



What would you take with you?

Refugee Simulation Game

Though each refugee's journey is unique, many face similar challenges along the way. This simulation will help you wrestle with the many difficult choices families face to be part of a peaceful community.

Participants move through five locations or stations representing typical segments of a refugee's journey. Spread the stations throughout a building or large outdoor space far enough apart so that there is a short travel time between each. For each station there is a suggested script for the journey's narrative as well as instructions.

SUPPLIES AND SPACE

- 5 stations large enough for a group to stand or sit for the activity at that station. If you have multiple small groups moving through the stations, stagger them 5-10 minutes apart or have separate stations 1-4 for each group and reunite them at the 5th station.
 - Home, school, or church in your community or other familiar location
 - First shelter/resting place woods, or hiding place representing known location within 2 hr. walk
 - Second shelter—place within 8 hour or overnight walk
 - Refugee Camp—a place representing the refugee camp could be a known location hours or days away by foot but the journey must involve crossing an international border i.e. Canada or Mexico
 - Arrival airport in a third country—pick a destination as different in culture and climate as possible from the starting location
- Optional—props or visuals to represent each station
- A piece of paper for each participant and pencils at each station
- Leader to accompany groups through each station
- Leader at each station to read instructions and facilitate discussion
- Note: this was written for high school students so adapt as needed for other ages

1 HOME OR SCHOOL

So you've been hearing your parents talk about the war. You see coverage of battles on TV. Your family wonders if they should leave before it gets worse. Then one day the fighting comes right to your town. Rebel forces are coming and you either have to join them or run for your life. Your mom/teacher says grab your backpack and put in anything you can that will help you survive. You need to be ready to run within 1 hour. The rebels are knocking out cell towers so phone communication is iffy. U.S. military and other folks who might rescue us are so busy fighting that we are totally on our own to get to safety. Make a list of what you typically have in your back pack and what you think you could grab easily in your home/classroom. You have no idea when or if you can go home, find shelter, or talk to all of your family members. Streets are full of abandoned vehicles, running seems best. (If groups need help imagining, mention films like Independence Day, The Day After Tomorrow, other disaster films.)



What would you take with you?

Refugee Simulation Game

Discuss lists as appropriate for age level. What do you think is important to take with you? Optional: Take a look at the group that will be fleeing together. Any special needs? Do we want to have buddies? Safety plans? Rendezvous point if we get separated? If fleeing from school talk about concerns communicating with family.

We've just heard that the rebels are only a few miles away. We have to move now! Everyone grab their pack (list) and run to [landmark] or head [direction/place].

2 FIRST SHELTER

We've been walking for 2 hours, let's rest here. Other people fleeing are resting here too—good hiding spot. First let's make sure everyone is still with us. Anyone injured? (older group option: have 1 or 2 per group "disappear" en route.) We've got to make better time. Everybody must make your back pack lighter. What will you remove? Cross them off your list. (Optional: have one person be injured so needs help walking.)

Discuss removed items. What doesn't seem as important now? What do you wish you had instead? How does it feel to leave so much behind? To know you may never go back? (If group members disappeared, discuss.)

During the rest, we learned two things. Somebody got through to [parent/town official] and heard that our town has pretty much been destroyed. We cannot go back. Since the rebels are coming from [direction] we've been advised to head toward [country in opposite direction]. That group over there has a van and can take 4 of us, but not for free. Who cannot walk this distance? Good idea? Does anyone have something to barter to get them on? (If yes on van, those people can leave first and walk/ride to final station.)

We gotta keep moving everyone. Everyone got their stuff? Let's get moving towards [country]. Run!

3 SECOND SHELTER

Finally we've made it to a place where there is water and we feel safe enough to rest before going the rest of the way to [country]. Other displaced persons (you're not a refugee until you cross a border) are here too so we can get first aid, food, and help others. Everyone is headed towards [country]. The United Nations has set up a refugee camp just over the border. We can make it there, get help, and look for our family members who should be going there too. Make your back pack lighter and make trades if you can.

Discuss having a destination. Relief? Hope? Sadness to leave your country? What do you hope you will find in the refugee camp?



What would you take with you?

Refugee Simulation Game

Let's get moving everyone! Move to refugee camp.

Optional: Add border crossing step. Border may be easy to cross or difficult. It may take bribes.

We gotta keep moving everyone. Everyone got their stuff? Let's get moving towards [country]. Run!

4 REFUGEE CAMP

The first thing we have to do is stand in line to apply for refugee status with the United Nations office outside the camp. We stand in line for a very long time. We're not prepared for the weather here. Hours later we can walk another hour to the camp. We are shown a place where we can sit, drink water, and get a bowl of rations- bulgur wheat mixed with peas. We are given a temporary place to sleep.

What's the first question you want to ask the staff in the camp? (The most common question people ask is have you seen so-and-so? Does anyone know my sister [name]?)

After a few days, some of you find your family members and are given or build tents or lean-to shelters. You sleep on the floor or rough cots. There are daily rations, water, latrines. Near the camp are some villages where some find work. There may be volunteers who teach the language of the country to help you. Eventually you get your UN ID card, your official refugee status. Mostly you wait and wait, trying to take care of each other. Optional: go urban. No camp- you must find a room or apartment in a huge city center. Some services are available at the UN office or from aid organizations, but essentially you are on your own. This urban refugee situation is increasing.

Flash forward 5 years. Your family has accepted that you can never go back. There is not a way to start a new life in the country where the camp is. The only way to survive, and move beyond surviving is to resettle, to move to a third country and start over. You have a few choices- Sweden, Brazil, or Germany. You know other people have gone to [country] and it gives you confidence. You take some language classes given by volunteers but it's hard. You wait to find out when you can go. It is several months. You have to go through interviews, security checks, and medical checks. Finally you are told that you are going to [country] and flying to [city]. You've also gone to an orientation about this country and told some good things and not so good things. The climate is very different. You know your family will get an apartment and money for a few months and help finding jobs. Say your goodbyes to friends in the camp. Gather up everything you have in a bag and go to the airport.



What would you take with you?

Refugee Simulation Game

5 U.S. AIRPORT

It has been two flights and more than 24 hours since you first left. You've hardly had anything to eat and everything is crowded, loud and confusing. Your family gets directions to baggage claim and you hope there is someone there to meet you. There is! You see a big sign with your family's name and about a dozen smiling faces. They seem really happy to see you but the language is hard to understand. One person is the case worker from the resettlement agency who will help your family with many things. The others are from a Lutheran church and seem eager to welcome you.

WRAP-UP DISCUSSION

Discuss how you imagine it feels to arrive in the new country. What are your fears? What are your hopes?

Hundreds of families arrive in the U.S. every month after journeys like this one. What do you hope for these aspiring Americans? How would you like to pray for them?