



## Lesson 1: Stories Connect Us

Often, facts and figures about people who are experiencing something alienate us from the emotions involved in their experience. To truly begin to understand others, it helps to zoom in on the experience of one and then to think about that experience in a larger context. A good starting point to learn about refugees and migrants isn't to begin with statistics and numbers--rather, it's imperative to hear about the experience from someone who has been through it.

As Rock Your World educators, we don't claim to be experts on any issue. We do believe in the spirit of inquiry and learning beside our students. We decided to enter the gateway of learning about refugees and migrants through one story and we're excited to learn with you!

Let's get started with [Malak's story](#).

While you watch and rewatch this story, keep in mind these 3 questions and use this handout inspired by Harvard Project Zero, Visible Thinking Routine to help organize your thoughts:

**What do you see?**

**What do you think about that?**

**What does this make you wonder?**

When we begin to focus on what we're thinking and wondering, our inquiry process is ignited. Here are some of the questions that our team had after viewing Malak's story. Did you have any of the same questions?

- What did we see?
- A stormy sky
- A small boat packed with people
- A little girl at the front
- Shadowy figures with "lights" for eyes
- The sea is choppy
- The water is splashing into the boat
- Malak looks afraid
- A giant sea creature emerges and surrounds the boat
- A woman behind Malak (her mom?) puts her arms around Malak
- The screen goes black
- Malak is now alone on the boat, crying
- Cut to the real Malak
- She smiles while she is talking



What do you think about that?

- In the boat, the adults are portrayed shadow-like and seem like non individuals. We think this maybe because refugees are spoken about as mass groups without individual traits.
- The sea and octopus scene seem to represent the monstrous unknown--the way children can imagine scary things lurking in dark and unknown spaces.
- Seven years old is so young. Like the film notes, some stories aren't meant for children.
- Seeing Malak at the end of the film, we noticed how she was smiling and hopeful. She seemed childlike.

Things we wondered about Malak's story:

- Why was this a journey from somewhere and not to somewhere? Usually, when we plan trips we say we are going to a place.
- Why did Malak have to leave Syria?
- Where was she headed?
- Where does Malak end up living?
- What happened to Malak's parents or extended family?
- Was Malak found in the boat alone or was the scene representing how alone she felt?
- Does Malak remember and miss her home?
- Has she made new friends?
- How many other children are experiencing similar situations?
- What will the long term effects of Malak's journey be as she grows up?

Our Thinking and Wondering are the fuel for our inquiry.  
Now we're really ready to begin--we've learned Malak's story  
and we want to know more.

Come with us!

