WOVEN THREADS

STORIES FROM AFAR TEACHING TOOLKIT

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM



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USING THIS RESOURCE

Woven Threads: Stories from Afar is an 8 x 4-minute series which presents varied refugee stories through beautiful and powerful animations. The emotive storytelling compels us to remember our shared humanity, and to identify with the universality of the refugee experience.

The *Woven Threads* Teaching Toolkit aims to support teachers in exploring key themes from the series. The resource also aims to build students' understanding of, and empathy with, refugees and asylum seekers. It contains curriculum-mapped learning tasks for Year 5-10 students, drawing on content from a wide range of learning areas, capabilities, and cross-curricular priorities. Tasks were designed with an inquiry approach, aiming to foster communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking in the classroom.

Teachers are encouraged to use the resource flexibly. The learning tasks can be undertaken in isolation or in any sequence, and can be adapted to suit the needs of your students or curriculum.

EPISODE SYNOPSES

EPISODE 1:

'THE UNEXPECTED CHRISTMAS' – MARTI

In 1956, Marti and her family fled Budapest. This is the story of their escape. It was the month before Christmas, and Marti's mother was preparing her for the fact that the Angel wouldn't know where they were this year.

EPISODE 2: 'THE REUNION' – ABBOUDS

Kabil, a Mandean, lived with his wife and six children in Baghdad. He owned two jewellery stores – a business passed down from generation to generation. This is the story of how the Abboud family's decision to leave lrag separated them for the next five years.

EPISODE 3:

'THE GIFT I WILL NEVER FORGET' – CARINA

In 1979, at the age of 16, Carina with her young brother and sister boarded a boat and left Vietnam. After a horrific journey through the South China Sea, they arrived in Indonesia, where they were taken by officials to an Island and told to swim ashore. This is her story.

EPISODE 4:

'HOW FOOTBALL SAVED MY LIFE' – ABRAHAM

In 1987, at the age of seven, Abraham fled war and left his family in South Sudan. Abraham joined a group of boys who numbered 50,000 to walk towards Ethiopia. This is his story of the restorative power of football.

EPISODE 5:

'THE AMAZING GIFT OF EDUCATION' – ATIKA

Atika grew up in Afghanistan. She is a Hazara from a small country village where girls are not allowed to leave the house once they are 10 or 11 years old. Education wasn't considered to be important for a girl.

EPISODE 6:

'A STRANGE LAND, CALLED AUSTRALIA' – FABLICE

This is the story of Fablice who, was orphaned at seven, lived on the streets, and attended school during the day. He was taken from school to become a child soldier. He managed to escape, find his sister, and arrive in a country where he thought the locals might eat him.

EPISODE 7:

'THE DAY I GOT MY DAD BACK' – HISHAM

When Hisham was 13, his father disappeared and he thought his childhood had ended. He was the oldest of his siblings and a male, so his mother would need help. This the story of what Hisham realised the day his father returned.

EPISODE 8:

'MY TANIKA DISASTER' – ZAINAB

Zainab was born in Malaysia but has grown up in Australia. She is ethnically a Rohingya. This is her story of growing up with different traditions, and at 16, starting to understand the amazing journey her parents took and how that has affected her life.

ZAINAB'S FAMILY ARE ROHINGYA (BURMESE MUSLIM) FROM MYANMAR. THE ROHINGYA HAVE A LONG HISTORY OF PERSECUTION IN MYANMAR. SINCE 1948 – POST-BRITISH RULE – THEY HAVE BEEN DENIED CITIZENSHIP.

ZAINAB'S FAMILY MOVED TO AUSTRALIA WHEN SHE WAS THREE. NOW 16 YEARS OLD, SHE SHARES THE WAYS THAT HER ROHINGYAN CULTURE MAKES HER FEEL DIFFERENT.

TASK 1

Culture is our way of life. It includes our community's shared values, beliefs, behaviours, customs, traditions and languages. When speaking about the differences between Rohingyan and Australian cultures, Zainab says: 'I feel different in the way I look, in the way I dress, what foods I eat, and my culture. It's really different to the culture here.'

Explore the concept of culture through a class discussion, and then ask students to write a reflection on their own cultural practices. (This might include their family's culture, wider Australian culture, or their school culture.) Which aspects of students' lives contribute to their culture? Which cultural practices or beliefs could seem strange from another perspective? How is their culture similar and different to Zainab's?

TASK 2

Recounting the story of wearing 'thanaka' – a traditional face mask – to school, Zainab says: 'I was really young, so I didn't know that doing this would affect people. I just walked into school, went to my class, sat down, and everyone kept giving me weird looks... The teachers thought that something was up, so my parents were called and this big issue happened.'

Divide the class into four groups, and allocate a character/s to each group: Zainab, her family, her teacher, or her classmates. Ask each group to consider what actions this person/s could have taken to achieve a more positive outcome for Zainab, and to build intercultural understanding in her school. Ask groups to share their thoughts with the class, and then consider whether similar actions might improve awareness of and respect for cultural diversity within their own school community.

YEAR 5 - CULTURE EPISODE: ZAINAB

TASK 3

Zainab's story is told through her spoken recount, and through images, text and animation. Both the dialogue and the visual elements convey information about her culture.

Watch the episode with students, and ask what they learnt about Zainab's culture. Explain to students that they will view the episode again, this time focussing on how they learnt about Zainab's culture – whether through dialogue, visual elements, or both. For example, they learn about Burma's neighbouring countries only through visual elements.

To focus carefully on visual elements, students may find it helpful to pause the episode frequently (either as a whole class, or on 1:1 devices). Their observations could be recorded on a Venn diagram, and followed up with a discussion about the different ways we can learn from visual texts.

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM LINKS:

ENGLISH

Identify aspects of literary texts that convey details or information about particular social, cultural and historical contexts. (ACELT1608)

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Identify how valuing diversity positively influences the wellbeing of the community. (ACPPS060)

INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

Identify factors that contribute to understanding in intercultural communication and discuss some strategies to avoid misunderstanding.

Discuss ways of reconciling differing cultural values and perspectives in addressing common concerns.

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL CAPABILITY

Explain how means of communication differ within and between communities and identify the role these play in helping or hindering understanding of others. CARINA AND HER SIBLINGS FLED VIETNAM BY BOAT IN 1979. THEIR FATHER HAD WORKED FOR THE FORMER GOVERNMENT IN SOUTH VIETNAM AND HE WAS SENT TO A RE-EDUCATION CAMP FOLLOWING THE VIETNAM WAR, LEAVING HIS FAMILY VULNERABLE.

IN THIS EPISODE, CARINA SHARES HOW SHE AND 400 PEOPLE SURVIVED ON AN UNINHABITED ISLAND UNTIL THEY WERE GIVEN AID AND RESETTLED AS REFUGEES.

YEAR 6 - STORYTELLING EPISODE: CARINA

TASK 1

Carina's story is introduced by the following text: 'This is the story of a gift Carina received when she was 16.' In pairs, have students discuss the filmmakers' choice to preface her story in this way. Could the episode be described differently? If so, which information should be included?

Ask students to write an alternative opening statement for this episode, using complex sentences to connect ideas. For example, 'In June 1979, Carina survived on an uninhabited island after fleeing Vietnam as a refugee.'

TASK 2

When sharing her story of survival on an uninhabited island, Carina talks about the day-to-day challenges of finding food, helping others on the island, and mending her salt-damaged clothes. Her story leaves viewers with unanswered questions about her experience as a refugee, including: what life was like for her during and after the Vietnam War; how her group came to be on the island; how long they spent there; and how she was eventually resettled in Australia.

Ask students to independently reflect on information that was omitted from Carina's story. Give students two slips of paper. On each piece of paper, have students write a question they would ask Carina if they had the opportunity.

Then in small groups, ask students to collate their questions and categorise them in various ways. For example, questions about Vietnam, questions about resettlement, or questions designed to elicit quantitative or qualitative responses. Finish the lesson with a whole class discussion on: the types of questions asked; the different ways the questions can be categorised; and how responses to these questions would change the focus of Carina's story.

TASK 3

Through both Carina's dialogue and the visual elements of her story, students are introduced to new vocabulary and concepts. Ask students to research an area of personal interest from Carina's story, and later share their findings with the class through a brief presentation. Research topics might include: the location of Vietnam in relation to Australia; the Vietnam War; the work of international aid organisations such as World Vision; a history of Australia's immigration policies; or migrant communities living in Australia.

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM LINKS:

CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING

Pose questions to clarify and interpret information and probe for causes and consequences.

ENGLISH

Investigate how complex sentences can be used in a variety of ways to elaborate, extend and explain ideas. (ACELA1522)

Plan, rehearse and deliver presentations, selecting and sequencing appropriate content and multimodal elements for defined audiences and purposes, making appropriate choices for modality and emphasis. (ACELY1710)

Use comprehension strategies to interpret and analyse information and ideas, comparing content from a variety of textual sources including media and digital texts. (ACELY1713)

HISTORY

Stories of groups of people who migrated to Australia since Federation (including one country of the Asia region) and the reasons they migrated. (ACHASSK136) THE 1956 HUNGARIAN UPRISING AGAINST SOVIET OCCUPATION SAW 200,000 PEOPLE FLEE FROM THE COUNTRY AS REFUGEES. NINE-YEAR OLD MARTI AND HER FAMILY ESCAPED TO VIENNA, AND WERE LATER RESETTLED AS REFUGEES IN AUSTRALIA.

IN THIS EPISODE, MARTI TELLS THE STORY OF HER FAMILY'S MAGICAL CHRISTMAS IN VIENNA.

YEAR 7 - CHARACTERISATION EPISODE: MARTI

TASK 1

In a class discussion, ask students about the techniques authors and filmmakers use to create character. How do they help the audience understand their characters, and care about what happens to them? How do students achieve characterisation in their own writing or filmmaking?

Have students prepare a T-chart, with the headings 'Language' and 'Images'. Explain that they will initially listen to this episode without viewing it, in order to focus on how language choices build character. For example, Marti's first person narration encourages the audience to empathise with her story, and her sensory language creates vivid pictures of places, events and feelings. Play the episode audio for students, and ask them to record their thoughts or questions in the 'Language' column.

Now play the episode again, with a focus on the visual choices that help viewers understand and connect to Marti's character. For example, the use of archival photos of Marti and her family. The audience also experiences the story from her viewpoint, including walking along the hallway towards the bright Christmas tree. Ask students to record their thoughts or questions in the 'Images' column. Have students share their observations with a partner, and then with the wider class.

TASK 2

In her lyrical storytelling, Marti uses abstract nouns to describe concepts and her own feelings. Words such as 'magic' and 'joy' help viewers to better understand Marti's character, as well as the events of the story.

After introducing or reviewing abstract nouns, ask students to collectively brainstorm a list of abstract nouns in response to Marti's story. For example: courage, generosity, or freedom. These could be recorded on an anchor chart for students to refer back to. In your reflection, point out how these words demonstrate students' understanding of various features of the text, such as characters and themes.

TASK 3

The characters in Marti's story are: herself as a nineyear old; her father, mother and brother; the lady at the church; and the heart surgeon's family, the Mlczohs.

Ask students to write an imaginative diary entry about the events in Marti's story, told from the perspective of their chosen character. Challenge students to incorporate dialogue, settings, their inferences about characters, and other aspects of the text in their imaginative recreations.

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM LINKS:

CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING

Draw parallels between known and new ideas to create new ways of achieving goals.

ENGLISH

Investigate vocabulary typical of extended and more academic texts and the role of abstract nouns, classification, description and generalisation in building specialised knowledge through language. (ACELA1537)

Compare the ways that language and images are used to create character, and to influence emotions and opinions in different types of texts. (ACELT1621)

Create literary texts that adapt stylistic features encountered in other texts, for example, narrative viewpoint, structure of stanzas, contrast and juxtaposition. (ACELT1625)

MEDIA ARTS

Identify specific features and purposes of media artworks from contemporary and past times, including media artworks of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, to explore viewpoints and enrich their media arts making. (ACAMAR072) IN WAR-TORN SYRIA IN 2011, WHEN HISHAM WAS 13 YEARS OLD, HIS FATHER WAS SHOT AT AN UPRISING. AS THE ELDEST CHILD, HISHAM TOOK RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FAMILY WHILE HIS INJURED FATHER RECOVERED IN HOSPITAL. DOCTORS WERE ABLE TO SAVE HIS FATHER, AND THIS INSPIRED HISHAM TO BECOME A DOCTOR HIMSELF. THE FAMILY FLED TO JORDAN DURING THE UPRISINGS, AND WERE EVENTUALLY RESETTLED IN AUSTRALIA IN 2015.

YEAR 8 - DUTY AND OBLIGATION EPISODE: HISHAM

TASK 1

Just 13 years old when his father was shot and hospitalised in Syria, Hisham assumed responsibility for his family. He believed it was his duty as the eldest child. When his father returned, Hisham was relieved to relinquish the roles of protector and provider: 'That day when my dad came back home, I felt like hope came back again to my life. I felt like I'm a children again. I don't have to take responsibility anymore. I felt like father will be the one who will protect us.'

As a class, discuss the role of duty in Hisham's decision-making and action. Ask students to reflect on how duty and obligation can inform their own actions, such as helping their parents, obeying the law, or volunteering at school events. Brainstorm a list of students' duty-based actions and collectively place these on a continuum – from strictly obligatory, to 'beyond the call of duty'. Have students reflect on the reasons and implications for each placement, and whether a consensus was easily reached.

TASK 2

Seriously injured after being shot at an uprising, Hisham's father was revived by a Doctors Without Borders field team. This international medical humanitarian organisation provides emergency aid in conflict zones and countries affected by epidemics.

'I felt so thankful for them', remembers Hisham. 'They gave me hope again. They gave me life again when they gave us back my dad... That was the moment that I knew I going to be a doctor one day, 'cause I felt like I have to help others.'

Ask students to reflect on the skills and dispositions required to be a doctor. In a brief written response to the text, have them explain why Hisham's sense of duty, hopefulness and resilience will be assets in his chosen career.

TASK 3

Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program provides resettlement for refugees in two ways: 'onshore' and 'offshore' processing. Within the onshore component, the Federal Government reviews the claims of people who seek asylum after arriving in Australia, and protects the people it finds to be genuine refugees. Through the offshore component, the Government protects those who arrive in Australia as part of the UNHCR resettlement program - such as Hisham and his family – and through community sponsorship. The program is underpinned by Australia's international obligations, including being a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In pairs, ask students to generate three factual questions they would like to research in a future inquiry about Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program. These questions could be explored in class if time permits.

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM LINKS:

CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING

Pose questions to probe assumptions and investigate complex issues.

ENGLISH

Share, reflect on, clarify and evaluate opinions and arguments about aspects of literary texts. (ACELT1627)

Create imaginative, informative and persuasive texts that raise issues, report events and advance opinions, using deliberate language and textual choices, and including digital elements as appropriate. (ACELY1736)

Recognise and explain differing viewpoints about the world, cultures, individual people and concerns represented in texts. (ACELT1807)

ETHICAL UNDERSTANDING

Investigate scenarios that highlight ways that personal dispositions and actions can affect consequences.

AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S TELEVISION FOUNDATION IN 1987, 13-YEAR OLD ABRAHAM BECAME SEPARATED FROM HIS FAMILY AS THEY FLED CONFLICT IN THEIR SOUTH SUDAN VILLAGE. HE JOINED THOUSANDS OF OTHERS – MAINLY CHILDREN – IN TREKKING FOR MONTHS TOWARDS WHAT WOULD BECOME THE PANYINDU REFUGEE CAMP IN ETHIOPIA. IN THIS EPISODE, ABRAHAM REFLECTS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF SPORT IN THE CAMP.

YEAR 9 - THE POWER OF SPORT EPISODE: ABRAHAM

TASK 1

Abraham managed to remain positive – hopeful, and even happy – during his 17 long years living in refugee camps. Reflecting on his resilience, he credits soccer: 'It made me to be strong. I was full of resilience compared to the rest of the kids who were my age because they have no hope. That's where I was getting my happiness.'

In groups, ask students to consider the ways in which playing soccer could have contributed to Abraham's resilience. For example, the shared experience of playing sport helps to build friendships, and friendship helps people cope with adversity. Have groups share the factors they identified with the class. Discuss whether these factors are relevant to coping with a range of challenging situations. Could adopting any of these behaviours or attitudes help students to develop their own confidence and adaptability?

TASK 2

Recognising the benefits of soccer in the Panyindu refugee camp, the UNHCR (the United Nations Refugee Agency) formalised the competition and provided top players with uniforms. Abraham reflects on how the sport improved the wellbeing of the whole community.

'It was the love of it and the fact that it bring everyone together. People that were in the same camp would come and play. That was the whole idea', explains Abraham. 'And you know, when you win, or somebody scored a goal, it brings the atmosphere of that's your home.'

After discussing the positive impact of soccer in Panyindu community, ask students to investigate initiatives aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of refugees in their own communities. These may include sports and recreation programs, education and language services, or other initiatives. Have students share their findings with the class through a short presentation.

TASK 3

The media undoubtedly plays a role in shaping public perceptions and opinions about refugees and asylum seekers. The issues / groups covered, the spokespeople for these issues, and the language used can all influence the audience. Abraham's story is unique in that it is told from a refugee's own perspective, and it provides rare insight into a child's experience of refugee camps. By focussing on children and the universal themes of sport and community, this representation encourages the audience to connect and empathise with Abraham.

To further analyse media representation of refugees and asylum seekers, ask pairs of students to compare and contrast this episode with two relevant and recent news articles, reports or television programs. Have them consider who is telling the story, the issues covered, the language used, and how these texts position readers in relation to refugees.

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM LINKS:

ENGLISH

Analyse how the construction and interpretation of texts, including media texts, can be influenced by cultural perspectives and other texts. (ACELY1739)

Use interaction skills to present and discuss an idea and to influence and engage an audience by selecting persuasive language, varying voice tone, pitch, and pace, and using elements such as music and sound effects. (ACELY1811)

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Plan, implement and critique strategies to enhance the health, safety and wellbeing of their communities. (ACPPS096)

Critique behaviours and contextual factors that influence the health and wellbeing of diverse communities. (ACPPS098)

MEDIA ARTS

Analyse a range of media artworks from contemporary and past times to explore differing viewpoints and enrich their media arts making, starting with Australian media artworks, including media artworks of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and international media artworks. (ACAMAR079) ATIKA AND HER FAMILY ARE HAZARAS, AN ETHNIC GROUP NATIVE TO HAZARAJAT IN CENTRAL AFGHANISTAN. HAZARAS WERE ONCE THE LARGEST ETHNIC GROUP IN AFGHANISTAN, BUT NOW ACCOUNT FOR ABOUT 9% OF THE POPULATION. AS THERE IS NO EDUCATION SYSTEM FOR HAZARAS, AND ATIKA WAS NOT PERMITTED TO LEAVE THE HOUSE AFTER A CERTAIN AGE, SHE WAS UNABLE TO GO TO SCHOOL.

WHEN THE FAMILY RELOCATED TO PAKISTAN IN 2000, ATIKA BEGAN HER SCHOOLING THERE AT 11 YEARS OLD. SHE CONTINUED HER FORMAL EDUCATION AFTER ARRIVING IN AUSTRALIA WHEN SHE WAS 18 YEARS OLD.

VEAR 10 - EDUCATION EPISODE: ATIKA

TASK 1

Education is highly valued by Atika and her family. Atika began her schooling in Quetta when she was 11 years old, and overcame many obstacles to continue her education. Passionate about human rights, she successfully completed a law degree in Australia, and was admitted as a solicitor of the Supreme Court.

Working in pairs, ask students to identify further examples of the family's values in the text. They should find evidence to support each example, such as spoken or written language, or visual elements. When sharing their work with the class, ask students to reflect on the thinking processes they used to identify values and supporting evidence in the text.

TASK 2

While on a Temporary Protection Visa in Australia, Atika's father made weekly phone calls to his family. He spoke to Atika about Australia's education system and urged her to attend school and her intensive English classes.

Taking into account what they have learnt about education for Hazaras, Atika's parents' illiteracy, and her dedication to schooling in Quetta, have students creatively write an exchange of dialogue between Atika and her father. Their conversation should centre on Australia's education system and what Atika has to look forward to.

TASK 3

Fundamental to personal, social and economic development, education is recognised as a human right. The Universal Declaration on Human Rights states that 'everyone has the right to education', regardless of their nationality, sex, ethnicity, religion, language, or any other status. Despite this, millions of girls around the world are missing out on an education. Ask students to independently research initiatives aimed at protecting girls' right to education around the world, such as the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) or the Malala Fund. Through their research, they could identify common threats to girls' education, the countries these organisations work in, and the benefits of girls' education to communities and economies.

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM LINKS:

CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING

Give reasons to support their thinking, and address opposing viewpoints and possible weaknesses in their own positions.

ENGLISH

Create imaginative texts that make relevant thematic and intertextual connections with other texts. (ACELT1644)

Identify and analyse implicit or explicit values, beliefs and assumptions in texts and how these are influenced by purposes and likely audiences. (ACELY1752)

MEDIA ARTS

Evaluate how technical and symbolic elements are manipulated in media artworks to create and challenge representations framed by media conventions, social beliefs and values for a range of audiences. (ACAMAR078)

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL CAPABILITY

Articulate their personal value system and analyse the effects of actions that repress social power and limit the expression of diverse views. The colourful and intricate tapestry of *Woven Threads* reminds us that regardless of creed or colour we all belong to the same human family, and as mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters we care for each other and dare to hope for peace and a safe place to call home.

PRODUCER

Woven Threads is an 8 x 4 to 5-minute series, which through beautiful and powerful animations presents many varied and moving stories of refugees. The animations are designed to elicit empathy and understanding so that for a few minutes it is the human and not the refugee experience that is central. By finding this common ground, maybe, for a few minutes, the debates, disputes and fears surrounding migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers might be suspended and replaced by empathy.

Our intent is to involve and unite people, not only within Australia but around the world. It is our hope that *Woven Threads* with its many colours will weave its magic as it delights and entertains.

Our animations are designed to show that everyone is human and has the same desires and fears. We seek to give 'voice' to the marginalised through stories which recognise and celebrate our common humanity; and, thereby question the language and emotions aroused by prejudice.

It is a well-established fact that our technological era is suffering from information overload, culminating in compassion fatigue. Sadly, the immediate and closeup, worldwide reporting of disasters de-sensitises us to the individual impact of catastrophe. However, our animation montage and the texture-rich images, to some extent, redress this by enchanting the viewers so they can listen to the audio, freed from any prejudice due to the speaker's appearance. This allows the story to be heard without stereotyping the storyteller.

Everyone who participates in this project gains from the experience. Through the opportunity of storytelling, the protagonist gains self-respect and self-worth. The production team, simply, because we have extended a hand of friendship and given some hope to those who have none. The audience because, hopefully, they will gain insight and some understanding of what it means to be 'the other'.

MICHI MAROSSZEKY, *Woven Threads* director and producer. PAUL SULLIVAN, *Woven Threads* producer.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following resources and organisations will provide teachers with further information about refugee experiences, journeys, and settlement in Australia.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL: https://www.amnesty.org.au

ASYLUM SEEKER RESOURCE CENTRE: https://www.asrc.org.au

REFUGEE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA:

https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au

ROADS TO REFUGE:

http://www.roads-to-refuge.com.au

UNHCR:

http://www.unhcr.org/en-au



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SCREENNSW





