



Changing life stories

Refugee week

Worksheet #1: WRITE TO YOUR MP

Your first writing challenge for Refugee Week is to **write an email to your MP**, to tell them what you have found out so far about schools and communities helping refugees from Ukraine, and how you think it should happen more often (if that's how you feel).

This is a great example of writing for a purpose. We live in a democracy. Each of us has an MP – Member of Parliament – who is supposed to represent us and listen to us. If you write to them, you can influence what they decide to do in the Houses of Parliament and you might help change the world for the better. Everyone is entitled to a voice.

Here's how to write to your MP:

1. First, find out their name.
2. Next, find their email address on their website. You can also find this out using this Government website: <https://www.parliament.uk/get-involved/contact-an-mp-or-lord/contact-your-mp>.
3. Write a polite email. You could **start by saying you hope they are well** and thank them for being your MP. It is a positive way to start your email and will show that you are considerate and know that they are a person, not just a figure of power.
4. Next, **write something positive about the TV clip about the Ukrainian refugees you have seen:** [\[https://youtu.be/STnZYNschVA\]](https://youtu.be/STnZYNschVA). This could be something like “It was lovely to see those families receiving the care they deserve”.
5. **Now ask your MP if they can do more to help.** Could they help families like that in your area? Could they work with other people in your area to be even more generous to refugees? Do they know how many schools in their area have taken refugees in?
6. Now say **thank you for reading your email**, and explain that you would very much like to hear back from them, with some answers to your questions.

You could even invite them to your school to answer questions about how they feel about refugees.

Before you send the email to your MP, check it – and even get a friend or adult to check it – just to make sure it is as persuasive as possible. Remember that writing to your MP is one of the main ways we can take part in our democracy, especially as you are not allowed to vote until you are a lot older.

Good luck! I hope you hear back.

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T: 020 7587 1842 W: literacytrust.org.uk Twitter: @Literacy_Trust Facebook: nationalliteracytrust

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Worksheet #2: WRITE A WELCOME SIGN

Your second writing challenge for Refugee Week looks simple and quick, but it might not work out that way.

Sometimes, writing for a purpose requires a few words. Remember in chapter two of the story – and in the newspaper article – how the Ukrainian refugees were met with signs saying “YOU ARE SAFE HERE” and “EVERYTHING FOR FREE”? What an extraordinarily powerful example of one person writing for the purpose of helping others!

So, for this writing challenge, we’d like you to write a sign of between two and five words. That’s all. Words. This should be a sign that you would show to refugees if they showed up on your border, to make them feel like some of their problems might be solved, like the good people of Poland did.

Think of the problems that the refugees have, such as a lack of food, clothes, shelter, family or education. What do people really need?

Now make a list – on your own or as a group – of 10, or even 20, phrases you could write on a sign to welcome refugees. We are asking you to write lots because then you can choose the best ones you can possibly come up with, rather than the first.

Once you are happy with a phrase, make sure it is as short and clear as it could be, then write it in big writing on a large piece of paper or card.

You’ve done your bit. But could you do more?

Most of us won’t be at the borders when refugees arrive in our country, but we could take a photograph of ourselves and display it. This could be on social media (use the hashtag #NLTRefugeeWeek to see what other schools have come up with). It could be a display in the school reception of you and your classmates holding up your signs. It is also very possible that a refugee family will be coming through your reception in the next few weeks and seeing your display might make them feel welcome.

Your third writing challenge for Refugee Week is to prepare some notes or ideas about something you want to tell someone at home, or even a teacher.

Writing for a purpose is not always about the finished written item. People who give speeches or present TV shows usually have a script or a few notes to remind them exactly what they want to say. The purpose of this writing is to organise your thoughts so that you can speak clearly, persuasively and powerfully.

It is really important to be able to talk about something that you have strong feelings about, and this exercise should help you to do that. This is how Tom Palmer would prepare if he had to talk to someone about something important or even make a persuasive speech.

Go over what you have learned so far about refugees from Ukraine, from the TV show, the newspaper, and the podcast you have listened to today.

Working with your friends, brainstorm what the 10 most important things that you have learned are. Write them down in a brief note form.

From your list, select the three most important issues that you want to talk to someone else about.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

For each issue, ask yourself: What is the issue? Why is it important to you? How can you articulate it to the person you want to articulate it to?

Issue 1:

What is the issue?

Why is it important to you?

How can you articulate it?

Issue 2:

What is the issue?

Why is it important to you?

How can you articulate it?

Issue 3:

What is the issue?

Why is it important to you?

How can you articulate it?

Now you have the key points you want to speak about, practise talking about them, to yourself, to a classmate and to a teacher.

As you go, don't forget that your view on the world is as important as anyone else's and that, just as they listen to you, you should listen to them. Also, it's sometimes important to rethink your views and improve them.

Your fourth writing challenge for Refugee Week is about writing for yourself, or to yourself: a diary entry.

Learning about people who have difficult lives can be upsetting. It can also be discombobulating. You could feel empathy, maybe guilt, and sometimes even cross with the people who have difficult lives for confusing reasons. This confusion is normal. Feeling emotional and powerless is also normal, especially when there are dramatic events like wars or pandemics to worry about.

This is perhaps the best sort of example of writing for a purpose: to write to help yourself understand and process the troubles of the world around you.

The first thing to say is what you write now will be at its best if you write it for yourself and show it to no-one. That way, you can be 100% honest. You can destroy what you wrote afterward if you wish to. You can hide it. Or just keep it at home. You can even show it to people if you really want to.

When I write a diary, I show no-one. I had about 25 books full of diaries from when I was a teenager. Writing them really helped me cope with being a teenager and young adult, especially when grim things were happening at home, like my dad and mum dying. No-one has ever read them, not even my wife (in fact, to be honest, I took them all to the tip last year and they are gone forever!). But – at the time – they really helped me.

Why write a diary entry? To ask yourself questions, and to challenge yourself.

In a diary, you can talk to yourself about how you feel about the war in Ukraine, about the refugees we have been finding out about. How do you feel? What would you like to see change in the world? Why? How do you feel about refugees coming to your area? Do you always feel welcoming, or do you sometimes get confused? That's normal, too. These things are so big and dramatic that we need time to sort what we think about it out. Write about it and see where it goes.

The bottom line is to be honest. Explore your own feelings. You are writing to yourself. Nobody else.

And if you are really struggling, do what I do. Ask questions.

- What am I writing about?
- Why does it bother me?
- Who is suffering? Who is to blame?
- How can I help?

Also, try looking at the photographs that we saw from Ukraine. Describe what you see. Describe how it makes you feel.

And, if you enjoyed writing in this way, why not write a diary through the summer? You might end up filling 25 books with your thoughts like I did.

Your fifth – and final – writing challenge for Refugee Week is about setting up a sponsored fundraising page for refugees from Ukraine. You do not have to actually set up a fundraising page, although you can if you like. Either way, one day you might want to, and this will help you make a start.

I was so inspired by Zarlisht Halaimzai's Ted Talk, the one I used to write chapter five, especially what she said about feeling like she was a thing, not a person. What she has done to help refugees, having been a refugee herself, is magnificent, and her talk really challenged me. She made me want to do something to help. And I will. I will do more.

Creating a fundraising page is a great example of writing for a purpose. It's meaningful, just like the work of Zarlisht Halaimzai.

In this case, you are making it clear what you are doing, why you are doing it, and writing a statement to persuade people to give up their money.

In 2021, I set up a fundraising page to help raise money for a charity that raises awareness of refugees' plight and fights racism and intolerance. You can see my fundraising page [here](https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/lakedistrictholocaustproject) (<https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/lakedistrictholocaustproject>). Please don't donate, as that event has now passed.

When I did my challenge, I tried to answer the following questions.

Who do I want to raise money for?

What will I do to raise money?

Where will I do it?

When will I do it?

How can people donate?

Why do I want to raise money for them?

Can you do that for a fictional (or real) fundraising campaign you are planning to do?

Answer the questions above. The last one is the most important, as that is how you persuade people to give you money for your fundraising.

As well as answering the questions, if you have time, you could write up your answers into a persuasive piece of writing like the one I did in the link above.

And if you really do want to help fundraise for Ukraine, talk to an adult about your plans.

Good luck!