

From War to America

The story of two teenage Syrian refugees living in the U.S.

About the Story

Lexile: 920L

For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.

Learning Objective:

to apply a quote about the strength and courage of refugees to a nonfiction article

Key Skills:

key ideas and details, inference, tone, close reading, critical thinking

Essential Questions:

- What responsibility does the world have to refugees?
- What is the power of kindness?
- What is courage?

Standards:

This article and lesson support these Common Core anchor standards: **R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.6, R.7, W.1, SL.1, L.4, L.5, L.6**
For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.



Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of materials at
scope.scholastic.com.

Video: “Behind the Scenes: From War to America”

Audio:

- The article read by the author
- Vocabulary words
- Poem

Differentiated article:

- Lower-Lexile version (printable)

Poetry Connection:

- “Always” by Rebecca Kai Dotlich (printable)

Literature Connections: ideas for connecting to curricular texts

Activities to print or project:

- Vocabulary
- Video Discussion Questions
- Close Reading and Critical Thinking
- Preparing to Write: The Lives of Refugees
- **Core Skills Workout:** Text Evidence*, Central Ideas and Details*, Summarizing*, Tone*
- Quiz*
- Nonfiction Elements*
- Contest Entry Form

*Available on two levels

Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

1 Preparing to Read

Watch the video.

(15 minutes, activity sheet online)

Project or distribute the **Video Discussion Questions**. Show our **Behind the Scenes video**. Then, as a class, answer the discussion questions.

Preview vocabulary.

(5 minutes, activity sheet online)

Project or distribute the **Vocabulary Words and Definitions**. Review the words as a class. (Optionally, assign the activity for homework.) Highlighted words: *daunting, deteriorate, embroiled, factions, humanitarian, persecution*

2 Reading and Discussing

Read the article.

(45 minutes, activity sheet online)

Read “From War to America” as a class. Then have students work in groups to discuss the following questions:

Close-Reading Questions

▶ **Why did the Jacob family leave their apartment on a September afternoon in 2012?** (key ideas, inference) *The family left their apartment because a battle with guns and bombs was going on right outside. They likely feared that their building would be hit and that they could be hurt or killed.*

▶ **According to the article, why is there fighting in Syria?** (key details) *There is a civil war in Syria involving multiple groups that are fighting for control of the country.*

▶ **What are some of the ways that the war in Syria affected Francois’s and Cedric’s lives in Aleppo?** (key ideas and details) *Answers may include: Their city of Aleppo was “reduced to rubble” (6); they had to live surrounded by gunfire and explosions (6); Francois’s high*

school moved its classes into a basement and often canceled classes altogether (6); the disruptions to Francois’s education put his future in question (6); the boys had to leave their home suddenly and move to another part of Aleppo (7-8); they had to live under difficult conditions, such as frequent power outages and a lack of running water, food, medicine, fuel, and money (8).

▶ **What are some of the challenges that refugees may face?** (key ideas and details) *As they flee, refugees may face a long and dangerous journey (7). In their new country, refugees may feel alone because they do not speak the language and are unfamiliar with the customs. They may encounter prejudice and discrimination. Refugees also face practical challenges, such as finding jobs and learning how to get around. In addition, refugees miss their homes and the people they left behind, and may be healing from trauma (8).*

▶ **What is the tone, or attitude, as Kristin Lewis writes about refugees? Explain.** (tone) *The tone as Lewis writes about refugees is sympathetic. She dedicates much of her article to describing the challenges that the Jacobs and other refugees face, and includes a sidebar with suggestions for helping refugees. She sounds like she is saddened by the plight of refugees and wants others to help them.*

Bring the class back together to answer the following critical-thinking questions.

Critical-Thinking Questions

(5 minutes, activity sheet online)

▶ **Lewis writes that Francois tries not to think too much about what his life would be like if he had stayed in Syria, that such thoughts “can haunt a person” (9). Why might it be difficult or upsetting for Francois to think about what his life in Syria would be like?** *On one hand,*

thinking about living in Syria could be difficult for Francois because he might imagine himself living in the familiar place where he grew up, surrounded by the friends and family members he left behind. This could increase his homesickness. On the other hand, Francois could be imagining bad things that could have happened to him if he'd remained in Syria, which would be upsetting. (Answers will vary.)

To empathize with someone is to understand and share their feelings—to put yourself in their shoes. Which details in the article could especially help *Scope* readers empathize with Francois and Cedric? *Students might point to the detail about kids playing soccer in the brothers' neighborhood, the story Francois tells about a bomb going off while he was in math class, Francois's quote about how he had to leave Syria without saying goodbye to his friends or getting a final look at the city where he'd grown up, and Francois's quote about sitting by himself at lunch. Such details could help middle school readers relate to Francois and Cedric, and therefore empathize with them.*

BONUS PAIRING

Go to *Scope* Online to find a poem that pairs beautifully with this article.

► In the sidebar “How to Help Refugees,” Rachel Peric says that interacting with people who are different can be awkward and require a “little bit of courage.” Do you agree with her? Do you think it's important to interact with people who are different from you? Explain. *Students might say that it can be hard or intimidating to talk to someone who is different because you're not sure what you have in common, you're afraid of asking dumb questions, or you don't speak the same language. But interacting with people who are different from you is important because it can help those people feel welcome and less lonely, and because it can introduce you to new ideas and give you a better understanding of the world and the people in it.*

3 Skill Building

Featured Skill:

Key Ideas and Details

(15 minutes, activity sheet online)

Have students work in groups to complete the activity **Preparing to Write: The Lives of Refugees**. It will prepare them for the writing prompt on page 9. *For alternate culminating tasks, see the box below.*

Differentiate and Customize

For Struggling Readers

In a well-organized paragraph, describe one challenge refugees face and what you could do to help them overcome that challenge. Support your ideas with details from “From War to America.”

For Advanced Readers

Imagine a group of refugees will soon be arriving in your town. Write an opinion piece for your local newspaper about how your community can help them and why it's important to do so. Support your ideas with details from “From War to America.”

For Changemakers

Write to your local representative about why your community should host a refugee family. The letter should include compelling reasons why this is important as well as what the community could do to support that family.

For Visual Learners and Artists

Create a slideshow or a video explaining how middle school students can help refugees. Consider the idea that big changes start with small steps.