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Summerville, SC
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Objective: To help students see that refugees are not nameless, faceless individuals. Refugees are mothers, fathers, grandparents, brothers, and sisters—and more. Both the struggle and resilience of the refugee represent a myriad of stories which have yet to be told. Sadly, the media narrative of the refugee can often be “a menace to society.” With such a narrative, students (and others) miss out on an opportunity to develop empathy towards the plight of the refugee.

Materials Needed:

Andrew Lam’s Perfume Dreams (Chapter 3, “Letter to a Young Refugee”) or attached excerpt

White paper, colored pencils, colored markers

Videos/images of refugees. There are some really good videos on YouTube. Google “What is a refugee” in the YouTube search engine.

“Legal definition of a refugee” sheet

Class period (40-50 minutes)

Day 1

5-10 Minutes—Have students draw (stick figures are allowed) what they believe a refugee looks like. No captions or labeling are allowed.

Teacher should move around the room to see what kinds of drawings students are producing.

10-15 minutes- Show students some YouTube videos which talk about refugees. The teacher may also elect to show relevant news clips about the refugee issue. Have students do another drawing, based on this additional information. Now, students are allowed to label their images and provide captions. Provide students with time to talk about their drawings with some classmates.

15-25 minutes- Pass out the “Letter to a Young Refugee” sheet and have students read it silently. Then, ask for two-three students to do a Reader’s Theatre on this passage. These students will come up and alternate reading lines.

25-35 minutes—Have students do another drawing, based on this additional information. Students should continue to label their images and provide captions of who these refugees are. They may even consider in this drawing phase—what are their lives like.

35 minutes-to end of class—Write at least two paragraphs about why your image of a refugee changed from drawing one to drawing three. Go home and share your drawings with your parents. Have them sign the last drawing, so teacher will know that drawings have been (hopefully) discussed. Students will not report out what parents have said about drawings.

Class Period (40-50 minutes)

Day 2

(20 -30 Minutes) Display legal definition of refugee on board. Pass out definition sheets. Ask for a student volunteer to read it aloud.

Raise the following questions: What is meant by race? What is meant by religion? What is meant by membership of a particular social group or political opinion? Hopefully, students can generate examples of how these distinctions in the legal definition have caused people to become refugees.

30 minutes-to end of class—Now, have students label the refugees with regard to the reason(s) that they have become a refugee. Students should write 3-6 sentences about why they have made this labeling choices. In other words, how have class discussion and activities and media informed your choices?

Homework—Due in a week. Now, put an actual **real** name to one of your labeled refugees. A good start is this link--https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_refugees. Teachers and students may also use other search options (e.g., Vietnamese refugee, political refugee, etc). On a separate sheet of paper, write up (no more than a paragraph) where the refugee was from, where he/she was attempting to go, and the reason(s) for being a refugee. Find a photo of your refugee, if possible.

When the homework assignment is brought in, teacher should facilitate a conversation: “What should be done about the refugee crisis?” Require students’ answers to reflect an understanding of the series of drawings which they submitted as well as the research on the one refugee.