



Students come to understand what life may be like for a refugee seeking safety and write letters to those who emigrate from other countries.



Paper; Pens; Pencils; Markers; Optional: (Stickers, glitter, photos, etc. to decorate LETTERS); Glue sticks; Scissors; Manila envelope; Access to Newcomer Letters Handout of refugee support organizations

Total Prep Time: 5 mins.



As this is the third Monday of the month, please consider sharing or re-sharing the Monthly Kick-Off activity, and if appropriate, video at www.everymondaymatters.org. Additionally, a three-minute recap of the previous weeks may add extra context to this week and help connect the dots around the monthly theme.

*** Some of your students may have emigrated from other countries as refugees or have strong views about refugees or immigration. We have tried to treat this subject with delicacy, COMPASSION, and understanding toward those who seek safety outside their birth countries. Younger students may need reminders that they are safe currently, and do not need to leave their homes.

Special Note: Consider starting class with the “Picture Book Discussion” activity from the “Extension” section of this lesson.

4 C's		SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL LEARNING		SERVICE LEARNING	
•	Critical thinking	•	Self-awareness	•	Integrated learning
•	Communication	•	Self-management		High quality service
•	Collaboration	•	Social-awareness	•	Collaboration
•	Creativity	•	Relationship skills	•	Student voice
		•	Responsible decision-making		Civic responsibility
				•	Reflection
				•	Evaluation

GOALS FOR THE WEEK

- **DISCOVER** what it means to be truly COMPASSIONATE toward others in order to alleviate suffering.
- **ENGAGE** with others in meaningful, unselfish, and LOVING ways.
- **UNDERSTAND** how CURATE COMPASSION is an important part of this month's theme, MONDAY GETS LOVING.



STUDENT ACTIVITY: **NEWCOMER LETTERS**

1) SHARE THE NAME OF THIS ACTIVITY WITH STUDENTS: NEWCOMER LETTERS

2) CONSIDER ASKING 1-3 QUESTIONS FROM THE LIST BELOW TO WARM STUDENTS UP ON THE ACTIVITY'S FOCUS:

***NOTE:** *Choose questions appropriate to your students' ages, grades, ability levels, and classroom goals. Students may share their answers in pairs, small groups, or as a large group.*

- **What are some things that all humans need in order to survive?**
 - Possible answers include: Air, clean water, food, shelter, rest, health, security, safety, warmth, friendships, clothing, etc.
 - How does having these things help us feel safe, secure, and LOVED?
- **How would your life be different without having each of these basics for survival? (NOTE: Consider going through each item listed in the "Possible answers include..." section above to get more specific and in-depth responses from students.)**
- **What are some circumstances or events that could make it impossible to meet these basic needs?**
- **If you were in a situation where you didn't have one of these things, what do you think you would do?**
- **How could we have COMPASSION for others who may be currently unable to meet their basic needs?**
 - How would this show in a LOVING way, WE MATTER and so do our individual needs?

3) SET UP THE "NEWCOMER LETTERS" ACTIVITY:

- **Explain:**
 - Every day, there are people around the world who unexpectedly have to leave their homes.
 - Intense events like war, extreme poverty, violence, and other torment can make it necessary for people to move, even to other countries.
 - As we have learned, all people need safety and security to survive, as well as basic necessities like food, clean water, and shelter.
 - People move for many reasons, and one of those reasons is safety.
 - People who move to find safety are called "refugees" and their journeys can be incredibly difficult.
 - Many refugees travel for days without food and other necessities or have to hide in order to stay safe.
 - Sometimes these refugees live in camps, staying in tents for weeks, months, even years.
 - Sometimes the refugees are able to move into our neighborhoods and become our friends and neighbors.
 - Once they have found "refuge", or safety, instead of being called "refugees", they are called "NEWCOMERS" or labels may simply be dropped.
 - And when we consider where they have come from, what they have gone through to find safety, and what they may be experiencing in a new and strange culture, we give room for COMPASSION in our hearts.
 - With that COMPASSION in mind, today we'll be writing LETTERS to refugees from many parts of the world.
 - These LETTERS will be LETTERS of COMPASSION and welcome, and our hopes for them now that they have arrived in a safer place.
- **Ask:**
 - How do you think it might feel to be a refugee or NEWCOMER seeking safety?

4) START THE "NEWCOMER LETTERS" ACTIVITY:

- **Explain:**
 - Today, we will write letters and postcards for refugee children and families.
 - As we have become more understanding and COMPASSIONATE to their incredible journeys, we want to make sure they know that and understand that they MATTER to us.
- **Set out supplies: Paper, pens, pencils, markers, and ephemera (stickers, pictures, etc. to decorate the letters).**

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- If using the extension activity with videos, show the video prior to having students write their LETTERS/POSTCARDS.
 - Let students gather all supplies they will need in order to write their LETTERS.
 - The LETTERS/POSTCARDS can begin, “Dear new friend,” “Hello,” or some other inviting way.
 - These LETTERS/POSTCARDS may be written in English, or, if students know another language that is applicable, they may write LETTERS/POSTCARDS in that language.
 - Give students suggestions if they get stuck writing their LETTERS/POSTCARDS, like “I hope you feel at home in your new surroundings”, “You are welcome here”, or “My wish for you is that _____.” (with their wish inserted, such as, “...that your struggles become less each day.”)
 - Students may also feel free to decorate or draw pictures on their LETTERS.
 - Gather all written LETTERS/POSTCARDS and place them in a manila envelope to be delivered to the organization of your choice that aids refugees/NEWCOMERS.
 - Consider checking the LETTERS/POSTCARDS before sending them.
 - When students are finished with their LETTERS/POSTCARDS prepare for reflection.

5) AFTER THE ACTIVITY, CONSIDER ASKING 1-3 OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TO HELP STUDENTS REFLECT ON WHAT THEY’VE ACCOMPLISHED AND HOW THEY CAN TAKE THIS FORWARD:

***NOTE:** *Choose questions appropriate to your students’ ages, grades, ability levels, and classroom goals. Students may share their answers in pairs, small groups, or as a large group.*

- What is one takeaway you have from today’s activity?
- Has your understanding of NEWCOMERS changed in any way today? How so?
- In what ways did writing your LETTER help you get more LOVING?
- Besides writing LETTERS, what are some things you can do to show COMPASSION for refugees who are trying to resettle?
- How did learning about the plights (struggles) of others help you to view your own life differently?
- What is one thing you wrote in your LETTER that showed the recipient, WE MATTER as a global community?

6) THANK STUDENTS FOR TAKING TIME TO STEP INTO THE SHOES OF REFUGEES AND “NEWCOMERS”. REMIND THEM THAT MANY REFUGEES HAVE FACED MAJOR DIFFICULTIES IN TRYING TO FIND SAFETY FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILIES, AND “COMPASSION” HELPS THEM SETTLE INTO A NEW, AND SOMETIMES STRANGE, PLACE.

7) CHALLENGE STUDENTS TO MAKE THEIR “LETTER” THE FIRST STEP OF MANY IN AIDING AND UNDERSTANDING REFUGEES/“NEWCOMERS”, AND TO LOOK FOR OTHER WAYS TO “GET LOVING” THIS MONTH.

8) CONSIDER CONTINUING TO EXPLORE “CURATE COMPASSION” BY LEADING AN EXTENSION ACTIVITIES.



EXTENSION IDEAS:

DO ONE OR MORE OF THESE EXTENSION IDEAS TO BRING THE LESSON FROM 15 MINUTES TO 30 MINUTES OR MORE.

- 1) Picture Book Discussion:** Read aloud or listen to *The Journey* by Francesca Senna at <https://bit.ly/37rD180> or *My Name is Not Refugee* by Kate Milner <https://bit.ly/2tnrulg> and discuss the author's message.
- 2) Compassion Extended:** Together with your community, gather donatable items to be given to refugees in your area or in other parts of the world. These may include clothing, umbrellas, shoes, hats, playing cards or other games, etc. You may also consider putting together hygiene kits with items such as toothbrushes, toothpaste, and other travel-sized toiletries.
- 3) Social Studies Connection:** Let students research different places and peoples who have had to flee their countries throughout history. Some places include: The Democratic Republic of Congo, Venezuela, Vietnam, Syria, Iraq, Laos, and North Korea, among many others. Students may make charts, pictures or digital graphics to show what they found.
- 4) Each Person Matters:** To help students understand the personal nature of being a refugee, consider showing one of the following videos:
 - Kids Meet A Refugee | Kids Meet | HiHo Kids (6 minutes 57 seconds. For 5th grade and up. Shows students asking questions to a NEWCOMER who fled the Democratic Republic of Congo at age 13.) <https://bit.ly/35qTZSD>
 - Kids, refugees, questions: 'What is it like to have no home?' (As this was originally a fundraiser, show only 0:08-3:03.) (For younger grades. Shows children in the UK asking questions to refugees coming into Britain from all areas of Eastern Europe.) <https://bit.ly/2ZSnBHu>
 - Refugee Life: Through a Child's Eyes (2 minutes 59 seconds. Appropriate for all ages. A refugee camp is shown and narrated by a young boy from Iraq named Hamze.) <https://bit.ly/2Fpopu4>

After watching the video, let students discuss similarities between themselves and the refugees, as well as differences. Let them also brainstorm ways they can be helpful to those who are resettling. Make a list of what challenges refugees might face in a new culture, such as learning a new language, going to a different type of school, experiencing different types of weather, dealing with homesickness, leaving friends and loved ones, etc.

“**ALL OF OUR HUMANITY IS
DEPENDENT UPON RECOGNIZING
THE HUMANITY IN OTHERS.**”

-ARCHBISHOP DESMOND TUTU,
SOUTH AFRICAN CLERIC



REFUGEE SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS

FOR LETTERS AND POSTCARDS:

- Operation Refugee Child: <http://www.operationrefugeechild.org/>
- CARE: <https://www.care.org/get-involved/letters-hope>
- Any Refugee: <https://anyrefugee.org/>

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS THAT PROVIDE REFUGEE SUPPORT:

- UNICEF USA: <https://www.unicefusa.org/>
- International Rescue Committee: <https://www.rescue.org/>
- Asylum Access: <https://asylumaccess.org/>