# Refugees: Welcome – Welcome words

## Introduction

This activity uses poetry as a means for young people to explore the power of words. Young people will experiment with language to express a message of welcome for refugees and asylum seekers in the UK.

## Learning objectives

In this activity young people will:

* use poetry to explore the power of language in making refugees and asylum seekers feel welcome
* create their own message of welcome using a variety of writing formats.

## Activity 4

1. This activity will build on the learning that young people have gained in previous activities. In particular, young people will need to draw upon and use:

* the notes they made in the facts, feelings, present and future group work in activity 1
* the negative and stigmatising language discussed in activity 2
* the bank of unwelcome and welcome words created in activity 3

Make sure learners are familiar with these earlier outputs and give some time for them to reconnect and discuss if needed.

1. Ask learners to create a short poem that reflects the negative and unwelcome messages they have learned about in earlier activities. They can use ideas and words from those activities.

*[NOTE: Learners may feel uneasy about this task. Explain to them that this is an activity to explore the use of and power of language and that it is acceptable to take a negative standpoint for the purpose of creating the poem.]*

Once they have completed their poems, learners could read them to one another in pairs or small groups. This could be used as a way to share a range of language and interpretations.

1. Provide learners with a copy of the poem ‘Refugees’ by Brian Bilston available here: <https://brianbilston.com/2016/03/23/refugees/>. Leave off the bottom instruction to read the poem in reverse when making copies for learners.

Ask one learner to read the poem out loud to the group.

Discuss how the poem makes them feel, does it bear any similarities to the negative poems they have created? What language has been used in this poem that is similar to theirs?

Now ask another learner to read the poem out again but this time beginning at the bottom of the poem and reading upwards.

Share learners’ reactions to the poem and in particular draw out how the same words can be used in different ways, through the use of structure and conjunctions, to create very different meaning.

Prompt questions:

* How does the poem support the reader to think in new way?
* Why do they think the poet has chosen to write a poem like this?

1. Using the idea of language transformation in Brian Bilston’s poem, ask learners to review their original poems and to re-craft the words they used into a positive message of welcome for refugees and asylum seekers.

This message could be in the form of a re-worked poem that takes a positive standpoint but learners should be encouraged to use whatever form of expression they wish. Some ideas might include:

* A short piece suitable for sharing through social media (perhaps even a limited character Tweet);
* A newspaper article (perhaps for a school or community newsletter);
* A slogan for a positive campaign promoting awareness of humanitarian impact of the refugee crisis;
* A banner or poster that could be displayed to show support for refugees and asylum seekers.

What do learners feel the impact of their work might be? What impact do they feel welcome words might have for a refugee?

Use the [Next Steps](http://www.redcross.org.uk/~/media/BritishRedCross/Documents/What%20we%20do/Teaching%20resources/Lesson%20plans/Refugee%20week%202016/Next%20steps.docx) sheet to explore more positive actions young people could take to welcome refugees and asylum seekers within their school and community.