# Migration: Channel crossings

In December 2018 and January 2019, migration to the UK hit the headlines again. News sources reported that more than 200 people arrived on the coast of Kent in southern England in small boats. Many of these migrants hoping to reach the UK were from Iran.

Learners will build empathy in a role-play activity, thinking about the reasons why people choose or are forced to leave their homes. They will also consider positive and negative attitudes towards migrants and why people may feel this way.

A quick quiz will put the UK experience of refugees in a more global context. Learners will look at the scale of refugee crises around the world and think about how the countries hosting the most refugees are often the least able to cope.

Be sensitive to learners’ personal experiences when carrying out this activity, and see our guidance on [creating a safe, inclusive and supportive learning environment](https://www.redcross.org.uk/get-involved/teaching-resources/creating-a-safe-inclusive-and-supportive-learning-environment).

**Learning objectives**

Learners will:

* Develop empathy for people making this difficult journey
* Increase their understanding of the reasons why people become migrants and refugees.
* Explore positive and negative responses towards refugees.

## Discussion activity: The journey

Display the following quote: “You have to understand no one puts their children in a boat unless the water is safer than the land.” (from “Home”, by Somali–British poet Warsan Shire)

How does this quote make them feel? What recent news story could this quote relate to? What do they know about it?

Explain that the news has been reporting on an increase in migrants attempting the dangerous journey across the English Channel. These people have left their homes and what they know to make a very dangerous journey to the UK, where they hope for a better life. They have crossed the English Channel on small boats, a journey which is extremely dangerous. Crossing the busy shipping lanes of the Channel in these small, inflatable boats has been compared to crossing a motorway on foot. There are few legal and safe routes for them to travel to the UK, so they have no choice but to make this dangerous journey to find safety.

Ask the learners to work in pairs or small groups to think about how the people might have felt before, during and after their journey.

Come together as a group and think about:

Before the journey

* What reasons could these migrants have for leaving their home countries and travelling thousands of miles to find a new home?
* How might they feel before leaving home? Answers could include being nervous about their dangerous journey, concerned about leaving home, excited about finding a better life, worried about the unknown.
* What might they be leaving behind? As well as physical things, learners could think about family, friends, native language etc.
* What might they be able to take with them? Think about things that would remind them of home.

During the journey

* Why might they take the decision to cross the sea in a small boat? Emphasise to the students how risky this choice could be.

After the journey

* How might the migrants feel when they land in the UK? Think about how different this may be to their homes and the things they will need such as food and shelter, the uncertainty of what will happen next.
* How do the class think local people might react to the people arriving on the coast? Emphasise that there are likely to be a range of responses. Consider both positive and negative: how might these different responses make people feel?.

Do the learners think that meeting migrants or hearing their stories would make a difference to how people think about migrants and refugees? If so, why might this be the case?

**Role-play activity: Taking the risk**

Divide the learners into small groups with at least one person representing each of the roles below. Display the image in the PowerPoint.

Ask groups to imagine they are a group of migrants on a tiny boat in the middle of the sea sharing stories and experiences. Have them express:

Who they are

Where they come from

Why they left that place

Why they are coming to the UK

Why they are coming via boat/ such a dangerous route

Each group could develop a short scene looking the different people’s stories and perform these to the rest of the group.

**Quiz: Migration in context**

How much do the learners know about refugees? Display the quiz in the PowerPoint:

What is a refugee?

1. A refugee is someone who moves to another country illegally

2. A refugee is someone who has proven that they are at risk in their home country and has been legally allowed to live in another country

3. A refugee is anyone who leaves their home without knowing where they will go to live

[Answer: 2. A refugee is someone who has proven that they are at risk in their home country and has been legally allowed to live in another country. Anyone who is trying to claim refugee status is an asylum seeker.]

What is a migrant?

1. Someone who moves from one country to another.
2. Someone who moves to another country illegally.
3. Someone who is awaiting legal status to work in a country.

[Answer: 1. A migrant is someone who has moved to another country, often to find work or better living conditions. They may or may not have legal status to be in that country.]

How many refugees are there around the world?

1. 99.6 million
2. 2 million
3. 25.4 million

[Answer: 3. There are 25.4 million refugees around the world according to the United Nations (in June 2018). The UN estimates that there are 68.5 million displaced people including many who have been forced to leave home but are still in their home countries]

Which country is home to the most refugees?

1. The United Kingdom
2. Germany
3. Turkey

[Answer: 3. Turkey hosts 3.5 million refugees, mainly fleeing the conflict in Syria.]

How many refugees are there in the UK?

1. 2.1 million
2. 121,000
3. 21,000

[Answer: 2. At the end of 2017 there were over 121,000 refugees in the UK, which is about 3% of the total in Turkey]

Only one of these statements is true; which one?

1. 85% of refugees live in developing countries
2. 50% of all refugees live in Europe
3. The UK has the most asylum applicants in Europe.

[Answer: 1. 85% of refugees live in developing countries. Germany has the highest number of asylum applicants in Europe, with the UK having fewer than France, Greece and Spain according to the most recent figures]

How many migrants crossed the English Channel in small boats in 2018?

1. 312
2. 2242
3. 10,038

[Answer: 1. 312 people came to the UK in this way. The figure of 2,242 is the number of migrants who died crossing the Mediterranean Sea to southern Europe in 2018]

Which answers did the learners find surprising? Have their views changed at all?

Emphasise that the biggest refugee crises are usually in countries close to conflict. These countries are often poor themselves and need outside help to cope with large numbers of refugees. This is where organisations such as the International Red Cross and Red Crescent can help, providing essentials such as food, water and medical care and shelter.

**Creative writing: A letter home**

Ask learners to write a letter to their loved ones as a migrant just about to cross the channel. Maybe their family is back home in their country or perhaps they are waiting for them in the UK. Think about how the migrant may feel and what motivates them.

Learners could consider their:

* Hopes and dreams for the future
* The desire for safety
* The love of their family
* The fear of something bad happening to them
* The determination to live a better life

Afterwards, ask learners to share some of their letters with the group.

Finish by discussing how learners might feel if they had to leave their home suddenly, might they have similar concerns and hopes to what they wrote in their letter?