



GET CREATIVE  
WITH ART ONLINE

MODULE No: 8 of 8

# Migrants and Refugees

- Lesson Background for Teachers -



# LESSON AIMS and OBJECTIVES

- To understand the difference between immigrants and refugees
- To consider the different ways that immigrants and refugees can be depicted in Art in order to show their lives and hopes and rights
- To think about the benefits of multicultural coexistence and how diversity can support social development

## FOCUS

Art, Drama, Language (SMSC) Spiritual, moral, social, cultural understanding

## AGE RANGE

Ages 9 – 11 (Adaptable for younger or older pupils)

## SKILLS

Analytical Thinking/ Creativity/ Perception/ Self Awareness

# Theme: Migrants and Refugees

## What do we think of when we think of it?

Migrants and refugees are people who have left their homes in order to find a safer or better life.

Movements of populations are as old as civilization. Every country in the world includes people who have reached its borders and settled there.

**Immigrants** mainly choose to move to search for better working conditions, to reunite with family members, for educational or for personal reasons.

**Refugees** are people fleeing armed conflict or persecution. Those recognized as 'refugees' under international law should not be returned or repatriated to situations where their lives or freedom are at stake.

When we think of Migrants and Refugees, we might think of the people we see on television, or read about in the news, who are fleeing persecution or making long journeys in search of peace and a better life. Or we might think about new arrivals in our own communities, our towns, our schools.... or even of ourselves or others in our family.

## Why is it important?

Migrants and refugees are important to the United Nations, which in their 1948 United Nations Declaration of Human Rights Article 13, declared, "Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state; and everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country".

They also have an impact on the countries they leave, those they settle in and those they pass through on their journeys.

As a result, such movements of people and the rights and safety of those in transit should be something of importance to all of us.

Refugees can be disproportionately vulnerable to discrimination, exploitation and marginalization, sometimes living and working in the shadows, afraid to complain and denied their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Migrants can bring a wealth of positive cultural and workforce benefits to the places where they settle. However, they can still be vulnerable to human rights violations including the denial of their civil and political rights, a lack of due process, or a lack of access to health, housing or education. The denial of these rights is sometimes linked to attitudes of prejudice or xenophobia.

## How does it affect our lives/ our world?

Throughout human history, population migration has happened for many reasons. When people move and settle in other places, it can contribute to an intercultural dialogue that enriches society and can contribute to the reconsideration of standards, views and ideas.

These days, it is very common for people to live in a different place from where they were born. Many of us value the diversity of our multicultural societies where immigration has enriched our economies and our cultures.

New arrivals can offer new opportunities for the places they settle. However, sometimes they can also burden already overstretched services in countries that struggle to support them. But we should remember that if circumstances changed – for example, if global warming made our country too hot, or if war came – any of us might also find ourselves as refugees or considering migration.

## Did you know .....

- An estimated 281 million people currently live outside their country of origin. This is due to poverty, lack of access to healthcare, education, water, food, housing and the consequences of environmental degradation and climate change, as well as persecution and conflict.

- The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) most recently estimated that at the end of 2020, for the first time in history, the number of people displaced numbered 82.4 million with over 26.4 million being refugees. Half of these were children.
- Many famous personalities such as Albert Einstein, Dalai Lama, Marie Curie, Marc Shangall, Malala Yousafzai, M.I.A., Mila Kounis, Rita Ora, Giannis Antetokounmpo and even Superman, are of migrant/refugee background.
- The United Nations has created special offices for the protection of migrants' and refugees' rights:  
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

## HOW MIGHT AN ARTIST PORTRAY 'MIGRANTS and REFUGEES'?

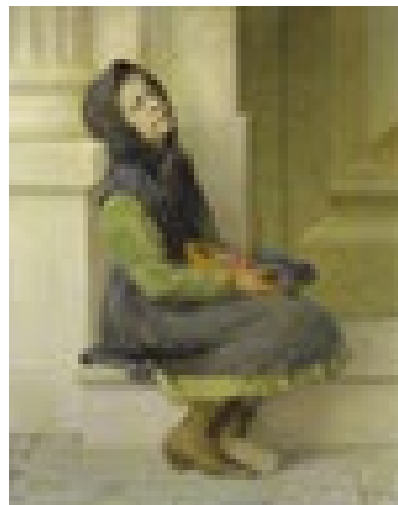
Many artists have been inspired by moving populations and have portrayed migrants and refugees in their artworks. Some refugees and migrants have also expressed their own experiences through art.

While some have chosen to portray the actual experience of migration in a realistic style, others have tried to capture the feelings and emotions of being a migrant or a refugee in a more abstract way.

Some have used a photographic style in an attempt to make a historical record of migration movement, while others have tried to express our greater humanity. They have seen their Art as a chance to raise awareness about human rights and the rights of migrants and refugees, to promote values of peace, respect of human dignity or to celebrate the benefits of multicultural coexistence, social cohesion, development and progress.

We can find examples of the migrant experience in every medium of Art, from paintings, to sculptures, photographs, installations, street art, video art, and performances, in exhibitions throughout the world. **Europeana** is a web portal created by the European Union which contains digitized cultural heritage collections of more than 3,000 institutions across Europe, including artworks for migrants and refugees.

## OUR MAIN ARTWORK



- Title : THE REFUGEE GIRL/SLEEPING FLOWER GIRL
- Artist: GEORGIOS IAKOVIDIS, 1853-1932, Greek
- Medium: Oil on canvas
- Dimensions: 100 x 79 cm
- Date Completed: After 1900
- Location Displayed: THE NATIONAL GALLERY, ATHENS, GR
- Web link [www.nationalgallery.gr/en/all-collections/collection/collections/the-refugee-girl-sleeping-flower-girl.html](http://www.nationalgallery.gr/en/all-collections/collection/collections/the-refugee-girl-sleeping-flower-girl.html)
- How / When was it acquired by the gallery? E. Koutlidis Foundation Collection

### How does it communicate 'MIGRANTS and REFUGEES'?

Georgios Iakovidis (1853–1932) is considered one of the most important Greek artists of the 19th and early 20th century. He painted a wide range of subjects, from portraits to landscapes, still life paintings, scenes of mythology and genre scenes. One of his main interests was childhood scenes and he is well-known as the “greatest painter of children”, capturing realistic aspects of children’s life and world.

In this painting we can see how Georgios Lakovidis used the form, the light, the colours and the organization of the space to depict this scene with a refugee girl. The tired or sleeping girl sits in front of a neoclassical building, holding a basket with flowers. The colours are muted and tinged with grey and green, apart from the flowers she holds in her basket to sell. They give the only flash of a brighter colour and perhaps hint at the promise of a brighter future? The artist makes us consider what the life condition of this child might be and what she might be dreaming of.

## IN CONTEXT

Are there other works by the same artist (or others) that help us understand it more?



Because of its geographical location and its history, the country of Greece has often seen or experienced immigration. Many other Greek artists have also been inspired to produce Art focused on migrants or refugees. In 1893, Nikolaos Gyzis made this charcoal and watercolour, "Philippos Marthas in the Boat of the Refugees, Clinging to his Desperate Mother", also on display at the National Gallery, Alexandros Soutsos Museum in Greece.



“The traveller” [The immigrant]”, by 20<sup>th</sup> Century artist, Theodoros Papagiannis, illustrates the journey of people who leave their homeland with all they have in a suitcase in the hope of a better life. As the artist wrote, *“I have him as an example. He holds his suitcase and we don’t know what is inside, his sufferings [...] his wealth...”*



This artwork is part of a series titled, “Immigrants” (1971–1976). It reflects immigration in the context of agreements between countries during the post-war period of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in terms of life and work conditions, identity and social exclusion. Artist Vlassis Caniaris produced this installation called ‘Hopscotch’ in 1974. It included 6 human figures, 9 suitcases and a cage on a tar paper base flooring with a hopscotch drawing.

## OTHER ARTWORKS THAT SAY SOMETHING ABOUT 'MIGRANTS and REFUGEES'



From Sweden

- Title: NOAH'S ARK
- Artist: IVAR AROSENIUS 1878- 1909, Swedish
- Date Completed: Unknown
- Location Displayed: THE NATIONAL GALLERY, STOCKHOLM, SE

### What it says about 'Migrants and Refugees'

The picture shows one of the earliest migrant trips, depicting the Bible story of Noah taking two of every animal onto a ship to escape a great flood. This picture from Sweden is childlike and idyllic, without any of the sense of danger we associate with the difficult sea journeys faced by current-day asylum seekers trying to reach countries of safety by boat.





From Italy

- Title: THE EMIGRANTS
- Artist: ANGILO TOMMASI 1858-1923, Italian
- Date Completed: 1895
- Location Displayed: NATIONAL GALLERY OF MODERN ART, ROME, IT

## What it says about 'Migrants and Refugees'

Tommasi's painting shows the multitude of sailing boats and the crowd of emigrants waiting to sail, expressing the scale of the migration phenomenon from Italy in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. 'The Emigrants' presents the doubts, the fears, the hopes, the hunger, the past and the future, all in the minds of the crowd of people about to leave by ship to find a new life.



From United Kingdom, photograph, courtesy of Christies

- Title: MIRROR OF HUMANITY
- Artist: JOSEPH KANGI South Sudan, living
- Date Completed: 2019
- Location Displayed: Hope Project exhibition at St James Church, Piccadilly, London, January 2020

## What it says about 'Migrants and Refugees'

Joseph Kangi, a Moira Camp (Lesbos) refugee artist from South Sudan, was one of the migrant artists to have his work included in a 2020 exhibition at St James (Piccadilly) Church, London and an auction after at Christies. Proceeds went to the Hope Project, an initiative promoting greater dignity for refugees with an aim to transform the way they're seen.

The painting is about unity, according to the artist. "People from different countries, different religions and different tribes need to accept each other. We need to put our hands together to build a better world, one that does not see colour or differences, only what unites us. We should see others as we see ourselves in the mirror, as human beings. Humanity should take precedence over everything".

# PUPIL ACTIVITIES:

## (POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES TO USE AS APPROPRIATE WITH YOUR PUPILS)

Teachers can choose from each category below or devise their own – *or* different activities, like creating computer generated images, a piece of music/ song/ rap inspired by art or researching other galleries or pieces of art they feel illustrate this theme.

## ART ACTIVITIES

Create a poster (mood board) which represents you. Imagine you are travelling to a country where you don't understand the language and culture, and the people there don't understand yours. Using only images and colours and design, fill your poster with all your favourite things to represent you in your new home to the new people you meet. Include your family, pets, sports teams, activities, likes.

Create a digital collage that depicts the humanity of the migrant experience. Take photographs of each other showing what you think migration might involve and add them to media images that can represent the shapes of people on the move. Use silhouettes, colours and shapes and think about the experience you want to represent.

Paint a picture that shows, 'Unity'. Try to represent a world without borders, where everyone shares all the lands, seas and resources, and lives in peace and harmony. Refugees would not exist and all peoples would 'hold hands around the world'. What can that look like represented in paint?

Create your own virtual gallery display using [www.artsteps.com](http://www.artsteps.com) to display all of the art you've made.

## LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES

Take a map of the world and place a counter on all of the places you and your classmates are connected with. Discuss all the links you have to as many different places as you can. Maybe your family is from one of these places or you have visited or know someone who has. How much of the world is represented by this activity once everyone has spoken?

Cooperate in a 'group story telling task', to see what the continuation of the story of the sleeping flower girl might be. Sitting in a circle with your friends, each take it in turns (going left to right) to say one sentence, which follows on from the sentence of your classmate before, to create new experiences and adventures for the girl, beginning with, " And then she opened her eyes and found that.... "

Search the internet or library for information about famous sportsmen, scientists or personalities with migrant or refugee backgrounds. Present your research to the class to share their story.

Like the child refugee selling flowers in our artwork, imagine YOU have been outdoors selling flowers all day, even falling asleep on the spot. Write a diary about your 'life working on the street' and explain what you might feel and think and experience during one long day.

## DRAMA ACTIVITY / Circle Time

In groups of 6-7 recreate the scene where the refugee girl is sleeping on the street pavement. If you imagine the picture zoomed out, who would be close or further in the scene? One by one the roles speak a phrase they would like to address to the girl, or one that crosses their mind when seeing her.

Now, bring the scene to life: Improvise the girl sitting there and the people moving around her. What would they do? Would they address the issue or would be indifferent? Create short improvisations and present them to the class.

In groups, imagine a situation where you are part of a family that needs to escape. Maybe you are refugees fleeing rising oceans due to climate change. Or maybe war or a natural disaster has made it impossible to stay in your home community. Improvise your situation for the others in the class, describing and acting out the situation that you are fleeing and how it makes you feel.

## USEFUL RESOURCES:

**The website of the UN Office for Human Rights**

[www.ohchr.org/EN/pages/home.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/pages/home.aspx)

**The EU portal containing digitized cultural heritage collections**

<https://www.europeana.eu/en>

-Migration in Artworks [www.europeana.eu/el/galleries/migration-in-artworks](http://www.europeana.eu/el/galleries/migration-in-artworks)

-Refugees, Art & Activism [www.europeana.eu/en/blog/i-am-the-change-refugees-art-and-activism](http://www.europeana.eu/en/blog/i-am-the-change-refugees-art-and-activism)

**Information about the Greek Artist, Iakovidis Georgios**

<https://www.nationalgallery.gr/en/painting-permanent-exhibition/painter/iakovidis-georgios.html>

**Guardian Newspaper Article about the 2020 UK Exhibition of Migrant Art**

[www.theguardian.com/global-development/gallery/2019/dec/25/we-never-chose-this-refugees-use-art-to-imagine-a-better-world-in-pictures](http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/gallery/2019/dec/25/we-never-chose-this-refugees-use-art-to-imagine-a-better-world-in-pictures)

**History Extra – 'How has Migration Changed the World?'**

<https://www.historyextra.com/period/modern/how-migration-changed-the-world/>