

Twinkl's Take on Compassionate Education: International Refugee Week 2023

2023 marks the 25th anniversary of International Refugee Week. Twenty-five years after its creation, displacement still has a devastating effect on millions of people's lives, all over the world. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), by the end of 2022, of the 108.4 million forcibly displaced people, an estimated 43.3 million (40 per cent) were children below 18 years of age. Displacement isn't stopping or slowing down, so we need to keep talking, keep finding ways to make people safe.

Refugee Week this year

This year, Refugee Week is taking place in the shadow of an unspeakable, and sadly relevant, tragedy as many have recently lost their lives in the waters off southern Greece. Our thoughts are with all those who have lost their lives, their families and friends and those who are still missing.

We know that many people use Refugee Week as an opportunity to educate children about the experiences and contributions of refugees. We also understand that children will have many questions about what has happened and as an education community, we believe it is important to talk about and acknowledge recent events. For support in helping children cope with upsetting events in the news, please see our Newsroom resources for [KS1](#) and [KS2](#).

The theme of International Refugee Week this year is 'Compassionate Education'. As a global educational publisher, Twinkl is determined to help by creating resources that will support refugees as they settle into new homes, facilitate difficult conversations and promote empathy among educators and parents.

Empathy and fiction

Twinkl has been producing stories and non-fiction books for years, all created by educators with curriculums in mind. They've introduced new titles to the [Twinkl Originals](#) range, designed to help children understand the difficulties faced by refugees fleeing areas stricken by war or natural disasters.

[Somewhere Called Home](#) is aimed at older learners (KS2) and tells the story of a family forced to flee their country due to war and their treacherous journey to find safety. [The Long Way Here](#) is aimed at children between the ages of 5 and 7 (KS1) and tells the stories of several refugees from different parts of the world through the eyes of toys who have just arrived in the UK with their children. The recent tragedy off the coast of Greece brings to light



the reality of the challenges and perils faced by families and children as they seek new homes.

The Long Way Here, which is also available in German, has been shared on esteemed websites in Germany, Austria and Switzerland such as the University of Basel in Switzerland and the public libraries in Bayern, Germany. This ebook has also been published in Spanish.

Each Originals book comes with additional resources such as discussion guides, activity worksheets, and supporting materials. These resources enable educators and parents to effectively guide students through challenging subjects and empower them to take compassionate action.

Building a compassionate future

The best hope for a compassionate planet is compassionate children. With this in mind, Twinkl's '[Living Together in Peace](#)' international school project was launched in May 2022. This project encouraged children from around the world to express the importance of world peace and show solidarity to those living through war and crisis. Over 400 students participated by creating their own [Messages of Hope](#), which were translated in collaboration with the Voices of Children Foundation and shared with children in conflict areas. Students also contributed to a [playlist](#) of songs about peace.

"You are not alone. Even if it's hard, even if it hurts, there's always another way, a way where you can smile again, a way where you can feel yourself again." - "Uschool" ESL Academy (Ciudad Ojeda, Zulia, Venezuela)

"Participating in Twinkl's Living Together in Peace project was a lovely experience for our students. All Twinkl initiatives the 4th Grade has participated in were mentioned in yesterday's end of the [school year celebration](#), where our students also presented a music and dance act on the theme of peace and war based on the song ID that we included in our school's presentation for the project. The video with our entire presentation is now uploaded to the school page," says a primary school teacher from Athens, Greece.



*End of the 2021-2022 school year celebration in Greece.
The children's message 'We want peace' was inspired*

by their participation in Twinkl's project.

"A hug for children living through war. Solidarity and peace for all children of the world" - 18th Kindergarten of Volos (Magnesia, Greece)

"Be strong! Have faith! There is hope! We'll be there for you and together we will claim the right to global peace!" - 1st Primary School of Avlona (Attica, Greece)

Creating tools for change

Refugee children have specific needs and experiences that can make education difficult. As highlighted in [an article published in the European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry Journal in March 2022](#), the effects of war on refugee children are vast, encompassing everything from immediate stress responses to a higher likelihood of developing mental health issues like PTSD, depression, and anxiety.

Twinkl has created resources specifically to help in these situations, partnering with organisations like Voices of Children in Ukraine, and KidsRights in Italy to extend their reach and impact. They've also developed 166 bilingual resources to assist affected families and educators. The bilingual Ukrainian resources, which have been available since the start of the war, were downloaded 200,000 times in April 2022 and 250K times in May 2022. The [resources](#) created with Voices of Children are available in multiple languages, including English, German, Polish, French, and Ukrainian. These resources were launched in October 2022 and more [mental health and art therapy](#) bilingual resources were introduced in February 2023 to support war-affected families and individuals.

Apart from Twinkl's resources in collaboration with Voices of Children resources, more dual language resources are available in 19 different languages on Twinkl's [EAL page](#).

'Firstly, it's worth highlighting the relevance and scope of the materials that were useful in direct work with children,' says a member of the Voices for Children charitable foundation team. 'Their accessibility and skillful use distinguish them from other materials with similar content, and for this we should separately thank their authors. We believe that these materials will continue to be useful to professionals working with children, especially in conveying the core values of our foundation, such as child-centeredness and accessibility of psychological assistance.'

Over the last year, natural disasters have also led to many children and their families seeking refuge. In response to the earthquake crises in Syria and Turkey, Twinkl published a fundraising [resource](#) in early March 2023 and offered the [entire website](#) for free in Turkey on April 12th this year.

**You can make a difference**

"At Twinkl, we believe in the transformative power of compassion and education," says Leon Smith, Chief Customer Officer at Twinkl. "Through our efforts during International Refugee Week and beyond, we are dedicated to supporting refugees, empowering educators, and fostering empathy among learners worldwide. Together, we can make a difference in the lives of those seeking a new home and create a brighter future for all."

Twinkl invites educators and parents to explore the range of [resources](#) available for teaching about refugees during International Refugee Week to foster empathy, understanding, and compassionate action among learners of all ages. The resources are available for free download during International Refugee Week (June 19-25, 2023) and can be accessed on Twinkl's [website](#).

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