

Migration Stories

In the following pages, we share the stories of the children in the “How to teach about (forced) migration” project’s accompanying animations, alongside additional stories on the same themes. Each theme/ animation can be used to engage with the BIG Questions outlined in the Teacher’s Toolkit.

We hope the inclusion of additional stories alongside the animations helps learners to understand the diversity of backgrounds and experiences of young people seeking sanctuary, including those of learners in our school communities. In line with the principles outlined in the toolkit, these initial stories may be used as a springboard to explore examples from your local areas or learners’ own families.

"My family left our home because it was dangerous ... there were lots of planes dropping bombs in our area – one fell only a few streets away – it was very scary. My parents decided we weren't safe as a family and couldn't live there anymore. We were travelling for a long time – weeks and weeks - and in every new place we couldn't find somewhere safe to stay. Lots of times there were men with guns and we were chased and had to run away to safety. No one helped us so we kept moving. My father's cousin lives in the UK, and we hoped to join him. We travelled for a long time and I often didn't know where we were. We took a boat that was full of people – it was dark, noisy, and cold. I was so scared. When we arrived in England, I was so happy to get off the boat and to stand on the ground. I like it here as there are no guns and bombs and it feels so peaceful."

Sara, 8, from Syria

"My father worked with the British in Afghanistan and when the Taliban took over Baghdad we realised it wasn't safe for us there. We ran to the airport and managed to get on an airplane to England. My uncle also worked with the British but he didn't get to their airport in time. He had to hide for a long time with my aunt and cousins but they are now in Pakistan. He hopes to come to England too. Although I miss him and my cousins a lot, I am happy to be here – if I was in Afghanistan I could not go to school because I am a girl."

Perveen, 10, from Afghanistan

"It was not safe for me to stay in my home country, as my family followed a religion that was not approved of. One day, my parents gave me to someone who brought me to the UK on my own. I lived with a couple from the same country as me for a while before my school found out they weren't my parents. I had no idea what was happening or where I was going but I now live with another family. I am sad as I have not seen my parents for a long time".

Abel, 11, from Eritrea

"I arrived in the UK in spring 2022 with my mother and brother as my country was under attack. We were given rooms in a house in the countryside with a host family as part of a scheme called 'Homes for Ukraine'. Our host family were very kind to us and helped us to find things to do and learn English although it was very quiet as there were lots of empty fields around the house. I did not see my dad for a long time as he was back home defending our country and I really missed him. After a while we had to move to our own house but my mum couldn't find a job like what she was doing before as her English is not so good. We don't have a lot of money so our flat is much smaller than our home in Ukraine. She wants to stay here now as it's safe but we don't know if we will be able to and I still worry about my Dad."

Ivan, 10, from Ukraine

"When we arrived, we lived in a hotel with lots of other families. Our whole family lived in two rooms and here was no kitchen so we eat what they give us. It wasn't very nice and I missed my Mum's food. The hotel was on a big roundabout so it was really noisy at night. My sister and I were put in two different schools far away so we had to walk or take two buses to get there. My Mum was very sad and tired all the time. After a few months we were moved to a new city hours away – although we have our own flat it was hard to leave my friends and teachers and start again. I am happy to have my Mum's cooking again though!"

Farhana, 8, from Bangladesh

"My Mum came to the UK 4 years ago as she was being threatened by some of our neighbours. I stayed with my Grandma, but my Mum really wanted us to be with her. She asked someone to bring me and my brother on a plane to Ireland, as we have Spanish passports and Ireland is part of the EU. When we arrived, we got on a lorry and came to the UK, and I finally arrived in London! It was amazing to see my Mum again as I missed her so much! Even though my Mum doesn't earn a lot of money, we are not allowed to get help with housing or food so my Mum has to pay nearly all the money she gets to our landlord. I know my Mum worries even though she works all the time. But I'm very happy my family is back together again and I made new friends at school."

Elena, 10 from Colombia

"When I started school I didn't speak any English, so it was very difficult. The teacher would talk to me and I didn't know what she was saying. I would look at my book or the board and not understand anything. Other people would try to speak to me at lunch but I didn't understand. I didn't want to say anything wrong and make people laugh. I didn't know I had to put my hand up to go to the toilet during class so one day I just stood up and left and the teacher asked what I was doing. When he realised I didn't understand he didn't shout but it was so embarrassing.

I became friends with Ben who was on my table at school. He introduced me to more friends which really helped me to learn English. The best bit was when they invited me to join the cricket team as I really love it! My English is so good now that I have to help my Mum and Dad when they are in town or going to the doctors because they don't speak it as good as me. I help them read the letters that school sends and explain what I am doing in class. They can't help me with my homework so much but I am good at using the internet if I need help."

Ali, 9, from Afghanistan

"When I started school it was very strange – I hadn't really been to school before so it all felt new. I don't know how my family are and feel very lonely. Sometimes it felt all too much and I thought my head would explode. I would get frustrated and sometimes get into fights or walk out of class. Then I met one teacher who would always stop and smile at me and ask how I was. If I felt upset or angry I could go to her and she would calm me down or let me read a book in her office and would talk to my class teacher about it. I am doing better now and really enjoy using the computers in school."

Mohamad, 12, from Sudan

"I was nervous to start school because I didn't know anyone and I didn't speak good English but I was happy to be back at school. My teacher gave me a buddy, another girl who sat with me and showed me around and she was so nice and now we are best friends. Some things were so strange – I didn't like the food in the canteen for a long time and we don't get as much homework as home. I am getting good marks but sometimes I worry about or miss my family and friends in my country and it makes it hard to think. I liked it during Eid when I got to talk about my religion and culture with my class and my teachers organised an iftar after school and invited lots of people to it."

Reem, 7, from Iraq