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Myths of Immigration

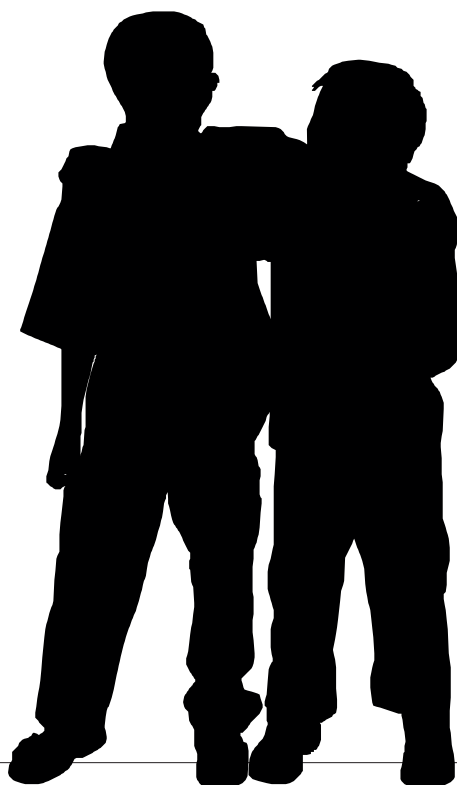


**Guidance for secondary teachers and lecturers
on challenging myths and misunderstandings**

“War is bad. It’s when they throw bombs out of planes. Sometimes I heard bombs. But I don’t remember. I only think of good things. I have a box in my head and put all the bad things in there and keep it locked. At the start in the UK it was hard because we knew no one. I was shy at first, but I have many best friends here now. I like school.”

Ahmed, age 9, from Syria but now living in the UK.

Source: http://www.refugee-action.org.uk/refugee_voices/2919_jana_ahmed



Introduction

We hope that teachers will find this resource useful for supporting open, honest conversations about immigration and for countering some of the misinformation that has spread in recent years. It should be used in the context of a broader anti-racist education programme.

The EIS welcomes and values a diverse and inclusive society. We welcome refugees and asylum seekers to Scotland. We support a rights-based approach to migrants and refugees, and expect governments to uphold all relevant laws including the 1951 UN Refugee Convention. We reject the demonisation of refugees and asylum seekers. We seek to enhance understanding of migration.

Migration is the movement of people from one country to another. The people who move into a country are considered immigrants to that country, though they would be considered to be emigrants by their home country.

Historically, immigrants have faced a number of challenges when settling into a new home within a host country. One of the most significant challenges faced by immigrants in Scotland is a lack of widespread public understanding about immigration, and the persistence of myths about immigration, often propagated by certain sections of the media. These myths taking hold can create a very hostile discourse about immigration and its scale, value, benefit, and origins; and can lead to racist attitudes and behaviours.

Misinformation about immigration has encouraged a rise in racist attacks here, and put additional barriers in the way of people abroad who are on the move, many fleeing for their lives.

This booklet aims to provide secondary school teachers and college lecturers with some ideas for tackling the myths of immigration within their schools and colleges; myths such as “*we have*

loads of immigrants in the UK” and “people come to the UK because we’re a soft touch and give out loads of benefits; people just want free healthcare and free houses.”

We know that teachers and lecturers are already very busy and that the curriculum is crowded. However, there are many different ways to engage with this issue. Whether you have time to organise one assembly, to run one or a few specific lessons on immigration issues, or to develop a whole-school or college-wide approach, there is something you can do to tackle the myths of immigration.

“These myths taking hold can create a very hostile discourse about immigration and can lead to racist attitudes and behaviours.”

Language and definitions

Some sections of the media use the words ‘migrant’, ‘refugee’ and ‘asylum seeker’ interchangeably. There are, however, vast differences in their meanings, which carry different implications for data and research, but also different legal obligations. It is vital to use clear language when discussing immigration to avoid perpetuating myths and misunderstandings. Clear language can also help challenge the racism that often surrounds debates about immigration.

Definitions

Racism: prejudice, discrimination or antagonism directed against someone of a different race or skin colour based on the belief that one’s own race is superior.

Immigrant: a person who comes to live permanently in a foreign country. Immigration is about coming into a new country. This is often confused with emigration, which is about leaving your country of origin.

Emigrant: a person who leaves their own country to settle permanently in another.

Expatriate: short for expatriate, a person who lives outside their native country, often used in the UK to refer to a UK citizen living abroad; has the same meaning as immigrant but usually used to refer to White Europeans and seen as less pejorative in tone than immigrant.

Migration: the movement of people from one country to another.

Migrant: a person who makes a free and conscious choice to leave their country to seek a better life elsewhere; often wrongly used to describe refugees or asylum seekers.

Economic migrant: someone who has moved to another country to work. For example, members of the European Union are currently free to move between EU member states and to seek work in any of them.

Displaced person: A person who has been driven from their homeland or place of residence by war, internal upheaval, or natural disaster; another term for a refugee.

Asylum seeker: a person who has fled persecution in their homeland, has arrived in another country, made themselves known to the authorities and exercised the legal right to apply for asylum.

Refugee: a person whose asylum application has been successful and who is allowed to stay in another country, having proved that they would face persecution or threat to their life in their home country; they have been given the legal “right to remain.”

‘Illegal immigrant’: a term commonly used to refer to someone who has entered the country through deception, perhaps not applying for a visa or for asylum. Some people do try to avoid detection when they get to another country but that may be because of a fear of authority, a fear of persecution, illiteracy, trauma or other good reasons. This is the least common type of immigrant to the UK. We recommend that other terms be used instead of this one.

The scale of the issue

- **65.3 million people** were “forcibly displaced” in 2015, including 21.3 million refugees and 3.2 million asylum seekers (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)
- An estimated **12.4 million people** were displaced due to conflict or persecution
- The number of asylum applications by unaccompanied minors tripled in one year reaching a record of **98,400** applications lodged across 78 countries in 2015
- **169 countries or territories** worldwide host refugees
- **80% of refugees** are hosted by developing countries
- In 2015, over 1.2 million people sought safety in Europe, yet the UK received just **38,878 asylum applications**, including dependants, compared with 431,000 in Germany, 163,000 in Sweden and 163,000 in Hungary
- An estimated **323,000 people** emigrated from the UK in 2015. The main reason people leave is for work and the most common destinations for UK citizens are Australia, Spain, the United States and France
- **Less than 1%** of the world’s refugees live in the UK, and refugees make up only **0.19%** of the UK population.



Legal context

- Immigration is a reserved issue in the UK, not a devolved one, meaning that powers over immigration sit with the UK Parliament, not the Scottish Parliament
- The UK’s approach to immigration is the subject of intense debate at present, due in part to the June 2016 vote for The UK to leave the European Union. This may lead to changes in the UK’s approach to immigration, which would change the future legal context in this country
- Since 1954 the UK has been signed up to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention. Almost every country is bound by this international law. Under this law, anyone in the UK has the right to seek asylum; and the UK Government has an obligation not to return anyone forcibly to a country where they have a genuine fear of being persecuted
- The right to seek asylum is completely separate to the issue of immigration. It is a human right.

“Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.”

- Article 14 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights

- There is no human right to immigration, so fair and non-discriminatory limits can be placed on economic migration (moving to another country for work); but the right to asylum can never be limited
- Human rights, including the right not to be subjected to degrading treatment; the right to a private and family life; the right to free expression and protest etc., apply to all human beings. These rights do not depend on citizenship
- The Equality Act 2010 protects people in the UK from discrimination on various grounds including race and religion. This law can protect immigrants who experience racism.

Historical context

Immigration to the UK and Scotland is not new, and the debate about levels of immigration is a recurring one.

Britain once had an empire of colonised countries, which contributed to the movement – not always freely – of people between countries. British history is steeped in migration and emigration.

During the 19th and 20th centuries, linked to increasing industrialisation, the UK has experienced immigration from many countries, including the West Indies, Ireland, Pakistan, Italy, China and Poland, many of whom have formed large communities, which are well established and have added to the richness and diversity of our society.

Simultaneous to their arrival, often, has been scapegoating of immigrants – blaming them for societal problems such as shortages of jobs and housing, caused by political decisions like pursuing austerity. Scapegoating of ‘others’ can lead to multiple forms of oppression and ultimately to murder. Jews were used as scapegoats by the Nazi government in Germany before and during World War 2, and six million Jewish people died in the Holocaust as a result. Dehumanising people opens the gates to abuse.

One tool for understanding how the Holocaust could have happened, the Allport scale¹, posits that hate speech (which is itself harmful) is the foundation for all forms of abuse, discrimination and violence towards groups. That is why it is so important to challenge the myths of immigration and the prejudices that can arise from misinformation.

Policy context

The Scottish educational context provides a range of ways to support anti-racist education on immigration:

- Curriculum for Excellence, with its emphasis on the four capacities and through the Experiences and Outcomes on a range of equality and inclusion issues;
- Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) policy and practices support inclusive education which meets the needs of immigrant, refugee and asylum-seeking children. The SHANARRI well-being indicators include feeling safe and included, which can be especially relevant to refugee and migrant children;
- How Good is Our School 4 has an increased focus on equality, and says ‘inclusion and equality leads to improved outcomes for all learners’;
- The General Teaching Council for Scotland expects teachers to commit to “the principles of democracy and social justice” and to “demonstrate a commitment to engaging learners in real world issues to enhance learning experiences and outcomes, and to encourage learning our way to a better future”. Providing education about the myths of immigration is entirely consistent with the GTC standards;
- The Equality Act 2010 protects people in the UK from discrimination on various grounds including race and religion. This law can protect immigrants who experience racism. It provides a framework for tackling discrimination and promoting equality.

Policy context – Scottish Government immigration policy

The current Scottish Government’s stance on immigration differs significantly from current and recent UK Governments’ positions. Immigration is reserved, not devolved, so that Scotland cannot determine its own policy on overall numbers of immigrants.

However, several Scottish Governments have used their powers to shape the debate and frame immigration as a positive development, as a means of attracting fresh talent to Scotland, and a way of addressing the challenges of a declining population.

Scottish Government spokespeople are on record as noting the important economic, social and cultural contributions migrants make to Scottish communities. In 2015 the then Minister for Europe and International Development said, *“We work hard to attract the best international talent to Scotland and those who choose to make Scotland their home will always be welcomed.”*

Whole school/college-wide approaches

Schools and colleges should take a whole establishment approach to anti-racism as part of a wider programme of equality proofing work. There are various ways to discuss the myths of immigration involving the whole school/college. You could:

- ✓ Hold an assembly/host a talk on immigration, possibly involving a speaker from an external organisation (see contacts in Further Reading section - page 11), or a parent or teacher/lecturer who is an immigrant, or by using a video clip which shares an experience of immigration (see links - page 11)
- ✓ Display posters or materials around the school/college, to convey a welcoming and inclusive environment, to pupils/students, parents, staff and visitors - for example:
 - A poster which says how many different languages are spoken in the school/college
 - A poster showing the word “Welcome” in every language spoken in the school/college, made with pupil/student participation
 - Posters from anti-racism organisations e.g. Show Racism the Red Card.
- ✓ Take part in themed weeks such as Refugee Festival Scotland (June) or hold special events on special days e.g. World Refugee Day (20 June), Holocaust Memorial Day (27 January), International Day for the Elimination of Racism (21 March), UN Human Rights Day (10 December)
- ✓ Have clear anti-racist policies, and procedures to prevent, record and respond to racist incidents and the use of racist and anti-immigrant language
- ✓ Hold joint activities with school/college ESOL programmes, e.g. guest speakers, shared lunches, and cultural/social events.

“I was afraid all the time before I came here but now I feel safe - at last.”

Aimee, living in Scotland, from the Democratic Republic of Congo

Source: British Red Cross: www.redcross.org.uk/What-we-do/Refugee-support/Refugees-true-stories/Aimees-story-escaping-years-of-persecution

More options

Senior Phase pupils and students could also address the myths of immigration through:

- ✓ incorporating into extra-curricular activities – e.g. a motion at the debating society or a guest speaker at a relevant club e.g. an Amnesty International club
- ✓ writing discursive essays/developing portfolio pieces about refugees, immigration, diversity and media narratives on migration
- ✓ volunteering or fundraising for refugee or migrant help charities or causes
- ✓ making links with schools or colleges in other countries, perhaps through social media, to explore different narratives around immigration
- ✓ raising issues through their pupil council or students’ association
- ✓ using core skills and project based learning units in NC programmes to investigate issues around immigration and work with asylum seeker/refugee groups.



Myth busting through the curriculum

There are many ways to embed refugee inclusion across the curriculum, so that issues around immigration, refugees, asylum seekers and a diverse population are routinely discussed in school/college. This can be a useful addition to stand-alone lessons. Immigration is relevant to every subject area and can be woven into:

- ✓ **English:** there are many excellent books about refugees and immigrants, including
 - *Christophe's Story* by Niki Cornwell (1st or 2nd Level)
 - *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* by Judith Kerr (2nd Level or above)
 - *Inside Out and Back Again* by Thanhha Lai (2nd Level or above)
 - *Coming to England* by Floella Benjamin (2nd Level or above)
 - *The Other Side of Truth* by Beverley Naidoo (2nd Level or above)
 - *Shadow* by Michael Morpurgo (2nd Level or above)
 - *Little Soldier* by Bernard Ashley (Senior Phase)
 - *Small Island* by Andrea Levy (Senior Phase)
 - *The Other Hand* by Chris Cleave (Senior Phase)
- ✓ It can also be useful to look at news and media coverage of immigration and examine the language used in different news articles, with pupils working at Second Level
- ✓ **Science:** many famous scientists were immigrants e.g. Albert Einstein (German-Jewish refugee) and Bernard Katz, Nobel Prize winner (German-Jewish refugee). In 2013, 4 immigrant scientists won the Nobel Prizes for chemistry, physiology and medicine. Consider mentioning scientists' backgrounds when you refer to their work
- ✓ **Maths:** an option might be to use immigration information for lessons on e.g. statistics, data-handling, percentages, and making graphs and charts; or to explore the origins of different number systems and mathematical concepts
- ✓ **Art:** many famous artists were immigrants, e.g. Camille Pissarro (French-Jewish refugee) and Anish Kapoor, Turner Prize winner (son of refugees who fled Iraq). You could find out more about artists who were immigrants, and how that affected their work. You could explore art related to immigration including photography projects such as World Press Photo

- ✓ **Music:** you could play music performed or composed by refugees and asylum seekers and discuss the artists' stories; or listen to and discuss songs about immigration and travel; or explore musical systems and scales from various cultures
- ✓ **Social studies:** consider looking at news coverage of immigration and examine the language used; or explore trends over time and links between immigration and political and historical events. Newspaper headlines are worthy of discussion
- ✓ **Drama:** there are many plays which include refugees' stories or stories of persecution and prejudice; drama can be used to explore themes of difference, diversity and inclusion
- ✓ **RME:** an option might be to explore how modern Scotland is enriched by many diverse beliefs and cultures; and to examine how prejudice against immigrants can often be connected to religious-based prejudice such as Islamophobia.

Lesson ideas

Lessons suitable for pupils working at First and Second Levels could be linked to various topics. There are various excellent materials for holding lessons on specific myths of immigration, developed by specialist organisations such as Show Racism the Red Card and the British Red Cross. Many organisations offer teaching resources and lesson and assembly outlines on immigration so you can select what would work best in your setting (see links in Further Reading). You could hold a series of lessons exploring different myths of immigration, or link several myths into one lesson.



Myths of Immigration: Countering misinformation

| Myths | Facts |
|---|--|
| <p>“We have loads of immigrants in the UK”</p> | <p>Less than 1% of the world’s refugees live in the UK, and refugees make up only 0.19% of the UK population. 86% of the world’s refugees live in the poorest countries. There are more refugees in Turkey, Pakistan and Lebanon than anywhere else.</p> <p>Suggested activities:</p> <p><i>‘My new neighbours’</i> – SRTRC No Place for Hate (20-30 mins)</p> <p><i>Quiz – Where do migrants come from and go to?</i> – British Red Cross (30 mins)</p> |
| <p>“Loads of immigrants are criminals”</p> | <p>Immigrants are no more likely to commit crime than anyone else. Research by LSEⁱⁱ found that crime fell significantly in areas of the UK that had experienced mass immigration from eastern Europe, with rates of burglary, vandalism and car theft down since 2004. There is no causal link between immigration & crime.</p> <p>Immigrants often face the poorest conditions and become targets for crime. People who arrive via human traffickers are vulnerable to exploitation, such as being forced into domestic work or prostitution. Immigrants can also experience hate crimes and racist attacks.</p> <p>Suggested activities:</p> <p><i>‘Who are migrants?’</i> – British Red Cross (Adaptable, 70-90 mins total, all activities 5-30 mins)</p> <p><i>‘How does it feel to be in a new country?’</i> – British Red Cross (50 mins)</p> |
| <p>“Immigration is a taboo subject; you can’t talk about it”</p> | <p>Immigration features in the newspapers and on TV/Radio/web news every day but there is a myth that it is ‘taboo’ to discuss it. Media portrayals of immigration can create or exacerbate racism and prejudice and are very worthy of discussion and critical examination.</p> <p>Suggested activities:</p> <p><i>‘The Media and Minority groups’</i> – SRTRC No Place for Hate (30 mins)</p> <p><i>‘How are migrants portrayed in the media?’</i> – British Red Cross (60 mins)</p> |
| <p>“Immigration creates terrorism”</p> | <p>Many immigrants are fleeing terrorism. Many immigrants have been victims of terrorism. Most terrorism is committed by people who are legally resident where they commit their crimes. Leaders from Black and Minority Ethnic groups and faith and community groups condemn terrorism. Terrorism is a complex issue with complex causes; stigmatising immigrants is wrong.</p> <p>Suggested activities:</p> <p><i>‘Terrorism and the media’</i> – SRTRC Islamophobia Education pack (20 mins)</p> <p><i>‘The historical context of terrorism’</i> – SRTRC Islamophobia Education pack (30 mins)</p> |

Continued >>>

Myths

Facts

“People come to the UK because we’re a soft touch and give out loads of benefits”

“People just want free healthcare and free houses”

“Immigrants are a drain on public services”

“Immigrants take all the jobs and keep wages low”

Most immigrants are refugees, fleeing persecution, violence and war. They cannot safely stay where they are. That’s why they often find dangerous ways of leaving e.g. unsafe boats or container lorries. More than 3,700 people drowned in 2016 trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea.ⁱⁱⁱ

Some people freely choose to leave a safe country to work or study in the UK, just as many UK citizens choose to live in Australia, America or Europe. Migration is part of British history and culture. 1.2 million people born in the UK live in other EU countries.

The UK is very tough on immigrants and has comparatively low levels of social security benefits and a high level of refusals of asylum applications. Only 41% of asylum claims here are granted, compared with over 70% in some EU countries. Refugees and asylum seekers have to live where they are placed, often in very poor quality housing. Sometimes asylum seekers, including children, though not in Scotland, are put in prison-like detention centres (e.g. Dungavel in Ayrshire and Yarl’s Wood in England) while their claims are processed.

Immigrants make a net contribution to the economy: they pay more tax than they take out in benefits. Migrants coming to the UK since 2000 have been 43% less likely to claim benefits or tax credits compared to the UK-born workforce. Immigrants tend to be better educated than the UK-born and less likely to be unemployed.

More people leave the UK for medical treatment abroad than arrive here seeking care^{iv}. Without immigrants the NHS would struggle to provide effective care. 11% of NHS staff are not UK citizens, including more than a quarter of doctors.

In its 2015 General Election briefing^v, the Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics observed: “There is still no evidence of an overall negative impact of immigration on jobs, wages, housing or the crowding out of public services.”

Scotland needs immigrants because of its declining and ageing population.

Suggested activities:

‘*Why do people move?*’ – SRTRC No Place for Hate (20 mins)

‘*Would you leave home?*’ – British Red Cross (40 mins)

‘*Persecution and Propaganda*’ – SRTRC Islamophobia Education pack (25 mins)

Film: *Courage: 60 Years of the UN Refugee Convention* (2 minutes).

Courage is a two-minute documentary featuring two people who came to Scotland in very different circumstances, but who both fled for their lives. It is an ideal opener for a lesson about immigration. View online: www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/courage or contact Scottish Refugee Council for a DVD.

Further reading

EIS publications and policies

Asylum seekers and refugees

Challenging Racism

Islamophobia

www.eis.org.uk/Equality_Publications/Equality_policies.htm

Teaching Children from Asylum and Refugee Seeking Families

www.eis.org.uk/images/equality/Asylumbrochure.pdf

Useful contacts and further reading

Show Racism the Red Card - www.theredcard.org

SRTRC can provide educational materials and deliver sessions tailored to your setting. Their resources include No Place for Hate, an Islamophobia Education Pack and the film 'Immigration: What's the story?'

British Red Cross - www.redcross.org.uk/What-we-do/Teaching-resources

BRC can provide refugee inclusion education. Their resources include Positive Images: A Toolkit on Migration and Development.

Scottish Refugee Council - www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk

British Council - www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/immigration

Unison and SRTRC myth-buster leaflet - www.srtrc.org/uploaded/Immigration%20Myth%20Buster%20May%202014.pdf

TUC leaflet: Truth, lies and migrants www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/myths%20book%202014.pdf

Famous Refugees - <http://refugeeweek.org.uk/info-centre/famous-refugees>

Ruth's story (video clip) - www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/36714334

Seeking refuge (video clips) - www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01k7c4q/clips

Assembly ideas - www.risc.org.uk/files/refugee_assembly.pdf

BBC schools lessons - www.bbc.co.uk/schools/pshe_and_citizenship/personal_wellbeing/relationships/challenging_discrimination/pages/immigration.shtml

Migration Observatory – research on UK attitudes to immigration - www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/briefings/uk-public-opinion-toward-immigration-overall-attitudes-and-level-concern

Teaching Tolerance (US resource, adaptable to UK) - www.tolerance.org/category/classroom-resources/immigration

Refugee voices - www.refugee-action.org.uk/refugee_voices

Refugee stories - <http://stories.unhcr.org>

ⁱ Allport's scale of prejudice - http://the-classroom.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2014/07/Prejudice_And_Allport_Scale.pdf-1.pdf

ⁱⁱ Bell, Brian, Machin, Stephen and Fasani, Francesco (2010) Crime and immigration: evidence from large immigrant waves. CEP Discussion Paper, No. 984. Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/28732/>

ⁱⁱⁱ www.unhcr.org/uk/news/latest/2016/10/580f3e684/mediterranean-death-toll-soars-2016-deadliest-year.html

^{iv} www.theguardian.com/society/2013/oct/24/medical-tourism-generates-millions-nhs-health

^v <http://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/ea019.pdf>

Myths of Immigration



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