



Refugee Drama

Before reading

1. Try to speculate what a day in the life of a refugee would be like.
2. Do you think that refugees are often victims of stereotypical behaviour? What is your stance towards this behaviour?

During Reading

1. Read the following extracts and share your thoughts on the difficulties a refugee faces on all levels.
2. What are some stereotypes that we can locate or infer from the extracts (social, racial)?

When Muzon's family fled the war in Syria in early 2013, they briefly considered leaving her behind. The bright 14-year-old had been studying hard all year for her grade-nine school exams, which were just a month away, and her aunt urged the family to let her stay and continue her education.

In the end, her father decided the risks were too great, and so she fled with him and her siblings across the border to Jordan. "I knew she could make up for lost schooling, but if you lose your life there's no way to make up for that" Abu Mohammed, 45, told me when I met the family in Jordan's Azraq refugee camp.

Education has always played a big part in Muzon's life. Both of her parents were teachers back in Syria's southern Dara'a province, and her aunt and uncle were head teachers at local schools. "I didn't need them to tell me that education is important. I always just felt it," she explains. "Our house was built by an engineer. When I was sick I went to a doctor. Education is everything in life."

Now 17, her deeply held conviction of the importance of education has become a defining feature of Muzon's life in exile. She has also become a forceful and increasingly high-profile advocate for education among Syrian refugees, particularly young women and girls.

Her campaigning has drawn comparisons with Malala, Pakistan's Nobel Prize-winning education advocate, whom Muzon has met several times and considers a personal friend. "She taught me that no matter what obstacles I face in life, they can be overcome."

Before the crisis began, Muzon remembers a normal, middle-class life surrounded by friendly neighbours and relatives. "I'm not saying I was a queen back in Syria. We had problems, good things and bad things, but it was like any normal life," she says.

The family's main home in Izra was close to a military base that regularly came under attack, leaving them trapped in the crossfire. Unable to endure the fighting any longer, they made their

way to Jordan and settled initially in Za'atari refugee camp.

“When I hear of people not letting their daughters go to school or marrying them off early, it makes me angry,” she says. “Education is the armour that will protect you in life. If you get married before finishing your education, you won’t be able to solve your own problems or educate your own children.”

When I first meet Muzon in Azraq, where the family moved a little over a year ago, it’s hard to imagine this neat, polite young woman going door-to-door to cajole parents into letting their daughters attend school. But as our interview starts, her gaze becomes intense and the pitch of her voice begins to rise with the passion of her argument.

She says she has encountered opposition along the way: “some people refuse to listen from the start. They think, ‘Why should we listen to her? She’s my children’s age.’ But I don’t let it discourage me. The opposite, in fact; it makes me want to talk to more people and try again and again.”

When I express admiration at what she has achieved despite her age and difficult circumstances, she brushes off the compliment. “Of course I have tried to turn this experience into a positive one,” she says. “Being a refugee doesn’t have to ruin your life. Many successful people have gone through hard times.”

After reading

1. Have you ever heard stories about refugees or ever had a similar experience? Share some of them with your classmates.
2. Discuss the quotations '*No matter what obstacles I face in life, they can be overcome*' and '*Being a refugee doesn't have to ruin your life*'. How can they be relevant in our daily lives?
3. Role-play: Assuming that Muzon is a refugee and new classmate of yours, how would you approach her and what would your advice be in order to help her feel more welcome in your country? What would you like to know about different aspects of her life (religion, beliefs, interests, customs, incidents of discrimination)?

*Instead of Muzon, you can come up with a different character (assign yourself a particular name, age, country of origin, nationality).

Author: Hsiodeio High School, Thespies, Greece