

“Refugee Stories from the Middle East” Saturday Seminar
April 2, 2016
Lesson Plan: Learning to Listen: Teaching the Middle East
Migration Crisis through Refugee Narratives

LESSON TITLE:	Learning to Listen: Teaching the Middle East Migration Crisis through Refugee Narratives
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GRADE LEVEL:	Grades 9-12
OVERVIEW OF LESSON:	This lesson gives students the information and context to explore the human narratives of individual refugees from the Middle East, and to analyze those narratives to discover the causes of migration, the paths and obstacles migrants and refugees face as they travel, and the difficulties they face in finding new homes and adjusting to new circumstances. Students will also examine contemporary debates over immigration in Europe and the U.S. in the context of the refugee crisis.
SUBJECT AREA:	Human Geography
COUNTRY/REGIONAL FOCUS:	Middle East, Mediterranean, Europe
TIME REQUIRED:	Two and one half one-hour class sessions plus homework assignments
MATERIALS REQUIRED:	Online interactive map to project Handout A: Migration Terminology Handout B: Competing Views of Migration Handout C: Refugee Voices

BACKGROUND:

The refugee crisis in the Middle East, Mediterranean and Europe has grown in magnitude and urgency over the past several years, driven chiefly by the five-year conflict in Syria, but with a variety of other conflicts and economic pressures also exacerbating the problem. While much of the global media attention has been focused on the dangers faced by migrants attempting to enter Europe, the vast majority of refugees from the Syrian conflict remain in three countries around Syria: Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan.

In order for students to have a better understanding of this and other refugee crises, they need first to have a basic understanding of major concepts in modern human migration—the push

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and pull factors that lead people to leave their homes, the difficulties they face in finding safe refuge, and the ways that the international community deals with them. It is also vital to understand the distinction in international law between refugees and migrants, since only the former have the right to protection and refuge. This lesson will prompt students to integrate geographical and statistical information about current Middle Eastern refugees with broader concepts of migration. Students will then analyze individual narratives of refugees to see how they reflect the broader scope and the local particularities of the refugee crisis and share their findings with their peers.

Another important element of the lesson is analysis of the discourse about immigration of Middle Eastern refugees into Europe and the United States. Backlash against migrants and more open immigration policies has been widespread, with nativist political rhetoric and anti-immigration groups gaining significant strength on both sides of the Atlantic. Recent terrorist attacks, while not committed by recent refugees, have polarized the debate further—unsurprising, since one explicit motive of ISIS and similar groups is to exacerbate tension and foment hatred between Muslims and non-Muslims in Europe and the U.S. Students will examine arguments on both sides of the refugee/migrant debate to see how logic, statistics, and emotion are employed to make an argument.

CURRICULUM CONNECTION:

This lesson plan can be part of the Population unit of an AP human geography course, but would also fit into a modern Middle Eastern history unit, a unit on contemporary Europe, or a global issues or global cultures course.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- How can we understand the present Middle East refugee and migration crisis through theories of migration?
- How can we evaluate arguments for and against accepting refugees and migrants into a country?
- How can individual narratives illuminate broader historical events?

LEARNING GOALS:

Students will gain geographic understanding of the relationship among Middle Eastern and Mediterranean populations.

Students will understand major theories of migration, including push-pull factors, systems of migration, and distinctions between refugees, migrants, and internally displaced persons.

Students will closely read argumentative writing and be able to cite specific textual evidence for authors' claims.

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Students will be able to distinguish logical, statistical, and emotional arguments in persuasive writing.

Students will read narratives about individual refugees and migrants in order to connect individual narratives to broader historical events and processes, to determine how the individual’s story fits into theoretical concepts of migration, and to develop empathy.

Students will write either an effective persuasive letter arguing for action on refugee immigration or write a personal letter to a refugee whose story they’ve learned.

STANDARDS:

Include NCSS Standards and Common Core State Standards.

Common Core State Standards

ELA->CCR Anchor Standards for Reading

Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3

Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Craft and Structure:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4

Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6

Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7

Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

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CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.8

Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9

Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.10

Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

ELA->CCR Anchor Standards for Writing

Text Types and Purposes:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

Production and Distribution of Writing:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

ELA->CCR Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening

Comprehension and Collaboration:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2

Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.3

Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of

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reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.6

Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

ELA->CCR Anchor Standards for Language

Conventions of Standard English:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.1

Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.2

Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Knowledge of Language:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.3

Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.4

Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.5

Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.6

Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

ELA Standards in History/Social Studies-Grade 9-10

Key Ideas and Details:

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CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

Craft and Structure:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6

Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.7

Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.8

Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claims.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.9

Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.10

By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 9-10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

ELA Standards in History/Social Studies-Grade 9-10

Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

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CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.3

Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

Craft and Structure:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines *faction* in *Federalist* No. 10).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.5

Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6

Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.8

Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9

Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.10

By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

C3 Framework: College, Career and Civic Life for Social Studies State Standards (NCSS)

Civics

D2.Civ.3.9-12. Analyze the impact of constitutions, laws, treaties, and international agreements on the maintenance of national and international order.

D2.Civ.5.9-12. Evaluate citizens' and institutions' effectiveness in addressing social and political problems at the local, state, tribal, national, and/or international level.

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D2.Civ.10.9-12. Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interests and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.

D2.Civ.13.9-12. Evaluate public policies in terms of intended and unintended outcomes, and related consequences.

D2.Civ.14.9-12. Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights.

Economics

D2.Eco.13.9-12. Explain why advancements in technology and investments in capital goods and human capital increase economic growth and standards of living.

Geography

D2.Geo.2.9-12. Use maps, satellite images, photographs, and other representations to explain relationships between the locations of places and regions and their political, cultural, and economic dynamics.

D2.Geo.7.9-12. Analyze the reciprocal nature of how historical events and the spatial diffusion of ideas, technologies, and cultural practices have influenced migration patterns and the distribution of human population.

D2.Geo.12.9-12. Evaluate the consequences of human-made and natural catastrophes on global trade, politics, and human migration.

History

D2.His.5.9-12. Analyze how historical contexts shaped and continue to shape people’s perspectives.

Evaluating Sources

D3.3.9-12. Identify evidence that draws information directly and substantively from multiple sources to detect inconsistencies in evidence in order to revise or strengthen claims.

Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action

D4.1.9-12. Construct arguments using precise and knowledgeable claims, with evidence from multiple sources, while acknowledging counterclaims and evidentiary weaknesses.

D4.3.9-12. Present adaptations of arguments and explanations that feature evocative ideas and perspectives on issues and topics to reach a range of audiences and venues outside the classroom using print and oral technologies (e.g., posters, essays, letters, debates, speeches, reports, and maps) and digital technologies (e.g., Internet, social media, and digital documentary).

D4.6.9-12. Use disciplinary and interdisciplinary lenses to understand the characteristics and causes of local, regional, and global problems; instances of such problems in multiple contexts;

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and challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address these problems over time and place.

PRE-ASSESSMENT:

Ask students to volunteer what they know or have heard about the current migration crisis in the Middle East. Project a map of the Middle East, Mediterranean Sea, North Africa, and Europe and ask students to connect what they’ve heard on the news to locations on the map.

It is possible that some students will connect recent terrorist attacks in northern Europe with the migration crisis. It is important to point out that while ISIS has been connected to some of these attacks, to date they have not been carried out by refugees or migrants, but by European citizens.

PROCEDURE:

Day 1 (1 hour)

Entry event: Video Introduction (20 minutes)

Explain to students that you are going to watch a short video about the refugee crisis. Show the video “The European Refugee Crisis and Syria Explained,” produced by In a Nutshell (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RvOnXh3NN9w>). This six-minute animated clip is a strongly-worded argument for accepting refugees from a European perspective. It sets out some of the basic context of the Mediterranean migration crisis, but is also a good springboard for asking questions.

Begin a short classroom discussion by asking students how they can tell the perspective of the producers of the video—what vocabulary, rhetorical devices or images are used to swing viewers to their opinion? Do they feel that the information in the video is trustworthy? Why or why not? What vocabulary, statistics, or events did they find most surprising, interesting, or thought-provoking? What new information does the film prompt them to want to discover?

Defining Critical Terms and Understanding Migration (40 minutes)

The short video “The European Refugee Crisis and Syria Explained” does not discuss the other refugees and migrants who have also been seeking to enter Europe in increasing numbers over the past several years. Explain to students that to understand the debates over the issue of immigration and accepting refugees, it’s important to understand the legal differentiation between refugees and migrants. It’s also important to understand some of the major theories that explain why and how migration happens.

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Distribute Handout A: Migration Terminology. Have students read the definitions of migrant, refugee and internally displaced person and highlight terms or phrases that they think are most meaningful in distinguishing among them.

Now ask students to list factors that might push or pull refugees and migrants to leave their homes for other countries. What factors might apply in the case of Syrian refugees? Now have students think about what it might take to make the journey to a neighboring country, or to somewhere further away, like Europe. Prompt them to think not only about monetary resources, but more intangible assets like health and strength, comfort with learning languages or navigating other cultures, etc. How would these elements affect how particular people respond to the push and pull factors in a particular situation?

Finally, talk about how networks of people and information might help refugees and migrants journey from their homeland to other places. How do displaced people learn about and choose their destinations? How do they choose their route, and find help along the way? Discuss such factors as:

- Media (both news and entertainment) as a source of information (and how accurate it might or might not be)
- Family members living abroad
- Human traffickers who charge money to smuggle people across borders (both land and sea routes)
- Family and friends who might give or loan money for the journey
- Social media (many migrants used Facebook, Twitter and other social media to share information in real time about routes and obstacles)
- GPS and internet (global technologies provide instant location, information and translation for people on the move)

Homework: Assessing Competing Narratives

Distribute Handout B: Competing Views on Migration. Each student should receive a copy of the first page as well as copies of two articles from the document. (If you can distribute the document electronically, you may assign articles or have students choose which they wish to read.) Have students read one article from the pro-immigration list and one from the anti-immigration list. The articles vary in length and difficulty, and one is a video of the popular author and blogger John Green. This may help in allowing you to assign appropriate materials for different reading levels.

For homework, have students highlight each major argument in one color, and supporting arguments in a second color, in each article (taking notes on the video and highlighting arguments in the same way).

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Day Two (1 hour)

Migration Debate (20 mins.)

In class, have student engage in an informal debate. Each should choose the side of the debate they find most convincing (or play devil’s advocate), and briefly make and respond to arguments based on what they have read. They should be ready to point to statistics or quote arguments from their sources for the arguments they make orally in class.

Refugee Narratives (40 mins.)

Divide the class into pairs or groups of three students. Distribute Handout C: Refugee Voices. Each student should receive two copies of the first page, and each group should receive copies of two different refugee narratives. Note that most of the narratives are text (of widely differing lengths) and others are online videos (also of different lengths). This variety should allow you to choose a set of narratives that both reveal the diversity of refugee and migrant experiences and that challenge students at different reading levels.

Have students read or watch one narrative and discuss the questions collaboratively (though each student should complete the sheet individually to hand in).

Homework: Completing Refugee Narratives

Have students read or watch the second refugee narrative and complete the questions for that refugee’s story for homework.

Day Three

Processing Refugee Narratives (30 mins.)

Open a class discussion by inviting students to introduce the refugees and migrants about whom they learned to the group. What made this person special? What details of their lives made students empathize with them?

Once students have had a chance to briefly introduce “their” refugees, discuss common elements of their stories. Did students find that they had more empathy with refugees and migrants after having the chance to see them as individuals? Discuss whether students found the textual narratives, graphic narrative, or video narratives more affecting and why.

Finally, discuss whether students feel more impelled to take action on the refugee crisis, either through direct support or through taking political action to convince their representatives to either support or oppose accepting refugees from Middle Eastern conflict areas.

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Homework: Write a persuasive letter

Ask students to write a letter to a local newspaper or a political representative arguing for or against the U.S. accepting refugees from Syria. Alternatively, they might write a letter to one of the refugees whose story they learned, offering empathy and asking any further questions they might have.

ASSESSMENT:

Assess students according to your preferred methodology for active and thoughtful participation in classroom discussions.

Assess students' grasp of argument structures in the pro- and anti-immigration articles by analyzing the portions they highlighted. Did they identify all the major arguments used by each author? Is supporting evidence highlighted, without too much extraneous detail? These assignments may either be graded by the teacher, or may be graded using a peer assessment rubric.

Assess students' collaborative discussion in class on the refugee narratives according to your preferred methodology.

Assess students' written analysis of refugee narratives for clarity and thoughtfulness.

Assess students' final written assignment for clarity, structure of their argument, and appropriateness of language. These can be graded either by the teacher or through your favorite peer writing assessment methodology.

RESOURCES:

Altman, Alex. "A Syrian Refugee Story: Inside One Family's Two-Year Odyssey from Daraa to Dallas." *Time*. Time, n.d. Web. 28 Mar. 2016.

Bello, Hakim. "I Was a Lampedusa Refugee." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 20 Apr. 2015. Web. 5 Mar. 2016.

Biro, Peter. "Age of Unrest: Syrian Refugee Youth at the Crossroads." (n.d.): n. pag. *Research*. Mercy Corps, 2016. Web. 22 Mar. 2016.

Clouds Over Sidra. Dir. Gabo Arora and Chris Milk. *Vrse*. UNHCR, 2015. Web. 28 Mar. 2016.

Cohen, Elisheva. "Today's Middle East: Refugees." *TeachMideast Digital Book*. Middle East Policy Council, n.d. Web. 23 Mar. 2016.

Connolly, Kate. "Firas Alshater: The YouTube Star Who Became Germany's Most Hugged Refugee." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 20 Mar. 2016. Web. 28 Mar. 2016.

Dellorto, Danielle. "7-year-old's Story Shows Pain, Worry of Syrian Refugees." *CNN*. Cable News Network, 13 Sept. 2013. Web. 28 Mar. 2016.

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- "In Crowded Lebanon, Syrian Refugees Are Forced to Shelter in Unlikely Places | Mercy Corps." *Mercy Corps*. Mercy Corps, 05 Nov. 2014. Web. 6 Mar. 2016.
- "It's Not Just Syria: Refugee Crisis Is 60 Million and Growing." *Mercy Corps*. Mercy Corps, 01 Oct. 2015. Web. 5 Mar. 2016.
- "Key Migration Terms." *International Organization for Migration*. International Organization for Migration, 13 Jan. 2015. Web. 20 Mar. 2016.
- Koser, Khaled. "Europe's Refugee Crisis Explained." *Migration*. World Economic Forum, 12 Nov. 2015. Web. 18 Mar. 2016.
- "Lesson Modules: Aids for Students." *UNHCR News*. UNHCR, n.d. Web. 2 Nov. 2015.
- Messerly, Megan. "A Syrian Family in Las Vegas Shares Its Refugee Story." *LasVegasSun.com*. Las Vegas Sun, 07 Dec. 2015. Web. 6 Mar. 2016.
- "Mid-Year Trends, June 2015." *UNHCR News*. UNHCR, 2015. Web. 4 Mar. 2016.
- "Migrant Crisis: Finland's Case against Immigration - BBC News." *BBC News: Migrant Crisis*. BBC, 9 Sept. 2015. Web. 24 Mar. 2016.
- "Migrant Crisis: Migration to Europe Explained in Seven Charts." *BBC News*. BBC, 4 Mar. 2016. Web. 16 Mar. 2016.
- "Moving Pictures: Video Galleries." *UNHCR News*. UNHCR, n.d. Web. 4 Mar. 2016.
- "My Escape From Syria: Europe or Die | VICE News." *VICE News*. Vice News, 6 Oct. 2015. Web. 6 Mar. 2016.

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Prager, Dennis. "Europe Is Making a Fatal Mistake." *National Review Online*. National Review, 15 Sept. 2015. Web. 20 Mar. 2016.

"Quick Facts: What You Need to Know about the Syria Crisis." *Mercy Corps*. Mercy Corps, 05 Feb. 2016. Web. 4 Mar. 2016.

Rainey, Vanetia. "Growing up as a Refugee: 'I Missed My Childhood'" *Al Jazeera English*. Al Jazeera English, 20 Nov. 2015. Web. 28 Mar. 2016.

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Stockmans, Pieter. "Diary of a Syrian Refugee Family Trying to Reach Greece." *Humanitarian Crises*. Al Jazeera English, 14 Feb. 2016. Web. 6 Mar. 2016.

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"Stories of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon – Life on Hold." *Life on Hold*. Al Jazeera, n.d. Web. 28 Mar. 2016.

Studebaker, Benjamin. "4 Arguments Against Accepting Syrian Refugees and Why They All Fail." Benjamin Studebaker, 20 Nov. 2015. Web. 24 Mar. 2016.

"Teaching about the Refugee Crisis and Making a Difference." *I AM SYRIA*. Ed. Andrew Beiter. lamsyria.org, n.d. Web. 1 Feb. 2016.

"Three Real Stories from Refugees." World Economic Forum, 17 Dec. 2015. Web. 6 Mar. 2016.

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Zaborowski, Marcin. "Why Eastern Europe's Resistance to Refugee Quotas Is Not 'selfish' | Marcin Zaborowski." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 16 Sept. 2015. Web. 24 Mar. 2016.