

TEACHER GUIDE:

NASRO FROM DADAAB

Summary of Nasro’s Story

Nasro is a 17-year-old girl who has fled from civil war and famine in Somalia to a refugee camp in Kenya, where she copes, along with tens of thousands of other displaced persons, with scarcity and hardship. Although her living conditions are very difficult, she makes a life for herself there and builds a “family” of other girls who share both her privations and goals. Inspired by her dreams of the mother who died giving birth to her, Nasro attends school and becomes an excellent student. She has the courage to stand up to a group of boys who threaten her and her friend. She believes that “Love always finds a way to exist, / Even in here.”

Note to Teachers

Girls around the world, but particularly in developing countries, face many difficulties, including gender-based violence, early marriage, and lack of educational opportunity. When girls become refugees, the dangers facing them are even greater, the opportunities fewer, the barriers higher. *Brave Girl Rising* focuses on a group of girls living in the refugee camp in Dadaab, Kenya. They are among the streams of refugees worldwide seeking shelter from civil violence, war, and religious persecution, or fleeing poverty and hunger in hopes of making a better life for themselves and their families. The film makes clear that their suffering is not only physical but is psychologically wounding as well; the specter of gender-based violence also appears and should be addressed. Yet Nasro and other girls of her acquaintance are strong and resilient; they encourage and protect each other. Students should consider both the enormous challenges faced by these young refugees and the strategies they devise to meet them.

Somalia lies in East Africa, with its coastline on the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean; it is bordered on the west by Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Kenya. It is slightly smaller than the state of Texas. The climate is mostly desert, with alternating dry and rainy seasons. Turbulence in government, poverty, lack of educational and job opportunities, and environmental degradation have led to a low standard of living. Conflict, including civil war,

led hundreds of thousands of Somalis to flee in 1991, and more left beginning in 2011 because of drought, famine, and continued violence. According to UNHCR, as of 2018, more than 870,000 Somalis were registered as refugees in neighboring countries and 2.1 were displaced within the country. Terrorist organizations like al-Shabaab and ISIS have active networks in Somalia. More information about Somalia can be found under Resources, below.

The largest refugee complex, with four camps, is called Dadaab and is located in neighboring Kenya. As of January 2018, close to 250,000 refugees lived there, in tents and in shacks built of thorn bushes, corrugated metal, and other found materials. Many refugees in the older camps arrived decades ago and have children and even grandchildren born in the camps. Dadaab is administered by the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, aided by the Kenyan Red Cross and other agencies. In recent years, food rations from the World Food Programme to Dadaab have been cut because of need elsewhere. The Kenyan government, a reluctant host to the refugee camps, has tried to find a way to close them, sending refugees back to the very countries they fled from because of violence and hunger.

Nasro’s story is told through five poems (actually six, if one counts the poetic language of the introduction). The poems are by Warsan Shire, a poet who was born in Kenya of Somali parents. Her family migrated to Great Britain when she was a baby and she grew up as a British citizen. She frequently writes about immigrants and refugees, people whose lives have been altered dramatically by circumstances beyond their control.

There are two forms of the lesson in this module. The full lesson is more detailed and would require three or four periods of class time; it allows for more student engagement and research. The abbreviated lesson is meant to be used in a single class period of 50 minutes.

One of the episodes in the film, the one marked “IV. Dreams in Which Mother Appears” (0:08:47-0:12:32), hints at the very serious problem of sexual violence that

vulnerable refugees are exposed to. In the scene when Nasro and her friend are confronted by three young men in an isolated setting, the camera angles and background music heighten the sense of threat. Although Nasro fights off one of the young men and frightens them with her henna tattoo, many students will be very aware of the potential for rape and/or murder in this situation. This topic is not addressed explicitly in the lesson. However, students may bring it up themselves during class discussions. For background information on this topic, see the Issues Fact Sheet. If you choose to address the topic fully, you may wish to team with a human development educator, guidance counselor, or other professional who has experience dealing with this subject.

Before using either of these lessons, identify any students in your classes who might have personal difficulty in viewing the film; for example, students whose parents are no longer living, students who have experienced sexual violence, or students who are immigrants who came to this country as refugees. Talk with them ahead of time to be sure they are emotionally prepared to view the film; have an alternate assignment available if necessary.

Curriculum Resources

- Video of *Brave Girl Rising* (approximately 20 minutes)
- Introductory Lesson (full and abbreviated, below)
- Film Viewing Guide (below)
- Issue Fact Sheet on Refugees
- Project-Based Lesson 1: A Welcome for Refugees
- Project-Based Lesson 2: Assuming a Role in a Refugee Camp
- Directors' Q and A: <https://bit.ly/2TsTvta>

Internet Resources

- Iceberg concept of culture image at <http://teaching-ourells.weebly.com/socio-cultural-factors-of-ells.html>
- Country guide to Somalia at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/so.html>
- "Her Turn: It's Time to Make Refugee Girls' Education a Priority" from UNHCR at <https://www.unhcr.org/herturn/> and <https://www.unhcr.org/news/%20press/2018/3/5a9eb2024/turn-unhcr-report-reveals-%20critical-gap-education-refugee-girls.html>
- A changing collection of short films featuring residents of Dadaab at <http://www.dadaabstories.org/>. (Be sure to preview stories before using in class.)

Further Reading

- *What is the What* by Dave Eggers
- *American Border Culture Dreamer: The Young Immigrant Experience from A to Z* by Wendy Ewald
- *Stormy Seas: Stories of Young Boat Refugees* by Mary Beth Leatherdale and Eleanor Shakespeare
- *Rescue: Refugees and the Political Crisis of Our Time* by David Miliband
- *The Displaced: Refugee Writers on Refugee Lives* by Viet Thanh Nguyen
- *City of Thorns* by Ben Rawlence
- *How Dare the Sun Rise* by Sandra Uwiringiyimana and Abigail Pesta
- *We Are Displaced* by Malala Yousafzai

Introducing the Film

Students will learn about the challenges facing girls in refugee camps and discover how one girl, Nasro, is responding to those challenges and helping others to do so.

Time Needed for Lessons

- Full lesson: three to four class periods (50 min. each)
- Abbreviated lesson: one class period (50 min.)

Materials

- Video of *Brave Girl Rising*
- A copy of the Film Viewing Guide (below) for each student
- Map of Africa at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:African_continent-en.svg
- Podcast "Muzamil's Day" at <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/podcast/dispatch/muzamils-day/>
- Copies of a selection from Warsan Shire's poem "Home," from the beginning to the line "No one chooses refugee camps." A copy can be found at <https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/home-433/>.

For more information and resources, including a robust toolkit, go to girlrising.org/brave

Full Lesson

(3 to 4 Class Periods; 50 minutes each)

Part One: Introducing Dadaab

1. Explain to students that they are about to see a short film about Nasro, a 17-year-old girl who lives in a refugee camp. Work with the class to elicit definitions of “refugee” and “refugee camp.”
2. Write the word DADAAB on the board and tell the class that this is the largest refugee camp in the world. Then tell them that they must learn about life in Dadaab by watching the film carefully, without sound.
3. Have students draw a vertical line down the center of a notebook page. Ask them to label the first column “My Observations” and the second one “My Questions.” Tell students that they are to take quick notes in the left-hand column about anything that they observe about life in the camp; for example, housing, food and water, the people, clothing, etc. Explain that you will stop the film as necessary so that they can record their answers.
4. Show the film without sound, stopping occasionally to allow students to jot down notes.
5. When the film is over, arrange students in pairs so that they can compare notes. Have them then fill in the right-hand column with questions they still have about what they have seen.
6. Have a whole-group discussion about their observations, using the following guide questions. (Some sample answers are provided.)
 - What kind of housing is provided at the camp? (Some people live in tents, others in shacks made of scrap metal and thorn bushes from the local area. The houses don’t appear to have electricity or running water.)
 - How do they get water? (They have to carry it from common faucets to their homes in big jugs. Water seems to be a precious commodity and must be used carefully.)
 - What did you notice about the people who live in the camp? (A great many of the people shown in the film are young. Point out that fully 50% of

Common Core State Standards addressed by this Full Lesson

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.2

Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.2

Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

Somalis are 18 or under. They look poor.) Where do you think they are from? (Most students will probably guess Africa without naming a particular location.)

7. Show the map of Africa and point out the location of Somalia and Kenya. Explain that beginning in 1991, Somali refugees fled to neighboring Kenya. Share additional information from the Note to Teachers (above).
8. Ask students to think about what it would be like to be a refugee. What would you feel if you were in that situation? (Homesickness, fear of the unknown, anger at the causes of your loss of your home, sorrow at the loss of friends and relatives)
9. Give students the rest of the period to work in groups to write down questions that they still have about Nasro's life in the camps. Explain that in the next class period they will watch the film again, this time with sound, to answer those questions.

Part Two: Nasro at 17

1. Sketch a simple drawing of an iceberg on the board, with most of the ice hidden below the water line. Then review with students the things that they learned from the visual aspects of the film (housing, clothing, water use, school, etc.) and write those topics on the top part of the iceberg. Explain to the class that the culture of a society is like an iceberg; some things are easily visible while others, the majority, lie beneath the surface. Project the Iceberg image at <http://teachingyourells.weebly.com/socio-cultural-factors-of-ells.html> and share some of the items below the water line with students.
2. Explain that you are going to show the video about Nasro again, this time with sound. Ask them to watch carefully and note down the additional information they learn about Nasro, as well as their own reactions to her story.
3. Show the film, stopping at the end of each segment as follows to allow students time to write their notes:
 - Introduction (0:00:00-0:04:00)
 - I. Sowdo Gives Birth to a Girl (0:04:00-5:52)

- II. The Lost and Found of Humanity (0:05:54-0:07:01)
- III. Girl Must Find a Way to Survive (0:07:03-0:08:46)
- IV. Dreams in Which Mother Appears (0:08:47-0:12:31)
- V. How to Bloom in Dark Places (0:12:32-0:17:26)

4. Conduct a discussion to clear up any questions your students have about the film and to share their responses to it. If you wish, you can use the reflection questions on the Film Viewing Guide as a tool to guide the discussion.
5. Tell students that the film clearly focuses on girls. What elements of Nasro's story would apply to boys in Dadaab as well? How would boys' experience in the camp be different?
6. For homework, have students listen to the PBS *Frontline* podcast "Muzamil's Day" at <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/podcast/dispatch/muzamils-day/>. Ask them to list ways the life of this 12-year-old Somali boy is similar to or different from Nasro's life.

Part Three: A Global Problem

1. Ask students to share their homework from the previous class and discuss how boys fare in Dadaab compared to girls. What reactions did they have to the podcast?
2. Play a section of the podcast (14:28-15:30) and be sure students understand that Dadaab refugees may lose part of their food rations when there is increased need from new refugees. Ask students if they know of any other refugee situations going on in the world today.
3. Divide students into teams and assign each team to research what is happening in these places:
 - Bangladesh (Rohingya)
 - Uganda (South Sudanese)
 - Jordan (Palestinians)
 - Europe (Syrians)
 - The Mexican/U.S. border (Central Americans)

Have each group research to find out why people have fled their home country, how many people are involved, what is happening to them, and who is trying to help them. Encourage them to pay particular attention to how being a refugee affects girls caught in this situation. (This research may take an additional day.)

4. When they finish their research, ask them to make a poster or prepare a PowerPoint to share their findings with the class. Give them time in class for their presentations.
5. After the presentations, give students copies of the selection from Warsan Shire's poem "Home." (See Materials, above.) Remind them that Warsan Shire, who is Somali, is the writer who composed the poems they heard in the video about Nasro. Ask them to write a paragraph (or more) explaining how this poem reflects what they have learned in this lesson.

Abbreviated Lesson

(One class period, 50 minutes)

Ideas for Introducing *Brave Girl Rising*

Explain to students that they are about to see a short film about Nasro, a 17-year-old girl who lives in a refugee camp. Work with the class to elicit definitions of "refugee" and "refugee camp."

Ask students to discuss this question: How would you feel if you had to leave your home suddenly without knowing when or if you could return? What would you take with you? (Remember, you can only take what you can carry yourself.)

Point out Somalia and Kenya on the map of Africa; explain that Somalia and the area of Dadaab in East Kenya are largely arid lands, without regular rainfall. Ask students what they think would be the challenges of living as a refugee in a place like that.

Watching the Film

Using the Viewing Guide below, ask students to answer the "Before You Watch" questions prior to watching the film.

Common Core State Standards addressed by this Abbreviated Lesson

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.2

Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.2

Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

Encourage students to use the space in the "While You Are Watching" section for any notes, comments, or questions that they have as they watch the film.

After viewing the film, students should complete the "Reflection" section. Students can answer these questions on their own, or you may opt for a class discussion around them.

Encourage students to answer the final question, "What more would you like to learn about the topic of refugees?" Consider student answers when choosing which Project-Based Lesson(s) you will use.

Film Viewing Guide

Before You Watch

1. What is a refugee? Do you know of any places in the world that large numbers of refugees come from? Where do they go to?
2. How important is your education to you? Do you think your classes now help to prepare you for your future? What would school mean to you if you were a refugee?

While You Are Watching

Record your thoughts, impressions, and questions as you watch Nasro's story.

Reflection

1. How does Nasro feel about her life at the beginning of the film? Why? How has Nasro's attitude about her life changed by the end of the story? What do you think brought about this change? How did she keep her dreams alive? Do you feel that your life is determined by your circumstances or can you change it? How do you keep your own dreams alive?
2. Nasro's mother died when she was born. What effect has this had on her life? In what sense is her mother still alive? Have you ever lost anyone you loved? If so, how do you keep those memories alive?
3. Nasro says that her second loss was losing her home. What do you think she means when she says,

"No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark"?

What do you think her journey to Kenya was like?

4. How are girls treated differently from boys in the camp? Do you think people have different expectations for girls compared with boys in your society? Are there limitations placed on girls? Do girls have to behave in certain ways?
5. How do you think the henna flower appeared on her hand? What does it symbolize? How does it help her respond when she feels threatened?
6. When Nasro and her friend are approached by three boys, why do they feel threatened? How do they respond? How did you feel watching this scene?
7. At one point in the film, Nasro says:

*"There are many names for this place between heaven and hell -
Limbo,
Purgatory,
Dadaab."*

What did the terms "limbo" and "purgatory" originally mean? What do they mean today? Why does Nasro compare Dadaab to limbo and purgatory?

8. How is Nasro's school similar to yours? How is it different? Why does her mother say that, if necessary, she must risk her life to get an education? Do you think she is right?
9. Although Nasro's life is different from your own, can it teach you anything about your own life?
10. What more would you like to learn about the topic of refugees?