Out of Exile Curriculum

Examining the Labels "Refugee" and "Exile" Through Storyboards

Time needed: Three class periods and two homework sessions.

Materials: *Out of Exile*, the *New York Times* Sudan Profile (topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/contriesandterritories/sudan/index.htm), Storyboards handout (on page 48), colored pencils and pencils, magazines, and definitions of refugee and exile.

Objective: Through literary analysis and visual storytelling, students increase understanding about exiles and refugees while exploring the power of labels.

Related core curriculum standards: Reading History RH.9–10.1, RH.9–10.2. Speaking and Listening L.9–10.1, SL.11–12.1. Writing W.9–10.1, W.11–12.1.

Connections: Other Voice of Witness narratives that can be used for this lesson: Abuk Bak Macham, Panther Alier from *Out of Exile*; Law Eh Soe and Khine Kyaw from *Nowhere to Be Home*; and Farid from *Underground America*.

Overview

This lesson allows students to personalize the realities of being an exile or refugee as they explore the power of labels. Using narratives from and utilizing a storyboard technique to summarize their responses, students will creatively express the challenges of individuals who have been removed from their homes and separated from their families.

Essential questions:

- What is it like to have to leave your home, family, and country?
- How can you summarize your responses using a storyboard?
- What connections can you make to this issue from U.S. history?

Narrative excerpt: "The children come to school, and we feed them a meal every day now. They are happy students, and they do very well. They read very well. They do very well on the national exams every year—better than the national average. They like being at Sud Academy, because Sudanese often get harassed in the Kenyan schools—their classmates will come up to them, poke them, say, 'Hey! You are a refugee. You create problems in your country and now you want to come here to make trouble for us.'

"The kids will wonder, 'What is a refugee?' because most of the young ones were born here in Nairobi. They'll come home to their parents at night and ask about this word. And that's not a good way to find out." —John Mayik

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WHAT I KNOW	WHAT I *WANT* TO KNOW	WHAT I *LEARNED*

Day One

Step One: Use the KWL chart format on the previous page to begin a student journal activity and discussion about their understanding of the labels *refuge* and *exile*. (5–7 minutes) The "W" (what I learned), should be addressed at the end of each class period or the end of the unit. A large version of the chart should be easily accessible to students in order for them to post responses and questions throughout the lesson.

Step Two: Share the following definitions/explanations with the class and discuss them in relationship to the KWL activity (5–7 minutes).

Refugee: Refugees are persons who have fled their homes and cannot return because they fear their life is in danger. People become refugees when one or more of their basic human rights are violated or threatened.

Exile: Exile is being forced to leave one's country or home. Voluntary exile is the departure from one's country due to political strife or dissension.

Step Three: Use the New York Times Country Profile to briefly introduce Sudanese history and *Out of Exile* (15 minutes).

Step Four: Assign students the following narratives: Nadia el-Kareem (13 pp.), and John Mayik (22 pp). Students should begin reading the narratives on their own or in small groups. Encourage them to employ active reading strategies. During their reading, students should post questions and responses on the KWL chart, as well as look for quotes that reflect the narrator's viewpoints on *home*, *family*, *exile,* and the label *refugee*. (15 minutes).

The remainder of the reading should be done as homework and/or during the beginning of the next class period.

Step Five: Introduce storyboards as a tool to help visually express and summarize reading. If students are unfamiliar with storyboards, provide examples (there are many appropriate examples online). Give students a copy of the Storyboards handout, which includes definitions and a sample storyboard format. Each student or small group can choose the narrative they would like to make a storyboard from, or each student or group can do a storyboard for both (5-7 minutes).

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Day Two

Step One: If needed, allow time for students to finish their reading (10 minutes).

Step Two: As a warm-up activity, students should post any responses/questions from their reading on the KWL chart (5 minutes).

Step Three: Working alone or in small groups, students begin work on their storyboards. Pens, pencils, magazines (to cut images out of), tape and other classroom supplies should be readily accessible. Allow students to share ideas and discuss text evidence that communicates their narrator's viewpoints regarding *home*, *family*, *exile*, and the label *refugee*. Remind students that they are practicing their summarizing and storytelling skills and that art or drawing expertise is not necessary to create a successful storyboard. If students need more time to complete their storyboards, take time at the beginning of the next class period. If students are working individually, storyboards can be completed as homework (35–40 minutes).

Day Three

Step One: If needed, allow time for students to finish their storyboards (10 minutes).

Step Two: Have groups (or individuals) tape their storyboards around the classroom in museum or art gallery-style. Narrators should have their own "section" of the gallery (5 minutes).

Step Three: Students do a "gallery walk" of the classroom, silently examining the storyboards. During the walk, students may post questions and responses on the KWL chart (10 minutes).

Step Four: Utilizing responses from the KWL chart, class has a discussion related to the storyboards and how they reflect the challenges and complexities of the labels "exile" and "refugee" (10–15 minutes).

Discussion Questions:

- How do the storyboards allow you to personalize the experience of the narrators?
- How did this activity help you to understand the labels "exile" and "refugee"?
- Can you think of the power that labels have in your own life? What are they?
- What are some of the ways in which home and family are represented in the storyboards?
- Are there "internal" exiles or refugees within the United States? Who are they? Can you think of examples from U.S. history?

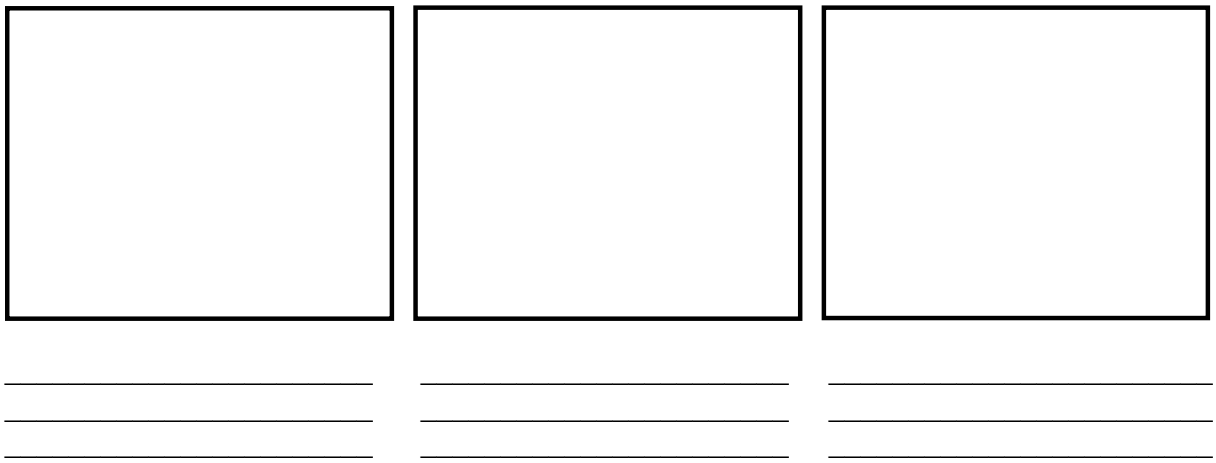
Step Five: Conclude the unit by allowing students to fill in the "L" section of the KWL chart. They should also feel free to add to the "K" and "W" sections (5–7 minutes).

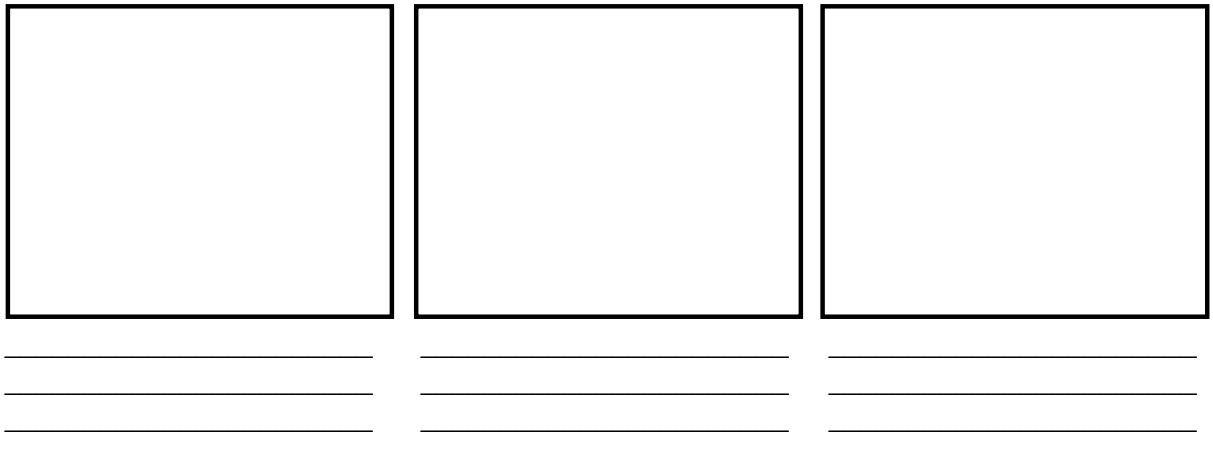
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Storyboards

Definition of a Storyboard: A consecutive set of panels on which images and words are arranged to show the important changes of action and emotion in a series of "shots" (as for a film, television show, music video, comic, graphic novel, etc.).

Storyboard Directions: On your storyboard, create a nonverbal representation of the text evidence of Nadia's or John's viewpoints, experiences or attitudes regarding home, family, exile, and the label refugee. You can make your storyboard larger if you would like. Create your panels as a story with a beginning, middle, and end, mirroring the chronology of your assigned narrative. Fill the blocks of the storyboard with stick figures, magazine cutouts, drawings, etc. Include text "bubbles" for the actual verbal text evidence. Then, below the storyboard, state the narrator's viewpoint or attitude as reflected in the passage.





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Step Six (optional)**:** Essay or Journal Writing.
The storyboard lesson and accompanying KWL chart should yield many topics worthy of further exploration and reflection. Class can consider several topics for a personal essay or journal entry related to the unit (can be done during class or assigned as homework). Class may also want to read other narratives from *Out of Exile* (as suggested in Connections).

Possible topics include:

- How do you define home? How many definitions directly apply to your life?
- Do the terms refugee or exile resonate with you personally? If so, how?
- If you were exiled from your home or family, what would you miss the most?
- Can you compare/contrast the narrator's experience with an individual or group you consider to be "internal" refugees within the United States?

Possible oral history project: Class creates an oral history project focusing on definitions and realities of home and family. Project can examine the myriad ways in which individuals construct their own versions of both.

Media option: Documentary films:

Lost Boys of Sudan (dirs. Megan Mylan and Jon Shenk). POV/P.B.S., 2004. *Lost Boys of Sudan* is an Emmy-nominated feature-length documentary that follows two Sudanese refugees on an extraordinary journey from Africa to America.

Museum of Exile: Assyrian Youth in Chicago (dir. Wonjung Bae). a twelve-minute HD documentary film that tells the story of teenage refugees from Iraq who go to Niles West High School in Skokie, Illinois. (*vimeo.com/14793548)*.