

Refugees and migration: Junior Secondary English, Year 8

Seeking refuge — The journey

This unit of work, *Seeking refuge — The journey*, allows students to explore the human face of the journey undertaken by refugees and asylum seekers, and to create a digital story to reflect what they learn. Texts used include *The Happiest Refugee: A memoir* by Anh Do, *Mahtab's Story* a novel by Libby Gleeson, the non-fiction text *Children of War: Voices of Iraqi refugees* by Deborah Ellis; and the graphic novel *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan.

Focus

This unit provides opportunities to explore the ideas that:

- wars, disaster, persecution and poverty can make it necessary for people to leave their homes
- the decision to leave home is difficult to make and the journey is often dangerous
- asylum seekers and refugees can often spend years in difficult conditions in refugee camps and detention centres before they are offered resettlement
- it can be difficult to adjust to life in a new country, especially when the media negatively portrays refugees and asylum seekers.

Australian Curriculum: English

The general capabilities emphasised in the unit of work, *Seeking refuge — The journey*, are literacy, information and communication technology (ICT) capability, critical and creative thinking and intercultural understanding.

The Australian Curriculum: English is built around the three interrelated strands of Language, Literature and Literacy. This unit of work integrates all three strands. Students respond personally, critically and creatively to a range of factual and literary print and multimodal texts, focusing on the text types of narrative, literary recount and literary description.

Content

The activities will support students to engage with the following content descriptions.

<p>Language</p> <p>Expressing and developing ideas</p>	<p>Investigate how visual and multimodal texts allude to or draw on other texts or images to enhance and layer meaning (ACELA1548)</p> <p>Recognise that vocabulary choices contribute to the specificity, abstraction and style of texts (ACELA1547)</p>
<p>Literature</p> <p>Literature and context</p>	<p>Explore the ways that ideas and viewpoints in literary texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts may reflect or challenge the values of individuals and groups (ACELT1626)</p>
<p>Responding to literature</p>	<p>Recognise and explain differing viewpoints about the world, cultures, individual people and concerns represented in texts (ACELT1807)</p>

Creating literature	Experiment with particular language features drawn from different types of texts, including combinations of language and visual choices to create new texts (ACELT1768)
Literacy Interacting with others	Plan, rehearse and deliver presentations, selecting and sequencing appropriate content, including multimodal elements, to reflect a diversity of viewpoints (ACELY1731)
Interpreting, analysing, evaluating	Apply increasing knowledge of vocabulary, text structures and language features to understand the content of texts (ACELY1733)
Creating texts	<p>Create imaginative, informative and persuasive texts that raise issues, report events and advance opinions, using deliberate language and textual choices, and including digital elements as appropriate (ACELY1736)</p> <p>Use a range of software, including word processing programs, to create, edit and publish texts imaginatively (ACELY1738)</p>

NSW 7–10 English Syllabus

Syllabus outcomes	Students learn to	Students learn about
OUTCOME 1: A student responds to and composes texts for understanding, interpretation, critical analysis and pleasure	1.1 respond to imaginative, factual and critical texts, including the required range of texts, through wide and close listening, reading and viewing 1.3 compose imaginative, factual and critical texts for different purposes, audiences and contexts 1.7 respond to and compose texts beyond the literal level 1.9 demonstrate understanding of the complexity of meaning in texts	
OUTCOME 3: A student responds to and composes texts in different technologies	3.2 respond critically and imaginatively to texts in a range of technologies, including video, computers, print and handwriting	
OUTCOME 4: A student uses and describes language forms and features, and structures of texts appropriate to different purposes, audiences and contexts		4.7 the effectiveness of specific language forms and features and structures of texts for different purposes, audiences and contexts and for specific modes and mediums 4.8 the ways in which specific language forms and features and structures of text are used to shape meaning including, in written texts, medium, organisation, sentence structures, grammar, punctuation, vocabulary and spelling

Syllabus outcomes	Students learn to	Students learn about
OUTCOME 5: A student makes informed language choices to shape meaning with accuracy, clarity and coherence	5.1 express considered points of view in speech or writing, accurately and coherently and with confidence and fluency in rehearsed, unrehearsed and impromptu situations 5.3 experiment with forms, features and structures, modes and media in deciding on the best ways to shape meaning with accuracy, clarity and coherence	
OUTCOME 6: A student draws on information, experience and ideas to imaginatively and interpretively respond to and compose texts	6.3 explore real and imagined (including virtual) worlds through close and wide engagement with texts 6.5 identify the ways characters, situations and concerns in texts connect to students' own experiences, thoughts and feelings	6.8 the ways 'the real world' is represented in the imaginary worlds of texts including literature, film, media and multimedia texts 6.10 the structure and features of imaginative texts including characterisation, setting, tension and climax, chronology and time, narrative voice, effective beginnings and endings
OUTCOME 10: A student identifies, considers and appreciates cultural expression in texts	10.1 recognise and consider cultural factors, including cultural background and perspective, when responding to and composing texts	

Teaching & learning activities

1. Introduce the unit with the refugee's journey and Anh Do

Libby Gleeson based her novel *Mahtab's Story* on interviews with a teenage girl from Sydney who had fled Afghanistan. In the early pages of his memoir, Anh Do uses stories told by his family to reconstruct a journey from Vietnam that he was too young to remember.

In this unit students will use an existing interview with a former refugee as a narrative 'skeleton' to write four fictional scenes from each stage of a refugee's typical journey — leaving home, on the road, seeking refuge and resettlement. Background research using information reports, factual recounts and factual descriptions will aid students in literary description in each scene. Students will be carefully scaffolded through class discussion, shared reading, viewing and listening, pair and small group work and individual writing exercises, to then write their fictional scenes independently. They will create a digital story containing the source interview, their scenes, a text box explaining how a particular NGO helps refugees and asylum seekers, visuals including a map of the journey route and Creative Commons-sourced images representing the journey.

Students will explore and develop narrative writing skills, looking closely at 'the journey' as a narrative structure and the scene as a key element in dramatic storytelling. They will explore the interview as an example of a literary or factual recount, and experiment with representing the 'real world' in fiction, based on a true story. By exploring a graphic novel and online interactive guides and creating a multimedia text, students can develop visual literacy skills.

Most importantly, students will consider different cultural perspectives as they put a human face on refugees and asylum seekers and reflect on their representation in the media.

The refugee's journey

Show a short clip of *Anh Do's stand up*¹ comedy and also Anh Do being *interviewed*² after winning a prize for his memoir *The Happiest Refugee*.

Discuss. Check the students' understandings of the difference in meaning between asylum seeker and refugee:

¹ Anh Do clip on YouTube (2 minutes): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z_eOuFx6kSo.

² ABC Anh Do interview on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZrHVjq3jRuM>.

A refugee is a person who has fled his or her country of origin in fear of being persecuted because of race, religion, nationality, public opinion or membership of a particular social group. An asylum seeker is a person who has fled their home and is seeking protection from another country. They are waiting for their claim to be a refugee to be evaluated.

As a member of the international community, Australia signed the United Nations Refugee Convention in 1954 and so shares responsibility for protecting refugees — people who have been forced to leave their home country and cannot return because of war, famine or persecution.

This program has two functions. It offers protection to people already in Australia who are found to be refugees (onshore protection) and it offers resettlement to refugees overseas (offshore resettlement).

In 2008–09, Australia accepted 13,507 people in this program — 11,010 were processed outside of Australia (offshore) and 2,497 were processed here in Australia (onshore). This was less than one per cent of all new settlers in 2008–09. Even with such small numbers, there have been many significant refugees in Australia's history. Share the following list of just some of the Australians who have contributed to cultural and political life, having come to Australia as refugees. Do students recognise any of the names, apart from Anh Do?

Just some of the many Australian high achievers who once were refugees include scientists Sir Gustav Nossal and Dr Karl Kruszelnicki, 2009 Victorian of the Year Dr Berhan Ahmed, painter Judy Cassab, comedian Anh Do, filmmaker Khoa Do, author Nam Le, academic Associate Professor My-Van Tran, Dr Anita Donaldson, poet Juan Garrido-Salgado, painter and restaurateur Mirka Mora, actor Henri Szeps, broadcasters Les Murray and Caroline Tran, Australian Rules footballer Alex Jesaulenko, footballer Atti Abonyi, swimmers John and Ilsa Konrads, newspaper editor Michael Gawenda, architect Harry Seidler, business people Sir Peter Abeles, Larry Adler, Ouma Sananikone and Judit Korner, public servant Tuong Quang Luu and politicians Jennie George and Nick Greiner.

Text source: The Refugee Council of Australia web page [Myths about refugees and asylum seekers](#).³

³ Refugee Council of Australia's website page and section 'Myths about refugees and asylum seekers': <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/myths.php#contributions>.

2. The journey as narrative structure

Begin with the quote below:

The Journey is the oldest, truest, most inescapable shape for a story. From nursery story to biblical narrative to contemporary novel, someone is always setting out from home.

The Journey doesn't need to be a literal voyage ... It can be physical or mental, deliberate or accidental, voluntary or forced, a quest or a flight.

Source: Jerome Stern, *Making Shapely Fiction*.⁴

Have students in pairs discuss Anh Do's journey in the terms of the quote, to then report their discussion to the class. Was his journey:

- **physical or mental?**
- **deliberate or accidental?**
- **a quest or a flight?**

Consider that it could be a quest *and* a flight, and that the experience of resettlement is also a mental journey.

Hand out the following 'The journey' schema adapted from *Get Connected*, Issue 8. Introduce the typical shape of a refugee's journey, in the four stages from 'The journey' handout: 1. leaving home, 2. on the road, 3. seeking refuge and 4. resettlement.

⁴ Jerome Stern (1991) *Making Shapely Fiction*, Dell Publishing, New York (page 33).

Leaving home

War, disasters, persecution and poverty can make it necessary for people to leave their homes. They may decide to leave slowly, after a long period of their situation getting worse. They could also make the decision suddenly. When events change quickly there's no time to plan, pack or sometimes even keep families together.

On the road

Families are at great risk. They may be attacked, or lack food, water and shelter. They may get lost or not know where they're going; and they can travel for days, weeks or even months. People may get turned back at the border or reach terrain that is too difficult to cross.

Seeking refuge in your own country

Most people seeking refuge go to another part of their own country, especially if they can't get to the border to escape.

They are called Internally Displaced People (IDPs). Unlike refugees, IDPs lack protection under international law.

Some refugees stay for a few months before they can return home or resettle. Others may live in a refugee camp for many years. The camp can be the only home that the children know.

Seeking refuge in another country

Some people cross the border into another country, and a refugee camp may grow where aid can be delivered. Other refugees also try to get there to receive help. In the new country, refugees may be treated like prisoners and prevented from leaving the camp or moving about freely.

Returning home

When it is safe, or if conditions have improved, many displaced people and refugees go back to their old homes.

They may need to rebuild destroyed houses, farms, schools and businesses. Displaced people may not receive as much help as refugees returning from another country.

Local integration

If their home is not safe or if someone else has taken their land, displaced people and refugees may make a home in the new area they escaped to. This can mean living on land nobody wants or staying in the refugee camp with poor conditions and little land. The people who already live in this area must make room for these new residents.

Resettlement

Some refugees get a chance to move to a third country. From the refugee camp, they can apply to live in a new country. However, countries control the number of refugees they allow to enter. Living conditions there can be much better but it is often difficult to adjust to a new country.

Source: World Vision (2010) *Get Connected*, Issue 8

Have students in small groups share their recall of Anh Do's experience recounted in the earlier [interview](#)⁵, through discussion of these journey-stage questions:

- **Why was his family forced to leave home?**
- **What dangers did they face on the journey?**
- **What were conditions like in the refugee camp?**
- **How did his family adjust to life in Australia?**

After small-group discussion, show the class a [second interview](#)⁶ with Anh Do to help them answer the questions. Encourage the groups to take notes.

Discuss the interview as a mode to elicit different types of information and responses, depending on its purpose. Responses can be agreement or disagreement with the interviewer, who is setting the agenda, and they can be extended, spontaneous or rehearsed responses, give factual information, an opinion or a story. Different text types may be found in answers, from how to do something (procedure) to retelling a personal experience (literary recount).

Have students watch the second interview with Anh Do again. Both interviews link the news of Anh Do's prize with the treatment of asylum seekers in Australia — both topics of headline news. The following questions, to be kept in mind while watching, will help students to compare the two interviews:

- **What was the purpose of the interview?**
- **What background information would the interviewers need before they spoke to Anh Do?**
- **Might all of their questions have been pre-prepared?**
- **Were the questions closed or open-ended?**
- **Did there appear to be any unexpected answers that might have led the questions in a different direction?**
- **Did the interviewers have a purpose besides discussing An Doh's award of the prize?**
- **What strategies did they use to change topics or the directions of Anh Do's answers?**
- **Did Anh Do himself have a purpose? Using your knowledge of text types, what type of responses did Anh Do provide?**

Groups now write completed sentences to answer the four questions below.

⁵ As above: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZrHVjq3jRuM>.

⁶ ABC 7:30 Report interview on YouTube (7 minutes): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z0gt1pA3F-E>.

- **Why was his family forced to leave home?**
- **What dangers did they face on the journey?**
- **What were conditions like in the refugee camp?**
- **How did his family adjust to life in Australia?**

Presentation and reflection

Have groups present responses as to why Anh Do had to leave. Consider together how each group may choose and prioritise different information from the same interview text. Students reflect on the personal dimension of broader issues in the news, such as refugees. A particular person's story can engage us with broader issues. Stress that this is an aim of the unit, to understand how language and narrative can engage us with broader issues.

3. 'Leaving home' and 'On the road'

To follow are three texts that address the issues of 'leaving home' and being 'on the road'.

Surviving on hope in Somali camps

Begin with discussion of the difficulty of leaving home, illustrated by the example of Kadija from Somalia. Kadija had to leave her elderly infirm grandmother behind with her eldest daughter who is only 13 (around the same age as the students).

Display the article about Kadija titled [Surviving on hope in Somali camps](#)⁷ on the interactive whiteboard and paraphrase it. Somalia is the third largest source of the world's refugees⁸. Kadija might be defined as an example of an 'internally displaced person'. Reinforce the difficulty of making such a decision by playing an [audio interview](#)⁹ with an aid worker who spoke to Kadija.

The Happiest Refugee

Read the section in *The Happiest Refugee* (chapter 2, page 9 to first paragraph page 10) describing the boat that takes them from Vietnam to Malaysia.

⁷ ABC world news page URL: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-08-29/surviving-on-hope-in-somali-camps/2857014?section=world>.

⁸ Reference World Vision (2010) *Get Connected*, Issue 8 – Migration: People on the move, page 10.

⁹ ABC audio file URL: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-08-26/faith-kasina-talks-about-meeting-kadija/2857044>.

In pairs, students briefly imagine being stuck on such a boat with 40 people. Consider what they might need, the difficult issues such as lack of water, and the good that might come of it, such as friendships emerging.

Read a section from *The Happiest Refugee* (pages 22–24), having summarised what went before (from page 13 onward).

Summary

Before they make international waters, an armed Communist patrol boat shoots at them. The boat is crowded, the sun burning; petrol fumes, the smell of old fish and the boat's motion make people vomit. They have to bail out water from the waves.

During a terrible storm, most of the rice is ruined and much of the fresh water is lost overboard. A feverish, incoherent teenager jumps overboard and is lost. Pirates attack and steal everything of value including jewellery and the boat's engine. Luckily the spare second engine is hidden. However, the worst experience, which students heard Anh Do talk about in the ABC interview, was to come, when pirates strike again.



Thirty-five Vietnamese refugees wait to be taken aboard the ship *USS Blue Ridge*. They are being rescued from a 10.6-metre fishing boat 560 kilometres northeast of Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, after spending eight days at sea. Photos [left](#)¹⁰ and [right](#)¹¹ by PH2 Phil Eggman (Public domain), via Wikimedia Commons

¹⁰ Link to Wikimedia file photo left: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:35_Vietnamese_boat_people_2.JPG.

Discuss the irony of Anh Do's story. If pirates had not attacked a second time they would have died of thirst, but they were thrown a gallon of water by the youngest of the departing attackers. How surprising is it in a narrative when someone who is 'bad' does something good?

Mahtab's Story

Introduce *Mahtab's Story*: Mahtab is from Afghanistan, which since 1979 has been the main source of the world's refugees with over six million people having fled because of war and persecution. Twenty-five per cent of refugees are Afghanis¹².

Read to the class from pages 6 to 9 in which Mahtab's family must decide whether or not to flee the Taliban¹³, the repressive regime that took over in 1996 and immediately banned girls from going to school and women from working or leaving home without a male relative.

In their learning journals, students privately reflect on how they would feel if they overheard their parents or caregivers talking about leaving their home. How hard would it be to suddenly have to leave everything behind: home, friends, pets and school? What would students take if they could only choose one personal possession?

The journey to find a safe refuge is full of risk. We saw how Kadija and her family had to *walk* for days without supplies, begging on the way, to seek refuge at a camp in the capital Mogadishu.

In Gleeson's novel, Mahtab's family are hidden behind furniture in a truck to cross into Pakistan. The novel begins dramatically within the journey, with a scene in the truck. Before reading out this section, discuss this explanation of what a scene is:

A scene ... gives the feeling that the action is unfolding before the reader. A scene makes the past present. The reader sees the characters in action, sees their gestures, hears their voices in conversation. Their participation (involvement) in the story is greater ... As soon as we see the scene, we feel it, smell it, hear it, and believe, for the moment, that we're in it.¹⁴

Scenes work on the principle of 'show — don't tell'. They might involve a description of a setting

¹¹ Link to Wikimedia file for photo right: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:35_Vietnamese_boat_people.JPG.

¹² Reference World Vision (2010) *Get Connected*, Issue 8 – Migration: People on the move, page 10.

¹³ Find information on the Taliban on the info please website: <http://www.infoplease.com/spot/taliban.html>.

¹⁴ Theodore A. Rees Cheney (2001) *Writing Creative Nonfiction: Fiction techniques for crafting great nonfiction*, Ten Speed Press, Berkeley, page 54.

using all the senses; characters' dialogue, thoughts, actions and gestures; they might take place in one location or one interrupted piece of time; for example, the characters might be walking along, moving through locations, but action occurs in one time frame.

Read the first scene of *Mahtab's Story* and the first two scenes of Chapter 3.

In pairs, students discuss what travelling hidden in the back of a truck would be like. They might recall a long, uncomfortable drive they've experienced. What are the differences between their experience and Mahtab's?

In small groups, students discuss the aspects of a scene evident in these extracts; for example, dialogue and sensory language. They underline the words and phrases that show the feelings of the characters, including indirect expressions such as gestures and figurative language (similes and metaphors) and grade the meaning of this evaluative vocabulary into high or low intensity.

Have students share findings with the class that illustrate that a scene shows what characters are doing and how they are feeling. They would have found that the evaluative vocabulary was high in intensity. Discuss how the expression of characters' emotions develops empathy and suspense in narratives.

Writing activity

Students are now scaffolded into writing their own fictional scene, an episode from a literary recount. They must choose Somalia, Afghanistan or another contemporary refugee source, study the country's map and write two scenes — one describing the 'leaving home' and another describing 'on the road.'

Have students refer to 'The Journey' proforma.

Students should use at least one metaphor or simile in their scene to vividly illustrate the physical sensation of the journey. Refer back to scene at the beginning of Chapter 3 of *Mahtab's Story*, where the motion of the truck is compared to being inside an elephant or a dinosaur having difficulty climbing a mountain. They should use emotionally intense evaluative vocabulary.

Presentation

Students discuss the scenes and the process of writing, in particular how difficult it was emotionally, or share their writing with the class.

Reflection

Students reflect on what they have learnt about the journey as a narrative form, the dramatic scene in imaginative writing, the four stages of the journey of the refugee or asylum seeker, the difficulty of making the decision to leave and the trials of the journey. Reiterate that they will be choosing an interview with a particular refugee, and using their story and background research, their empathy and their imagination, to write a scene from each stage of their journey.

4. Seeking refuge and resettlement

In this section, students will research the experiences of refugees as they seek refuge in another country. At the end of this research, students will then use this material to write the third scene in their refugee's journey.

Children of War: Voices of Iraqi refugees and The Happiest Refugee

Introduce *Children of War: Voices of Iraqi refugees* by Deborah Ellis, a collection of interviews with young people aged eight to 18 whose families fled Iraq to escape the brutality of Saddam Hussein's regime (check background knowledge). After Afghans, Iraqis make up the second largest group of refugees in the world¹⁵. Begin with the interview with 'R' (pages 26–31), an unnamed 18-year-old Iraqi youth who belongs to a persecuted ethnic group, the Kurds. In the section to be read out (from paragraph 3, page 28 to page 30 'Finally we came to Canada'), we can see how R's journey goes, from leaving home because of war and persecution, to being on the road, to seeking refuge in a refugee camp, then to resettlement in Canada. The context for this section is that R's father has left to become a soldier in the Iraqi army.

Afterwards, discuss how R talks so much about the terrible conditions in the refugee camp where he spent four years. Students can compare this very negative account to Anh Doh's account of the refugee camp on the Malaysian island where his family stayed for only three months (pages 27–28 to the end of the first section on page 28).

In small groups, students then discuss the positives of the refugee camp focused on by Anh Doh. Groups share findings with the class: they feel very lucky to be alive; make friends with other refugees; put their experiences into perspective, realising they had not suffered as much as others; after extreme hunger, food is now provided; they sell a possession to buy luxury food; they do not have to spend long there before an offer comes to resettle in Australia.

¹⁵ *Get Connected*, Issue 8 – Migration: People on the move, World Vision, 2010, page 10.

Research activity

In pairs or small groups, depending on computer availability, have students explore an [interactive guide to refugee camps](#)¹⁶ first led by the teacher on the interactive whiteboard.

The guide is on a website by Doctors Without Borders (*Médecins Sans Frontières* – MSF). Discuss the work this humanitarian-aid non-government organisation (NGO) does, and background knowledge of the work of other NGOs who aid refugees, such as World Vision, Amnesty International and the Refugee Council of Australia¹⁷.

As research for their writing, have students explore the interactive guide to become familiar with conditions in camps, and listen to the stories of refugees as examples of translated interviews, making notes for later reference.

Other useful resources are [Anatomy of a refugee camp](#)¹⁸ — a Flash version interactive refugee camp layout, and ‘Kala Refugee Camp’ below, on conditions in Zambia’s largest refugee camp.

Have students continue their refugee’s journey to include the third stage — ‘Seeking refuge’.

Kala Refugee Camp



Daria and her children, Mutuka and Nghanwe, in the Kala Refugee Camp (Zambia)

In Zambia’s largest refugee camp, Congolese mothers face the challenge of protecting their children from malnutrition and malaria — both potentially fatal. Kala Refugee Camp has over 16,000 refugees. There isn’t always enough food, clean water or medical supplies.

The violence and political unrest in the Congo have seen thousands of people fleeing their homes and having little choice about where they end up. Daria has been raising her family — four-year-old Mutuka and one-year-old Nghanwe — in Kala Refugee Camp since 2001. Daria says, ‘We don’t live in good conditions because there is not enough food. Mutuka loses weight and his stomach is bloated. My main worry is the sickness of my children. They are constantly sick.’

¹⁶ *Médecins Sans Frontières* website interactive ‘A Refugee Camp on the Web’ URL: <http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/events/refugeecamp/guide/index.cfm>.

¹⁷ *Get Connected*, Issue 8 – Migration: People on the move, 2010, page 20.

¹⁸ ‘Anatomy of a refugee camp’ URL: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/refugeecamp/index.html>.



Food distribution at Kala Refugee Camp

The camp relies on food trucked in from South Africa or Kenya. Many children are given extra rations to fight malnutrition. Families would die without the food. Daria and her family are also threatened by malaria infection and the likelihood of getting diarrhoea from the camp's poor sanitation.

Throughout the camp, preventable disease is common. The main causes of infant mortality in the camp are respiratory tract infection, malaria, malnutrition and diarrhoea.

The health clinic does what it can to monitor the health of children under five. Additional rations and high-energy protein supplements are given to children who are malnourished.

Daria visits the clinic as often as possible. 'It takes about one hour to walk to the health clinic. Sometimes the medication we need is not available in the clinic.' The clinic and food program are supported by World Vision but there is never enough. According to Daria, 'Sometimes we just stay hungry and don't eat. In a month there are about six days where we don't eat at all.'

Source: World Vision (2010) *Get Connected: Issue 8 — Migration, people on the move*, page 21.

Resettlement

The fourth stage of the journey for the students' refugee narrative is resettlement in a new country. After researching stories of resettlement, the students will then complete their refugee narrative.

Arriving in a new, foreign country is disorienting. Mahtab uses her own cultural perspective to describe what she first sees when she arrives in Australia (page 117): 'People everywhere, their arms showing, their faces naked. No beards.'

Refugees often arrive from a country to which they first fled on fleeing their home country. They will also compare a country such as Australia to the last country they were in. Pages 121–22 of *Mahtab's Story* have her first impressions of Darwin. While reading this extract, notice how Mahtab compares Darwin to Indonesia; notice the different cultural lens through which she sees things.

After reading, have students in small groups highlight the descriptions of Darwin that show Mahtab's Afghani cultural framework; for example, 'It was like a market turned outwards' (on page 121).

The Arrival

Introduce Shaun Tan's *The Arrival*¹⁹. Show the first 20 page spreads (unnumbered) of leaving home, the journey and arrival, up to finding a new home. Discuss how the visual text illustrates the disorientation of the migrant as he arrives and settles. Pre-choose a page to scan and display from the character's early arrival, showing his disorientation — perhaps the scene where he does not understand how anything works in his new bedroom.

Writing activity

Discuss the attributes of Gleeson's writing that show Mahtab's Afghani cultural framework and the sense of disjunction created. In small groups, students discuss the cultural confusions the man in Tan's *The Arrival* is experiencing. A 10-minute individual writing exercise can use a chosen page spread from *The Arrival*, with Gleeson's writing as a model (on pages 121–22). Have students write the man's first impressions of his new home from his own particular cultural perspective.

On page 175, near the end of *Mahtab's Story*, is another point where Mahtab confuses one thing for another, but it is in contrast a joyous moment.

We are in Adelaide. We came on the coach last night. It was late in the afternoon when we joined the main road and there was a huge tree by itself and the leaves seemed like they were yellow as well as green and as we drove past they all took off into the air. They were birds, Dad, tiny green and yellow birds. So beautiful and Soraya and I laughed and I don't know when I felt so happy.

Mahtab is soon to be reunited with her father.

Interview activity

Students now need to source and choose an interview (or first-person account, or profile derived from an interview), from resettled refugees who have gone through the four stages of the journey. One option is to follow the stories from the ABC in 'One on One: Goulburn Valley refugees' with stories from *Sakina*²⁰ and *Fatima*²¹ told through photos and audio.

¹⁹ Shaun Tan's website contains images from *The Arrival* and an essay on the book by Tan: <http://www.shauntan.net/books/the-arrival.html>.

²⁰ ABC Open, Love on Canvas: Sakina's story (3:21min): <http://open.abc.net.au/projects/one-on-one-02ue3ea/contributions/love-on-canvas-sakina-s-story-65Zt0cb>.

²¹ ABC Open, I am driving now: Fatima's story (3:50min): <http://open.abc.net.au/projects/one-on-one-02ue3ea/contributions/i-am-driving-now-fatima-s-story-74Mh3cx>.

Other options include interviews from *Children of War* by Deborah Ellis, including ‘R’s story’ (male, fled from Iraq to Iran, resettled Canada; pages 26–31) and those detailed below. Students might go online to independently read and choose a refugee’s story. Otherwise, print out and laminate several copies of Ellis interviews or the suggestions below and hold a ‘Drop Everything and Read’-style session.

Possible interview subjects

- Mie Tha La²² (male, fled Burma to Thailand, resettled Canada)
 Jean Bosco Munizikintore²³ (male, fled Burundi to Tanzania, resettled Australia)
 Aduc Barec²⁴ (female, fled from Sudan to Ethiopia, resettled Australia)
 Yuol Akoy Yuol²⁵ (male, fled from Sudan to Kenya, resettled Australia)
 Tony Le Nguyen²⁶ (male, fled from Vietnam to Thailand, resettled Australia)
 Anisa Memari²⁷ (female, fled from Iran to Turkey, resettled Australia)
 Pierre²⁸ (male, fled from Democratic Republic of Congo to Congo Brazzaville, resettled Australia)

Another option is to read one of the refugee stories below from *Get Connected* Issue 8: Migration — People on the Move.

After researching their refugee resettlement stories, students are to write the fourth stage of their own refugee narrative.

Phong Nguyen



I came to Australia in 1979 as a refugee from Vietnam. I came with my family — my mum, two sisters and a brother.

Four years after the war ended in 1975, life was very hard for many families. My father was a soldier with the South Vietnamese army and he was placed in gaol for 13 years. My mother had to work very hard to support us. Together with thousands of other families, we were forced into the countryside where we were given shovels and axes to fend for ourselves. There was no running water and we had to build huts. Also, my sister was kicked out of university. Four times my mother tried to escape from Vietnam.

Eventually, we got out by wooden boat with about 1,100 people. It was very crowded and it looked

²² Mie Tha Lie: <http://refugeecamp.ca/we-were-refugees/#mietha>.

²³ Jean Bosco Munizikintore: http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/stories_jmunizikintore.php.

²⁴ Aduc Barec: http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/stories_abarec.php.

²⁵ Yuol Akoy Youl: http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/stories_yyuol.php.

²⁶ Tony Le Nguyen: http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/stories_tnguyen.php.

²⁷ Anisa Memari: http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/stories_amemari.php.

²⁸ Pierre: http://www.ras.unimelb.edu.au/Refugees_Australian_Stories/Pierre/index.html.

like sinking. Somehow we survived on the ocean for 10 days before reaching a little town in Indonesia. Two people on board died and one lady gave birth to twins while we were at sea.

We then spent seven months in a refugee camp in Indonesia before coming to Australia. I couldn't understand a word of English (Phong could speak French, Vietnamese and Chinese) but I knew it would be very important to learn.

Today, one thing I love is the beaches in Australia. I love the sea but I still feel uncomfortable to get into the water. I take my kids to the water, but each time they get into the water I cringe. Somehow I have not got over the terrible memories of being in the sea on that boat. Even on big Australian ferries I still feel uncomfortable.

We consider that we are the very lucky few because many Vietnamese families perished and never made it to Australia.

Source: World Vision (2010) *Get Connected* — Issue 8, page 13

Sam Jalloh



I am 15 years old and I came to Australia in 2006. I was born in Sierra Leone in 1995. I was separated from my father when rebels attacked our town and everybody had to run away. Earlier, my mother had died in the civil war. My three older brothers and I were picked up by a UNHCR truck and taken to a UNHCR refugee camp in Guinea and it was another two years before we found our father again.

Even in our refugee camp we were attacked by rebel fighters from Sierra Leone and had to be taken to another camp. I went to a school in the refugee camp but it was very crowded and life in the refugee camp was hard. There was no electricity and there was not much food or water but NGOs like World Vision and Oxfam worked to help us.

After six years in the camp, my uncle who was living in Australia was able to bring us to Australia too. Life in Australia is much better for me and my family. The world here is different and it means that people from other countries like Sierra Leone face a lot of change. I love playing football (soccer) and I think I would like to join the police force when I leave school.

Source: World Vision (2010) *Get Connected* — Issue 8, p.17

Djibril Ly



I came to Australia as a refugee from Mauritania in 2007. I was 24 years old and arrived with my mother, three brothers and one sister. There was fighting in my home country and it was too dangerous, so my family fled to Senegal in 1988 — when I was just four years old.

Then for the next 20 years, we lived in a UNHCR refugee camp in Senegal. Most of my life has been lived in a refugee camp. We lived there with no electricity or water. We didn't know where we were going or when we would be able to leave the refugee camp.

The only things I had heard about Australia were the Opera House, the 2000 Olympics, kangaroos, Aboriginal people — and Harry Kewell. I love football and he was the most famous Australian football player. I didn't believe I would ever come to live here — we

had no money or passports and I couldn't believe it would ever happen.

Then in 2006, we were interviewed by people from the Australian Government and given medical examinations. Nearly one year later, we were given vaccinations and had a week of training about life in Australia. We were taught about the Aussie culture, foods, popular sports, religions and even how to cross roads!

Eventually, seven Mauritanian families were put on a bus to Senegal's airport and we were heading for Australia. We felt sad because we were leaving friends and family — and we didn't really know what life would be like in this new country. At the same time, we also felt excited about the opportunity to start a new life.

We arrived in Australia and we didn't know anyone. We had no food, no money and we didn't speak English (Djibril could speak Pular, French and Wolof!). It was embarrassing and we felt like babies who didn't know anything. We all started to learn English but it has been hard to find work. Two of my brothers are now studying at university and I am studying welding and engineering.

Now I know that if I marry and have kids, life will be different for them. If I study and work hard I will be able to give my family all the things that I couldn't have growing up.

Lots of things are different here. In Australia, all people are equal. People with disabilities are respected and can have a good education. In Africa, people with disabilities would have to beg to survive. Also, there is gender equality in Australia. The man can stay at home and care for the kids but that is very unusual in Africa.

Now I enjoy the best of both cultures. I play football for a local club with Aussie guys from different cultures and have monthly meetings with other Mauritanian families where we help each other, share experiences and make plans for housing, work and future here in Australia.

Source: World Vision (2010) *Get Connected* — Issue 8, page 19.

Further research

Students will also need background research to write their scenes, their box on an NGO, create a journey map and source images.

World Vision has a comprehensive list of [country profiles](#)²⁹.

Students can create a route map using [Google My Maps](#)³⁰. However, they need a Google account to do so; this requires them to be at least 13. The teacher could possibly open an account for the students to create the maps at school.

Encourage students to use only properly attributed Creative Commons-licensed images in their texts, which would make it viable if they wanted to publish it online. [CC Search](#)³¹ is a useful website that allows a search for free Creative Commons content from different sites. As an extension, an additional graphic element might be created with a confronting refugee camp word-visual, or 'wordle'.

Refugee camp 'word cloud'

Create a confronting 'refugee camp' word-visual — a [wordle](#) 'word cloud' — using R's negative description of the refugee camp in Iran in *Children of War: Voices of Iraqi refugees* by Deborah Ellis. Students underline negative words and phrases that 'R' uses to describe the camp.



Before making a list of words and phrases, some actions can be transformed into a single apt verb;

²⁹ World Vision country profiles: <http://www.worldvision.com.au/learn/schoolresources/CountryProfiles.aspx>.

³⁰ Google My Maps: <http://maps.google.com/support/bin/static.py?hl=en&page=guide.cs&guide=21670&topic=21676&from=21676&rd=2>.

³¹ Creative Commons Search: <http://search.creativecommons.org/>.

for example, 'we were just wandering around looking for things we could use, like wood or scraps to burn' could be changed to 'scavenging'. Some statements can be transformed into confronting questions; for example, 'you can imagine' to 'Can you imagine'. The more often a word is input, the larger it will appear, so 'refugee camp' should be repeated and groups can experiment with repeating particular words for effect. To keep words together in a phrase, use tildes between words. Students can begin randomising to try out different effects, then choose one they like and experiment with customising it.

Presentation and reflection

Students explore the digital stories of their classmates, thus sharing in the stories of many other refugees, or different imaginary treatments if the same people are chosen. What do students think or feel when they hear refugees and asylum seekers mentioned in the news, after having put so many individual human faces on the issue?

Global citizenship in action

Look at the Refugee Council of Australia's list '[Myths about refugees and asylum seekers](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/myths.php)',³² such as the myths that 'Asylum seekers who arrive by boat are illegal immigrants'; 'Refugee camps are perfectly safe. Why can't these people just go there?' and 'Refugees don't contribute to Australian society in any meaningful way.'

Have students prepare short digital presentations on 'Myths about refugees and asylum seekers' that can be shown at a school assembly, house meeting or parent-teacher evening. Have students invite their Federal Member of Parliament to the school to talk about refugees and asylum seekers, and show their presentations.

³² Refugee Council of Australia's website page and section 'Myths about refugees and asylum seekers'
<http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/myths.php>.

For the teacher

Find **supplementary resources**³³ for *Get Connected* issues from World Vision Australia. The Refugee Council of Australia has an **education resource kit**³⁴ (.pdf 3.3 MB) aimed at secondary students, with valuable factual information. The case study *Najeeba from Afghanistan* is taken from this resource. The public broadcaster, SBS, through the series and website *Go Back to Where You Came From*³⁵ provides a first-hand account of the international refugee experience.

Teachers **notes**³⁶ (.pdf 49.5 kB) and **reviews**³⁷ (.pdf 49.5 kB) are available for *Mahtab's Story* by Libby Gleeson, and teachers **reviews**³⁸ are available for *Children of War* by Deborah Ellis.

³³ World Vision *Get Connected* Supplementary resources:
<http://www.worldvision.com.au/Learn/SchoolResources/getconnectedsupplementaryresources.aspx>.

³⁴ The Refugee Council of Australia World Refugee Week Teachers Pack 2011:
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/resources/RW_Schools_Pack.pdf.

³⁵ SBS series *Go Back to Where You Came From* with supporting resources:
<http://www.sbs.com.au/shows/goback/listings/detail/i/2/article/8326/Schools-1>.

³⁶ Teachers notes for *Mahtab's Story* by Libby Gleeson, from Dr Susan La Marca:
http://www.allenandunwin.com/_uploads/BookPdf/TeachersNotes/9781741753349.pdf.

³⁷ Teachers reviews of *Mahtab's Story* by Libby Gleeson:
http://www.allenandunwin.com/_uploads/BookPdf/TeachersReview/9781741753349.pdf.

³⁸ Teachers reviews of *Children of War* by Deborah Ellis:
http://www.allenandunwin.com/_uploads/BookPdf/TeachersReview/9781742371146.pdf.