

MORE THAN WORDS

OBJECTIVES

- To examine the origin and meanings of the word "refugee".
- To reflect on the personal and social implications of language and how it is used to communicate.
- To learn how to express support in words.

MATERIALS

- The presentation (for projecting in class): "Refugee (n., pl. -gees) : More than words"

SUPPORT MATERIAL

- "Humanity Passport: The rights of migrant and refugee children" activities and resources guide for 2016-2017 available at unicef.es/educa

Our use of language shapes our everyday reality, how we see the world and relate to others. When we use the word migrant or refugee, we reveal our personal or collective mindset, which is constantly reinforced, weakened, or damaged. It is also important to examine how we see ourselves: if I were to settle in another country, would I refer to myself as an immigrant, a refugee, a traveller...?

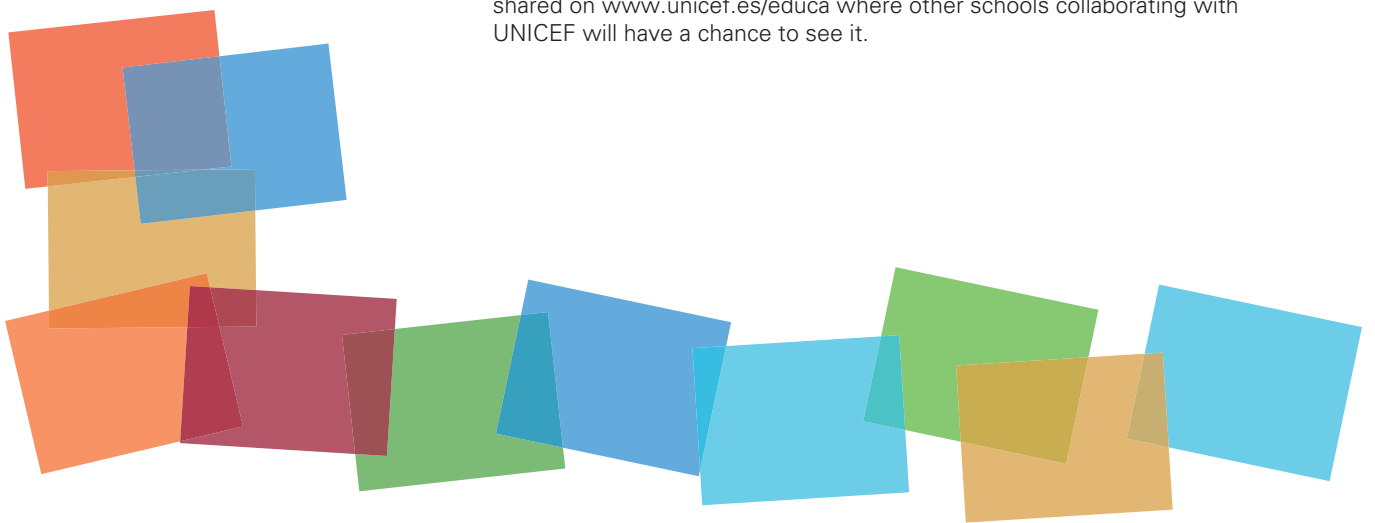
These are some of the issues that can be discussed in the language class activity centred on the word "refugee", its roots, uses and connotations.

The activity is based on a presentation which is first shown to the students. It can be complemented with the Humanity Passport class group activity.

The presentation

This presentation deals with different aspects of the use of language. While the presentation consists of a number of slides, it is not necessary to show them all as each slide is independent in content and can be used separately or as part of a selection, according to the students' needs.

The activity can conclude with the students doing a communication project in support of child refugees as suggested in Slide 11. The work or pictures can be posted on your school's blog spot or on social media. It can also be shared on www.unicef.es/educa where other schools collaborating with UNICEF will have a chance to see it.



Here are some suggested questions for leading the discussion



SLIDE 1

- This is the definition of the word "refugee" according to the Oxford English Dictionary.
- Would you add or take away anything in the definition? Do you notice anything special about it?
- It was chosen as the word of the year in 2015 by Fundéu (a foundation for the correct use of language in the mass media), as it is a word that has been used very often in the media but not always properly. Are you sure you know how to use this word?

SLIDE 2

- What do Ancient Greek and Latin words have in common?
- Do you know more words with roots in Ancient Greek or Latin?
- Who was Phryge or Fuga? What does this myth tell us about the word "refugee"?
- Do you know any other words with a mythological origin?

SLIDE 3

- Here we have the word refugee in different languages.
- What do these words have in common? How do they begin? How do they end?
- Can you group the words according to their similarities?
- Are there any similarities between these words and the languages of neighbouring countries?
- Which of them are rooted in Ancient Greek or Latin?
- How many of these languages are spoken by refugees nowadays? What about over the last hundred years?

SLIDE 4

- These words share a common root with "refugee", but they mean different things. What do they mean?
- What have these words got in common? Is there a common idea underlying all of them?
- Which word has the closest meaning to "refugee"? Which one is furthest in meaning?
- Which words have positive, negative or neutral connotations? What do you think are the connotations of the word "refugee"?
- Can you think of other words with a similar lexis?

SLIDE 5

- Which words do you think are most similar in meaning to "refugee"? And furthest in meaning?
- Do you think any of the words don't belong here? Why?
- If you had to group them as positive, negative or neutral words, how would you do it?
- If you had to make a concept map linking all the words, how would you do it?
- Would you add words to this list? What words would you add? Include them on your concept map.

SLIDE 6

- Did you know these words?
- Which are the denotative meanings of these words? Which are the connotative meanings? What pragmatic uses do we make of them?
- Does the speaker's intention and the listener's mindset affect the meaning of these words? What about the context? Which of them are always insults and which are only offensive depending on the context? Can you think of an example?
- Do you know the song "Frijolero" by Molotov? Do you notice any particular use of language in this song? Do you know other similar songs?
- Which similar words do you know? Do you think it is acceptable to use them?
- Do you think the very word "refugee" can be pejorative? "Common Sans" is a typographical font that automatically changes the word "refugee" into "human" and was created as part of an awareness campaign? What do you think of the idea?

SLIDE 7

- Do we talk differently about migrant and refugee people in these circles?
- What is said and what is unsaid in each environment?
- Why do you think there are different discourses about migration and asylum seeking in different settings?
- Do you think it is positive or negative to change our discourse about a topic in different contexts? Who does it benefit? Is there any possible harm in it?

SLIDE 8

- Where are these people from?
- Who do we think of when talking about a refugee? (E.g.: Women, men, babies, girls, students, workers...)
- Where do you think most refugees live nowadays? In Europe, in Asia, in Africa or in America?
- Do you think asylum-seeking is a recent phenomenon or has been around for a long time?

SLIDE 9

- What have you seen, read or heard in the news?
- What do we know about refugees from what it is said in the media?
- If we had to describe a refugee only by what is portrayed in the media, what kind of person would he/she be?

SLIDE 10

- Would you say there are political motives behind these pictures?
- Do you think they are good or bad decisions? Who do they benefit and who do they jeopardize?
- What decisions would you make if you were in government?
- What decisions are international, national, or local?
- Which level of government do you think you could exert more influence over: international, national, regional or local? What could you do?

SLIDE 11

- Is there anything you would like to say about child migrants and refugees?
- What format would allow you to express yourself best?
- Who would your audience be?
- What do you want to communicate? Do you want to inform, convince, educate or mobilize others?
- What resources and skills are available to you? What difficulties do you foresee?
- How would you do it? How would you make it known?

CHILDREN'S DAY



November 20 is International Children's Day. A good way to celebrate this day is for the class to make a collective passport. The activity highlights the children's right to identity, citizenship and protection. The Humanity Passport is a symbolic invitation to children seeking refuge and shelter. The passport, which is available at unicef.es/educa, comes in black and white and can be customized by the class.



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