



Changing life stories

Refugee Week 2023

A National Literacy Trust membership resource

Teachers' notes

Thank you for engaging with our Refugee Week resources. These resources were generously funded by a coalition of trusts and funds, including the [Association of Jewish Refugees](#), enabling us to provide these to schools for free.

The theme for Refugee Week this year is 'Compassion'. The organisation which runs Refugee Week (refugeeweek.org.uk) states: *For Refugee Week's 25th anniversary we invite you to celebrate what compassion looks like in action. Together we can create a shared understanding of compassion to ensure we are extending it widely to all.* We support this theme and hope that, in providing these resources, we are helping you to support your students to understand and develop this vital value.

We understand that the subject of Refugee Week is of utmost importance, but we also acknowledge that it may feel challenging to teach. It's important to consider the diverse range of students in your class, including some who may be refugees themselves or have experienced difficult circumstances. We are also aware that these stories can be deeply moving and may pose a challenge for everyone, including you, as the teacher, to process.

We encourage you to approach these stories with sensitivity and care. Please take the time to review them and their sources thoroughly before sharing them with your students, ensuring that they are appropriate and align with the needs of your students. Our aim is to foster empathy, understanding, and compassion, which are vital for building a progressive and caring society.

In this regard, we are thrilled to collaborate once again with Tom Palmer, the acclaimed author of the award-nominated novel *After the War*, who has developed these resources in partnership with the National Literacy Trust. Tom's extensive interviews and research have provided valuable insights and authenticity to these materials.

Remember, it is essential to create a safe and inclusive learning environment where all students feel respected and supported. By engaging with these resources thoughtfully, we can help cultivate a sense of empathy, promote positive learning experiences, and contribute to a more compassionate society.

In these notes, you will find:

- [About the resources](#) and a short overview of [how to use them](#)
- [A suggested framework for delivery](#)
- [Sources used by Tom Palmer to inform the instalment story](#)
- [Guidance for you on how to approach the subject](#)
- [Some writing tips for students from Tom Palmer](#)

© National Literacy Trust 2023

T: 020 7587 1842 W: literacytrust.org.uk Twitter: @Literacy_Trust Facebook: [nationalliteracytrust](https://www.facebook.com/nationalliteracytrust)

The National Literacy Trust is a registered charity no. 1116260 and a company limited by guarantee no. 5836486 registered in England and Wales and a registered charity in Scotland no. SC042944. Registered address: 68 South Lambeth Road, London SW8 1RL.

- [Sources and further resources](#)
- [Suggested reading \(fiction\)](#)
- [Curriculum links](#)

We hope that these resources will be of great use to you and your students, enabling and inspiring them to produce a short piece of writing over the course of a week.

About the resources

All resources can be downloaded for free from

<https://literacytrust.org.uk/resources/refugee-week>, and are designed for children in Years 5 to 9. They are based around a series of stories created by Tom Palmer, all of which re-tell true stories of refugees who have been forced to leave their country of origin by boat.

Resources are designed to engage children through these five stories and inspire and support them to write their own responses to the issue of refugees, leading them through the process of creating their own story about a refugee that they want to write about.

We have created a series of videos and worksheets to support students to learn about the plight of five groups of refugees. Students will be introduced to six stages of the writing process: character, setting, story, plot, motivation, and planning. Six workshop videos from Tom help students explore the issues from the story as well as the writing stages. These resources are intended to provide students with an opportunity to develop and demonstrate empathy, and sympathy, to those less fortunate than themselves. We intend to help students to secure an understanding that societies, communities, and individuals within them can and should help and welcome those in need. To develop compassion.

The students' task

These resources will support and inspire students to produce a single piece of writing. Each video and worksheet support students to create the core phases of creating a piece of writing about a refugee that they have selected to write about. Some ideas have been provided in the resources. Students might even be inspired to share their writing in the school, or more widely by reaching out to the person that they have focussed on themselves.

We want to give your students the opportunity to have their hard work showcased.

Therefore, we are inviting teachers to submit the top three pieces of work from the project to the National Literacy Trust, so we can publish some of the entries on our website.

Furthermore, from the entries received, one school will be chosen at random to receive a box of books from The National Literacy Trust. If you would like to get involved, please send students' work to sport@literacytrust.org.uk, with 'RW writing' in the subject heading. Our deadline for submissions is **Friday 7 July 2023**.

To enable this, we have provided the following:

- A video from Tom Palmer, to introduce the story and resources to students (10 minutes).

- Four stories written especially for Refugee Week by Tom Palmer. *A fifth story will be written and published during Refugee Week, to focus our attention on what is happening in the world right now.*
- Four videos of Tom Palmer reading the stories aloud.
- Six workshop videos to support and inspire students to write their own responses.
- A series of worksheets and supporting instructions to scaffold and guide the writing process.
- A teacher guide with ideas and sources to support your delivery and children's writing (this document).
- A free online event with Tom Palmer and the authors of *The Power of Welcome* at **13:00 on Thursday 22 June 2023**. During this event, Tom Palmer will discuss the stories that he has written, interview authors with lived experience of leaving their country of origin and provide supportive ideas about how to write about this sensitive subject.

How to use these resources

We want these resources to support you to address this important topic respectfully and sensitively, and to strengthen your confidence to deliver related activities. To this end, we are providing all resources on Wednesday 7 June for you to review and consider their suitability in relation to your students.

Resources to support activity can be used in the following ways:

- **The stories** should be read together. *Boat People* by Tom Palmer follows groups of refugees as they flee their country of origin and attempt to reach safety. The stories cover five periods of time, four stories are available now, while a fifth story will be written during Refugee Week. This final story will cover events relating to refugees travelling by boat during this week and will be written and uploaded for you to read on Friday 23 June. Each chapter is six-seven minutes long when read aloud and is designed to be read one part each day from 19 to 23 June 2023. You can choose to share a video of Tom reading the story or use the PDF copy to read chapters aloud yourself. The PDFs contain links to the real-world sources that Tom used to write the stories.
- **An introductory video** is available, to introduce the stories and resources to students. In this video, Tom Palmer introduces himself and the stories, as well as the activities that students will be taking part in, letting them know how they will be supported to work.
- **Writing activities:** Tom Palmer has created five writing activities that support children to write about a refugee. We have also provided six short workshop videos (4-6 minutes each) which show Tom guiding children through six stages of writing.
- **A live event with an author and someone with lived experience of fleeing their own country.** In the event we will interview a librarian who was forced to leave their country of origin and discuss how to approach writing sensitively and appropriately about the experiences of refugees, and how we can offer support to them. This event will take place on Thursday 22 June 2023 from 13:00 to 14:15. Schools are invited to submit questions for this Q&A by emailing sport@literacytrust.org.uk. Teachers must write

‘Refugee Week question’ in the subject, and include information that they wish to share, considering data protection and safeguarding protocols. We will only use students’ first names, year group, school and area (e.g. Ella, Y8, Alfred Academy in Newham). All questions are to be submitted by 09:00 Monday 19 June 2023. The Q&A will be a live Zoom webinar. You can sign up to take part using this link:

<https://literacytrust.org.uk/https://literacytrust.org.uk/resources/refugee-week/refugee-week>.

Framework for delivery

We recommend the following framework for each day throughout the week beginning Monday 19 June 2023:

1. Read or share Tom’s video of a story (6-8 minutes)
2. Show the workshop video for that day. Children should be encouraged to note down any tips and ideas (4-6 minutes)
3. Share the worksheet to support the activity for that day, and support students to complete their task (30 minutes or more, depending on capacity)

For Thursday 22 June 2023, we would encourage you to take part in the online event.

Date	Story	Writing activity	Additional resource
Monday 19	Story one	Film and worksheet #1	Intro video
Tuesday 20	Story two	Film and worksheet #2	
Wednesday 21	Story three	Film and worksheet #3	
Thursday 22	Story four	Film and worksheet #4	Live event
Friday 23	Story five	Two films and worksheets #5 and #6	

Sources used by Tom Palmer, to be used with the writing challenges

These different sources have been used in stories one to four. Firstly, they have been used to help make the story authentic. Secondly, they will show students how an author might use real testimonies or reporting to create a story. Teachers don’t need to use them, but it would help to contextualise both the chapters and the writing challenges.

Please note: these sources are external to the National Literacy Trust, and we are not responsible for their content. Content on these sites could be changed at any time and, owing to the subject, may cause distress. Please check that these resources are appropriate for your students before sharing them.

- Story 1. A recount: [The 22-Year-Old Woman Behind the Rescue of Over 300 Danish Jews \(mihnyc.org\)](https://mihnyc.org) (5’50 to 11’35).
- Story 2. A newspaper article: <https://www.kentononline.co.uk/kent/news/the-day-16-000-refugees-arrived-in-kent-234609>.
- Story 3. A news report: [June 24 1979 Vietnamese Boat People - The Price of Freedom.](#)

- Story 4. A news report: ['Everyone who was there was changed for life' – Christmas Islanders on the 2010 boat sinking disaster | Australia news | The Guardian.](#)

Guidance for you on how to approach the subject

Our resources follow four (ultimately five) stories of people forced to leave their countries of origin in extreme peril and flee to another country by boat – delivering themselves to the compassion of those nations. Our hope is that these stories will help your children to develop *their* compassion, empathy skills, kindness, and generosity, and to consider those less fortunate than ourselves and how we might support them. For formal training and deeper insight into the topic, we strongly recommend that you explore the wealth of resources that support teachers to teach about refugees (see [Sources and further resources section](#) at the end of this document).

Those of you with students who are refugees themselves from areas of conflict, will know to introduce the subject appropriately. By nature, the themes we are exploring here may cause distress, so please review them to ensure that you are comfortable sharing them, and that they are appropriate for your students. Equally, you may have students who come from families who have limited experience of other cultures. These activities should provide an opportunity to open students' eyes and develop empathy for others.

1. Do these stories include any traumatic scenes? Yes. The stories contain descriptions of people struggling to survive, and the source videos show the peril that they are experiencing.
2. How do I support students to explore viewpoints that might be considered challenging or different from their own? The stories contain acts of kindness and explore positive values and compassion to help others. However, there is an acknowledgement of discrimination and 'othering'. We want our young people to understand why fear and suspicion of those who may be perceived as being 'different' is damaging, harmful and unfounded. It is important to explore this with your students. You might consider some of the following approaches:
 - Group work, to enhance understanding, identify issues, and consider and demonstrate appropriate responses together.
 - Link in with your school values, with a focus on compassion, kindness and community.
 - Encourage children not to judge, but to question. If you don't understand something, find out why it might be happening.

Tom's top tips for writing

Here are some additional tips from Tom to support students' writing:

1. Research: Write down keywords that jump out at you from your source material. You can always add to these in later stages.

2. Planning: Use bits of paper and be free to move anything around. Add in further keywords if you like. Group keywords into clusters. Add feelings and/or descriptive words.
3. Drafting: Just get it down. This is the hardest bit, but also rewarding and fun. Don't worry about any mistakes. If you get stuck, leave it and keep going. Can you paint a picture with your words?
4. Big editing: Move pieces around, add further information and link paragraphs. Can you use questions?
5. Little (line) editing: Replace words, add words, remove words. Repetition can be powerful. You can always undo any changes. Can you use formatting to put emphasis on certain words? Read the whole thing aloud.

Sources and further resources

Refugee Week (<https://refugeeweek.org.uk/>)

Refugee Week is a UK-wide festival celebrating the contributions, creativity and resilience of refugees and people seeking sanctuary. Founded in 1998, and held every year around World Refugee Day on the 20 June, Refugee Week is a growing global movement.

The website contains details of all the arts, cultural, sports and educational events that will be taking place this year. Refugee Week enables people from different backgrounds to connect beyond labels, as well as encouraging understanding of why people are displaced, and the challenges they face when seeking safety.

The theme for Refugee Week 2023 is 'Compassion', with an invitation to: *"...celebrate what compassion looks like in action. Together we can create a shared understanding of compassion to ensure we are extending it widely to all."*

Tom Palmer (<https://tompalmer.co.uk/after-the-war/>)

Tom based his book, *After the War*, on the testimony of several Holocaust survivors that he listened to on the Lake District Holocaust Project website. His website includes interviews and resources about how *After the War* came to be, as well as resources to support its teaching.

British Red Cross (<https://www.redcross.org.uk/get-involved/teaching-resources/refugees-and-migration>)

The British Red Cross provide a plethora of resources to support the teaching of refugees and migration. They provide both primary and secondary age-appropriate materials that may help in addressing any questions that students have about current humanitarian crises.

Ukrainian war resources (<https://literacytrust.org.uk/about-us/ukraine-war-support-and-resources>)

This page houses a collection of resources from the National Literacy Trust, as well as signposting to external resources, to help teachers support the children and families they work with who are affected by the crisis in Ukraine. This includes those fleeing the war, those hosting refugee families, or any children finding news about the crisis upsetting and

overwhelming. These resources are designed to help teachers support wellbeing, combat the spread of disinformation, and welcome newly arrived families.

Suggested reading (fiction)

- *After The War* by Tom Palmer
- *Boy, Everywhere* by A.M. Dassu
- *Illegal* by Eoin Colfer and Andrew Donkin
- *Migrants* by Issa Watanabe
- *My Name is Not Refugee* by Kate Milner
- *No Ballet Shoes in Syria* by Catherine Bruton
- *On the Move: Poems About Migration* by Michael Rosen
- *Refugee Boy* by Benjamin Zephaniah
- *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan
- *The Boy at the Back of the Class* by Onjali Q. Rauf
- *The Crossing* by Manjeet Mann
- *The Island* by Armin Greder
- *The Journey* by Francesca Sanna
- *The Suitcase Paperback* by Chris Naylor-Ballesteros
- *The Unforgotten Coat* by Frank Cottrell Boyce

Curriculum links

English POS KS2

The resources provided link to several strands of the curriculum:

- By the end of Year 6, pupils' reading and writing should be sufficiently fluent and effortless for them to manage the general demands of the curriculum in Year 7
- They should be able to reflect their understanding of the audience and purpose of their writing by selecting appropriate vocabulary and grammar
- Understand the nuances in vocabulary choice and age-appropriate, academic vocabulary. This involves consolidation, practice and discussion of language

Reading

The text is designed to help maintain 'positive attitudes to reading' by giving students the opportunity to read and discuss a fictional text.

The non-statutory guidance suggests that even though pupils can read independently, reading aloud to them should include whole books so that they meet books and authors that they might not choose to read themselves. Listening to Tom Palmer provides an opportunity for this.

Writing

Students work on noting and developing initial ideas, drawing on reading and research.

Students are given the opportunity to select appropriate grammar and vocabulary, understanding how such choices can change and enhance meaning. They are also given the opportunity to evaluate and edit by assessing the effectiveness of their own and others' writing, and proposing changes to vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation to enhance effects and clarify meaning.

English POS KS3

The English national curriculum at Key Stage 3 aims to promote high standards of language and literacy by equipping pupils with a strong command of the spoken and written word, and to develop a love of literature through widespread reading for enjoyment.

The resources provided link to several strands of the curriculum:

- Read easily, fluently and with good understanding
- Develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and information
- Acquire a wide vocabulary, an understanding of grammar, and knowledge of linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language
- Write clearly, accurately and coherently, adapting their language and style in and for a range of contexts, purposes and audiences
- Use discussion in order to learn; they should be able to elaborate and explain clearly their understanding and ideas

Reading

Students will:

- Check their understanding to make sure that what they have read makes sense
- Study a range of authors

Writing

Students will:

- Summarise and organise material, and support ideas and arguments with any necessary factual detail
- Apply their growing knowledge of vocabulary, grammar and text structure to their writing, and select the appropriate form
- Draw on knowledge of literary and rhetorical devices from their reading and listening to enhance the impact of their writing
- Plan, draft, edit and proof-read, through:
 - Considering how their writing reflects the audiences and purposes for which it was intended
 - Amending the vocabulary, grammar and structure of their writing to improve its coherence and overall effectiveness

- Paying attention to accurate grammar, punctuation, and spelling, applying the spelling patterns and rules

Links to the Welsh 2022 Curriculum

Refugee Week resources give learners the opportunity to explore:

Speaking

(Progression step 3)

- Talk about issues and express ideas clearly, reasoning and giving examples, and using subject-specific and context-specific vocabulary
- Ask questions to confirm and check information
- Explain information, ideas, own and others' points of view

(Progression step 4)

- Present ideas and issues convincingly, using a range of techniques for impact
- Respond in group discussions to the ideas of others in thoughtful and considerate ways, including seeking clarification through appropriate questioning

Writing

(Progression step 3)

- Use a range of strategies to plan writing in a range of forms and genres
- Adapt writing style to suit purpose and audience
- Develop ideas and organisation of writing
- Use a wide range of suitable vocabulary, including idiomatic language, subject-specific and context-specific words

(Progression step 4)

- Produce writing, including extended pieces, which uses appropriate tone and style for specific purposes and audiences
- Structure writing in different forms to engage the reader's interest and sustain ideas coherently
- Use wide-ranging vocabulary and idiomatic language effectively to convey meaning and to engage the audience

Reading

(Progression step 3)

- Discuss the plot, character, theme and context of the literature read, expressing ideas and opinions
- Show empathy and recognise that others may have different views

(Progression step 4)

- Analyse language choices and techniques used by authors
- Explore and analyse issues through the plot, character, theme, identity and context of the literature read
- Show tolerance and empathy in responses and appreciate that texts can be interpreted differently
- Develop writing craft and creativity, experimenting with language features used by a range of authors and genres