

Learning Guide



Welcome Stranger

We hope you enjoyed learning all about the challenges and strengths that refugees bring to their communities, and about the amazing oud in this episode. Extend your learning with this print-ready Learning Guide!



What's in this Learning Guide?

Get Set to Listen:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3-8.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3-8.3; CASEL: Social Awareness

Vocabulary

Discussion Questions

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3-8.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3-8.3; CASEL: Social Awareness; NMSS: 3.2: Global Immigration and Migration

Spotlight Study: Malala Yousafzai

NMSS: 3.2: Global Immigration and Migration; CASEL: Social Awareness; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3-8.3; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3-11.3

Resonance: The Science of the Oud

NGSS: 4-PS4-1; NGSS MS-PS4-2

Make a Resonant Instrument

NGSS: 4-PS4-1; NGSS MS-PS4-2

Stepping Stones: Book Study and Art Project

NMSS: 3.2: Global Immigration and Migration; CASEL: Social Awareness; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3-8.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3-8.3; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3-8.3; NM Arts Anchor Standard 1

Additional Resources and Book List



The Children's Hour
kids public radio

© 2025 The Children's Hour radio show podcast
<https://www.childrenshour.org/welcome-stranger/>



Get Set to Listen

1. Before listening!



Write down your response to one of these questions. Share with a partner or small group when you are finished.

Imagine you have to leave your home and move to a completely new country where you don't speak the same language or have the same way of doing things as everyone else in your new home. How would you feel? What challenges would you face? What opportunities would you have?

2. After listening to [Part 1: Welcoming New People to Your Community](#)



Write down your response to the following question. Share with a partner or small group when you are finished. How did your thoughts about people who come here from other countries change after listening to this episode?

What can you do to help welcome new members of your community, especially refugees from other countries?



Vocabulary

refugee	people who must leave their homes to find safety somewhere else
oud	a 5,000-year-old stringed instrument that is considered the ancestor of the guitar
justice	being fair and making sure everyone is treated equally and with respect
variety	having many different kinds and ways of doing things instead of just one
culture	the way of life of a group of people, including their language, food, music, traditions, holidays, and beliefs
dictatorship	a type of government where the leader decides everything, even if the people don't agree
persecution	when people are treated unfairly or hurt again and again just because of who they are, what they believe, or where they come from
political refugee	a person who has to leave their country because it is not safe for them there, usually because of unfair leaders, wars, or being treated badly for their beliefs
moral choice	choosing to do something difficult because of a belief that it is the right thing to do



Discussion Questions

1. What is a **refugee**?
2. Why do people become refugees?
3. What challenges might refugees face in a new country?
4. How do you think it feels to leave your home and family behind?
 - *What would you miss most?*
 - *What would you take with you?*

Listen to [Part 2: Rahim AlHaj Tells the Story of His Oud](#). Rahim describes when and how he learned to play the oud. He received his first oud when he was in 2nd grade and loved it so much that he couldn't sleep without it and called it "habibi", which means "my darling". When he was forced to leave Iraq for safety reasons, this oud was taken away. Imagine what that would feel like.

5. How would you help someone who is new to your community?
6. Listen to [Part 3: The Importance of Sharing Cultures](#)
 - *Why is it important for people to share their cultures and identities with their communities?*
7. Why is it important to treat refugees with kindness and respect?

Group Discussion Strategies

Think Pair Share:

1. Individually, student writes down their answer to a question.
2. Students pair up and tell each other their answers.
3. Teacher calls for volunteers to share with the whole class their answer (and/or their partner's answer). Teacher notes key words/phrases on board.

Round Robin:

1. Teacher poses one question (written on top of a large page) to students, who are assembled into small groups of 3 or 4.
2. Students take turns brainstorming the answers. The recorder of the group writes down all answers.
3. The leader reads the group's ideas to the entire class. Teacher moderates.



Spotlight Study: Malala Yousafzai

Building Background Discussion Question

How would you feel if someone told you that you were no longer allowed to go to school? Why?

A Brief Bio

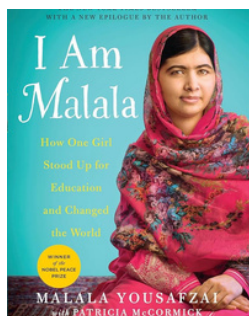
Malala Yousafzai was born on July 12, 1997, in Mingora, Pakistan. From a young age, she loved learning and dreamed of becoming a doctor. However, when the Taliban took control of her region, they banned girls from going to school. Malala spoke out for girls' education through interviews and a blog, even though it was dangerous.

In 2012, Malala was attacked for speaking up, but she survived and continued her fight for education. She moved to the UK for treatment and later started the Malala Fund to help girls around the world go to school. In 2014, she became the youngest person ever to win the Nobel Peace Prize. Today, Malala is a global symbol of courage and the right to education.

Books About Malala

Read one of these books to learn more about Malala's story.

Additional teaching ideas found under "Additional Resources"



I Am Malala: How One Girl Stood Up for Education and Changed the World; Young Reader's Edition

by Patricia McCormick, Malala Yousafzai

Malala's story, told by her with the help of Patricia McCormick. The Young Reader's Edition is recommended for 5th grade and up.



Free As a Bird: The Story of Malala

by Lina Maslo

This picture book shares the inspiring story of Malala Yousafzai, the youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner, and her fight for education and human rights. Great for younger grades.



Spotlight Study: Malala Yousafzai

Listen

for older learners:

the song [“I am Malala”](#) from Yellobird Records, produced by Jon Ingoldsby

- print the lyrics and discuss:
 - How does the song connect education to strength and equality?
 - How would you answer the question: Would you choose to fight for what you believe in?
 - What does “be the change you want to see” mean to you?
 - The song says, “Being silent doesn’t help, it adds fuel to the fire.” Do you agree? Why or why not?
 - How does this song show Malala’s impact on others?

for younger learners:

[“I Am Malala” \(feat. Debbie Lan\)](#) by Alastair Moock on *All Kinds of You and Me*

- Print the lyrics and discuss:
 - What does it mean when the song says, “I am Malala, you are Malala too”?
 - What does it mean to “raise up your voice”?
 - Why is it important for all kids to have an equal chance to learn?

Discuss/Write About

Malala is a spokesperson for education rights for girls and all people.

- What things are important for you to speak up about?
- Why is it important to speak up about things that are important to us?
- Do you think one person can make a big difference in the world? Why or why not?

Additional Resources

[Obsessed with Learning: 4 Activities for I Am Malala](#)

[I Am Malala Teaching Ideas by Gay Miller in Book Units](#)

Explore this list with a timeline, animated short, symbolism project, debate questions, and more—perfect for the Young Readers Edition for middle-grade students.

The fund for girls’ education that Malala founded can be found at malalafund.org



Resonance: The Science of the Oud

Listen

[Part 4: How the Oud Works](#)

About the Oud

How It Sounds:

The oud's boat-shaped wooden body helps make its unique, rich sound when the strings vibrate. Listen to [Part 5: Rahim AlHaj Plays "Horses" on the Oud](#).

Strings:

It usually has 10 or 11 strings, arranged in 5 or 6 pairs.

Making the Oud:

The type of wood, like rosewood, and careful building affect how it sounds.

Vibrations:

The body vibrates in special ways when the strings are plucked, creating musical notes.

Creating Sound:

The strings, bridge, and hollow body work together to make the oud's deep, beautiful tone.

Videos

[Introducing: The Arabic Oud](#)

Watch this video to learn more about the oud.

[The Power of Resonance: Objects Animate with Sound! Impossible Science at Home](#)

Discover how sound can move objects using resonance! Watch the video and try your own experiment.

Experimenting with Resonance

[Exploratorium's Science Snacks: Resonance](#)

Check out these awesome instructions for how to demonstrate and explore resonance.



Make a Resonant Instrument

The Oud is the ancestor of resonant, stringed instruments. Try making your own version of a resonant, stringed instrument!

Listen

- [Part 4: How the Oud Works](#)
- [Part 5: Rahim AlHaj Plays "Horses" on the Oud](#)

Materials

- variety of boxes and containers of different materials, sizes, and shapes
- variety of strings, rubber bands, etc.
- pencils (for bridge, frets)
- *optional: cardboard tube for the "neck"*
- scissors
- tape

Steps

1. Cut a hole in the container if it doesn't already have one.
2. Stretch 3–6 rubber bands around the box over the opening.
3. Pluck the rubber bands to hear the sound.

Variations

- Add a Neck: Tape a cardboard tube to one end of the box to make it look like a guitar.
- Change the Pitch: Use thick and thin rubber bands, or loosen/tighten them for different sounds.

Things to Consider

- Size of the Box: Bigger boxes make deeper sounds; smaller boxes make higher sounds.
- Material Strength: Make sure the box is strong enough to hold the rubber bands.



Photo credits: Idea Museum, Red Ted Art, Science Buddies



Stepping Stones

Building Background

What is a **refugee**?

[Learn about Syria](#) on National Geographic Kids' website.

Pre-reading Discussion Question

Look closely at the illustration on the front cover. What challenges do you think refugees might face based on this image?

Read

[Stepping Stones: A Refugee Family's Journey](#). Look at the artwork in the book. How does the artist show feelings and emotions through the pictures? What details stand out to you?

Expressing Emotions with Art

Syrian artist [Nizar Ali Badr](#) uses art to express his strong emotions of sadness about what is happening in his home country.

What emotions is Nizar Ali Badr showing with each of these sculptures?



Photo credits: Nizar Ali Badr, Syrian sculptor

Make Art with Stone

Art can be a powerful way to express and process our feelings. Use what you have learned by studying Nizar Ali Badr's artwork to create your own stone sculptures.

Gather rocks of various shapes, colors, and sizes. **Arrange them** to make a picture of something you feel strongly about.

Photograph your artwork and upload it to steppingstonesthebook.com to share with others and see what they have created.



Stepping Stones

Other Discussion Questions

- Jedo says they weren't truly free. Why does being free to 'dance our dances' and pray freely matter so much to him?
- Rama says she cries in her mother's lap "even though I am a big girl." Why is she crying, and why is it important that she can cry? Think of a time you cried even though you felt too old—does this help you understand Rama better? Do you think anyone is ever too old to cry?
- Why is it so hard for Rama and her family to leave Syria?

Writing Prompts

- Imagine you had to leave your home suddenly like Rama. Write a diary entry about what you would take with you and how you would feel.
- Write about a time you felt scared or uncertain but found courage—just like Rama did on her journey.



Photo credit: Nizar Ali Badr, Syrian sculptor



Additional Resources

Organizations that Support Refugees and Girls' Education Rights

malalafund.org

"Malala Fund is working for a world where every girl can learn and choose her own future." Learn all about Nobel Peace Prize-winning Malala Yousafzai's organization and read updates, including girls' voices, partner stories, and media releases.

[UNICEF](https://www.unicef.org)

Provides essential supplies, creates safe spaces for children to play, and offers mental health support. Learn more about refugee situations around the world and donate to support UNICEF's assistance efforts.

[Save the Children](https://www.savethechildren.org)

Delivers life-saving aid, including food, shelter, and education, to help children recover and return to learning. Learn about refugees and donate to help child refugees.

Teaching Kids about Refugees

[World Refugee Day Resources and Activities for Kids](#)

A collection from Globe Trottin' Kids.

[World Refugee Day Toolkit from UNICEF](#)

Help raise awareness for millions of children forced from home.

[UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency's Teaching About Refugees Webpage](#)

This page offers UNHCR teaching resources on refugees, asylum, and migration for primary and secondary students, plus guidance for teachers supporting refugee children in class.

[World Refugee Resources from Twinkl](#)

Find ready-made lesson plans, assemblies, creative poster packs, dual-language resources, and activities like coloring pages and displays to teach about World Refugee Day. Materials include PowerPoints on refugee stories, sports stars, and ways to support refugees, suitable for all ages.

Videos

[Who is a Refugee?](#)

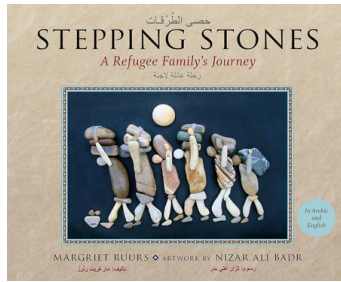
This animated video from UNHCR provides a brief introduction to what it means to be a refugee.

[Kids, Refugees, Questions: What's it like to have no home?](#)

This 2016 video from The Guardian asks young kids from the UK what questions they have for Syrian refugees their same age and records their responses.



Book List



Stepping Stones: A Refugee Family's Journey

by Margaret Ruurs, artwork by Nizar Ali Badr

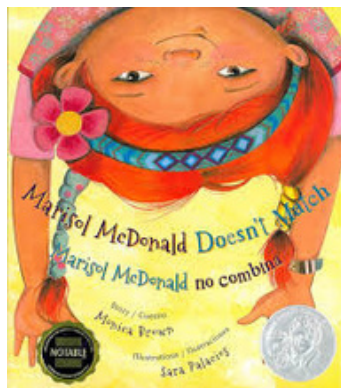
Told through a young boy's eyes, this bilingual book shares his family's flight from violence in Syria, introducing children to the refugee experience and Syrian culture. The story is movingly illustrated with the stone artwork of Syrian artist Nizar Ali Badr.



Everyone Loves Lunchtime but Zia

by Jenny Liao, illustrated by Dream Chen

A Chinese-American girl grows to feel proud to share the traditional Cantonese dishes her parents prepare for her with her classmates in this heartwarming picture book. Encourages kids to feel proud to share their cultural identities.



Marisol McDonald Doesn't Match

by Monica Brown, illustrated by Sara Palacios

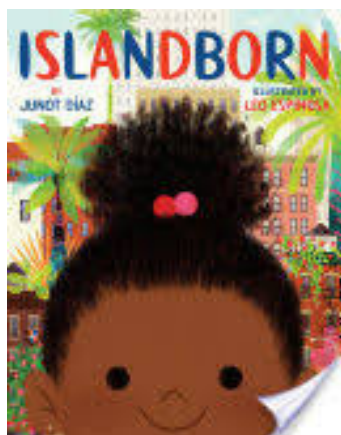
Biracial, Peruvian-Scottish-American Marisol McDonald doesn't make sense to people who try to put her identity into a box, but she loves being exactly who she is. Her vibrant way of living and mixed heritage affirms our blended society and celebrates people from diverse backgrounds.



Areli is a Dreamer

by Areli Morales

A DACA Dreamer shares her inspiring immigration story. As a child, she left Mexico to join her parents in New York, facing language barriers and prejudice before finding her place in America. This powerful picture book tells the story of a girl living between two worlds and chasing her American dream.



Islandborn

by Junot Díaz

This story follows a young girl, Lola, as she learns from family and friends about the island where she was born. While the island isn't named, readers can infer it reflects the history of the Dominican Republic. It explains in an age-appropriate way why people are sometimes forced to leave their home countries.



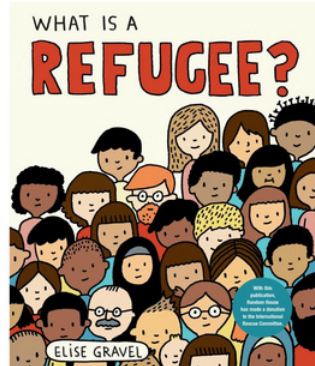
Book List



Dreamers

by Yuyi Morales

This beautifully illustrated book celebrates the gifts migrants bring: resilience, history, and the strength to create a new home. This memoir tells of finding your way in a new world, cherishing family, and carrying your dreams wherever you go. A Spanish edition, *Soñadores*, is also available. [Morales' reading of her book](#) is excellent.



What is a Refugee?

by Elise Gravel

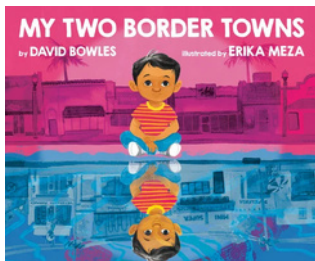
An accessible picture book that introduces young children to the concept of refugees. Bold illustrations and simple text answer key questions: Who are refugees? Why must they leave their homes? And why are they sometimes unwelcome? A clear, timely tool for helping kids understand the world around them.



Sugar in Milk

by Thrity Umrigar

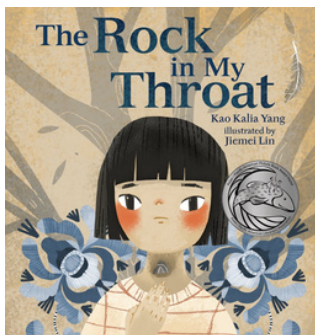
A beautifully told picture book on immigration, showing how diversity and acceptance strengthen us all.



My Two Border Towns

by David Bowles, illustrated by Erika Meza

A boy and his father take weekend trips to The Other Side/El Otro Lado. Along the U.S.-Mexico border, they visit favorite spots, spend time with family, and help friends seeking asylum—a tender story of community, care, and the vibrant life of border towns. Available in English and Spanish.



The Rock in My Throat

by Kao Kalia Yang, illustrated by Jiemei Lin

In this moving memoir, Kao Kalia Yang recounts her life as a young Hmong refugee, struggling to speak at school after witnessing her parents' mistreatment. Somber yet filled with love and hope, it's a story for anyone learning to find their voice.



Book List



Finally Seen

by Kelly Yang

This riveting, realistic middle-grade novel is about a girl who reunites with her parents and sister in China after five years apart, discovering family, friendship, and the joy of being truly seen.



Other Words for Home

by Jasmine Warga

This middle-grade novel is told through twelve-year-old Jude's eyes. Her life in Syria changes when conflict hits close to home. She and her mother travel to America, where Jude navigates school, family, and her identity—growing up, wearing hijab, and facing Islamophobia.



Land of the Cranes

by Aida Salazar

This middle-grade verse novel follows nine-year-old Latinx Betita, who finds hope in poetry and community while living in a family detention center after her father's deportation.



Save Me a Seat

by Sarah Weeks, Gita Varadarajan

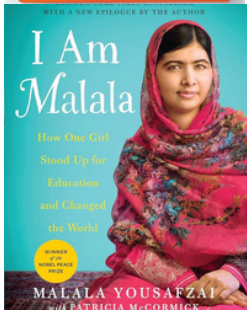
In this middle-grade novel, Joe and Ravi seem different—one a local kid, the other new from India—but both struggle with school life. When they face the class bully, they team up for a wild week to take control of their lives.



I Am Malala: How One Girl Stood Up for Education and Changed the World; Young Reader's Edition

by Patricia McCormick, Malala Yousafzai

Born in 1997 in Pakistan's Swat Valley, Malala Yousafzai witnessed her home fall under Taliban control. Now living in England, she advocates for every child's right to education. In 2014, she became the youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner. Learn more at malalafund.org.



Free as a Bird: The Story of Malala

by Lina Maslo

This picture book shares the inspiring story of Malala Yousafzai, the youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner, and her fight for education and human rights. Great for younger grades.