Ukraine enjoyed peaceful, 'normal' lives; or that the people of Syria lived in harmony despite their diverse population. If our fortunes were to change, we would hope that other countries would look favourably upon us, and offer us sanctuary.

The more informed and compassionate our young people are, the more they can welcome others who are in need of support, and challenge any negative views they encounter.





## WHAT POSITIVES DO REFUGEES BRING TO A COUNTRY?

SO MANY!

- Higher-skilled refugees can fill gaps in the labour market. For example, it is estimated that it costs around £25,000 to support a refugee doctor to practise in the UK. Training a new doctor is estimated to cost between £200,000 and £250,000.
- Other refugees start businesses that create wealth, employ locals, make the economy more dynamic and adaptable, and boost international trade and investment. A good example is Sergey Brin, who arrived in the US as a child refugee from the Soviet Union, and co-founded Google, now America's second most valuable company.
- Some refugees do dirty, difficult, dangerous or dull jobs that locals do not wish to do, such as cleaning offices and caring for the elderly.
- Thanks to their diverse perspectives and experiences, refugees and their children can help spark new ideas and technologies. People who have been uprooted from one culture and exposed to another tend to be more creative, while studies show that diverse groups outperform like-minded groups at problem solving.
- Ageing societies with a shrinking native working-age population benefit from the arrival of younger refugees. As well as complementing the skills of older, more experienced workers, refugees can help pay for the growing numbers of pensioners. They can also support population numbers, and thus investment and growth.

## WHAT MORE COULD BE DONE TO HELP REFUGEES?

- Provide safe and regular routes to reach protection in the UK.
- Improve the response to refugees arriving in Europe, including kind and considerate treatment at borders and in countries they travel through.
- Ensure access to a fair, effective and caring asylum system.
- Improve conditions in countries hosting large numbers of displaced people.
- Tackle the causes behind forced displacement.

## FURTHER READING

Here are some definitions and facts to shed light on a complicated situation. There's also lots more useful information on the Refugee Council website - <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/information/refugee-asylum-facts/>

### REFUGEE

The definition of a refugee according to The 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees is:

***“A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”***

In the UK, a person officially becomes a refugee when the government agrees that they meet the definition in the Refugee Convention. The government will 'recognize' that person as a refugee and issue them with refugee status documentation.

### PERSON SEEKING ASYLUM

A person who has left their country of origin and formally applied for asylum (refugee status) in another country, but whose application has not yet been concluded. Wherever possible, we prefer to describe someone as a person seeking asylum as we feel that the term 'asylum seeker' is dehumanising.

### REFUSED ASYLUM APPLICANT

A person whose asylum application has been unsuccessful and who has no other claim for protection awaiting a decision. Some people who have their case refused voluntarily return home, others are forcibly returned. For some, it is not safe or practical to return until conditions in their country change.

### MIGRANT

Someone who has moved to another country for other reasons, such as to find work.

### THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS AN ILLEGAL ASYLUM SEEKER.

Under international law ANYONE has the right to apply for asylum in ANY country that has signed the 1951 Convention and to remain there until the authorities have assessed their claim. The problem is that there is no legal way to travel to the UK to seek asylum.

### THE UK ASYLUM SYSTEM IS STRICTLY CONTROLLED AND COMPLEX.

It is very difficult for people seeking asylum to provide the evidence required to be granted protection. Despite these challenges, the majority of asylum claims are successful. In the year ending June 2022, 76% of initial decisions resulted in a grant of asylum or other form of protection. The Home Office can take months or even years to make decisions on asylum, and there is a growing backlog of cases. Since 2005, most people recognized as refugees are only given permission to stay in the UK for five years. This makes it difficult for them to make decisions about their future, to find work and make definite plans for their life in the UK.

### PEOPLE SEEKING ASYLUM DO NOT COME TO THE UK TO CLAIM BENEFITS.

Most know nothing about welfare benefits before they arrive and have no expectation that they will receive financial support. Most people seeking asylum are living in poverty and experience poor health and hunger. Many families are not able to pay for the basics such as clothing, powdered milk and nappies. Almost all people seeking asylum are not allowed to work and are forced to rely on state support. They will not be entitled to the benefits that UK citizens are entitled to, but will be given around the price of a coffee and cake per day to live on.



### A VERY LOW PERCENTAGE OF REFUGEES WORLDWIDE ARE RESETTLED.

Refugee resettlement involves the selection and transfer of people from a country in which they have sought protection — usually somewhere with a large number of refugees, often living in refugee camps — to a third country which has agreed to admit them as refugees. Many of the people selected have health needs that cannot be met in the country where they are living and around 30% of those submitted for resettlement are survivors of violence and/or torture. They are flown to the country where they are being resettled. Since these people have already been recognised as refugees prior to their arrival, they do not go through the asylum system. They are able to work and access mainstream services straightaway.

### SEEKING ASYLUM IS THE ONLY OTHER WAY TO BE ACCEPTED AS A REFUGEE.

But people need to be in the UK already before they are able to make a claim for asylum. The UK offers no ‘asylum visa’ — this means there is no safe way for someone to reach the UK in order to claim asylum. Unlike resettled refugees, people who claim asylum have often undertaken perilous journeys in the hands of smugglers before arriving here.

### ONCE ASYLUM HAS BEEN GRANTED, REFUGEES ARE LEFT TO FEND FOR THEMSELVES.

Unlike resettled refugees, who are provided with housing and receive a year of specialist support to help them access the job market and mainstream services, refugees who have been granted asylum often find themselves homeless and destitute precisely at the point when the UK Government accepts that they need protection.

RESETTLED REFUGEES AND REFUGEES WHO ARE GRANTED ASYLUM ARE OFTEN FLEEING THE SAME CONFLICTS AND PERSECUTION, HOWEVER, THEIR JOURNEYS TO SAFETY ARE VERY DIFFERENT.