

Human Migration Synthesis Unit Student Responses 2016

“This year’s Synthesis Unit was a wonderful learning experience. I walked in the first day knowing very little about migration, although I come from a migrant family, and almost nothing about refugees. By the time the last day came around my head was filled with maps, routes, numbers, and names. The thing that hit closest to home was the people. Such wide varieties of people traveling to such different locations inspired me to take action and help some of them out. Hearing their stories made me very thankful for what I have. It was a wonderful week!”

- 9th Grade

“Before, I knew basically nothing about the current migration problem. I had only heard that there were people fleeing a war somewhere far away. The Synthesis Unit exposed me to the magnitude of the refugee crisis in Europe, as well as how different countries handle immigration and refugees. So many different people showed me different perspectives and opinions about current migration. The “aha” moment for me was realizing how connected everything is in the world.”

- 10th Grade

“Before the Synthesis Unit I honestly didn’t know that much about migration. Now I know quite a lot about refugees and migrants – enough so that I can defend my position on whether or not we should allow refugees into the U.S.”

- 12th Grade

“Before the Synthesis Unit I knew only what was in the media with regards to human migration. Upon starting the unit, I realized how much I didn’t know. Viewing the film *Mediterranea*, which showed what the journey is like from Libya to Italy, had the greatest impact on me.”

- 9th Grade

“Before the Synthesis Unit on human migration I only knew people were migrating. I didn’t know where they came from or where they were heading. I was aware of the migrants coming from Mexico to the United States, but I wasn’t aware of what “refugees” really meant and the amount of risk it took to migrate from one place to another. During the Synthesis Unit I learned about the thousands of refugees coming to the Greek island of Lesbos. I will never forget the expressions on the people once they reached the island. Their faces showed relief and happiness.”

- 8th Grade

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“One moment that was particularly impactful was the presentation given by the Santa Barbara couple who live on the Greek island Lesbos and provide projects for just-arrived migrant children. The woman showed a drawing by a little refugee boy that looked like bombs attacking. This showed me how these people are fleeing for their safety and a better life. It made me even more grateful for the life that I have.”

- 10th Grade

“As a result of the Synthesis Unit I gained a much better understanding of the big picture, the difference between migrants and refugees, and the circumstances of Europe’s Boat People. I was moved by the video the Italian Consul General showed that displayed the true reaction of people being rescued from sea. Their expressions of delight and hope were extremely touching.”

- 11th Grade

“An important realization came during the presentation on Lesbos with the children’s artwork. They became more than numbers and I realized how similar we probably are at the core of our beings.”

- 11th Grade

“I was able to acquire high quality and very up-to-date information on the current migrant situation. We learned a lot about human migration out of Syria and also had one specific talk about our own border with Mexico. Two officers that work for the Border Patrol came to speak to us about their jobs and the type of migration happening in Southern California. This particular lecture had a great impact on me because what is happening down there has such an effect on us here in Santa Barbara. It was eye-opening to learn what children my own age do to try and get into the U.S. and what some do for the cartels just to survive.”

- 9th Grade

“The Synthesis Unit taught me to see refugees as people just like us and to not take for granted that I live in a safe place. I also learned how migrations are connected to each other and now have a better understanding of the problems that result from migration.”

- 9th Grade

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“What really caught my attention was when the Border Patrol men came in and talked about how drug dealers are using children as their transporters over the border. I didn’t realize how many were dying as a result of this and how inhumane these people are to risk life in order to make a buck. You can always get money but you can never get a life back. The Synthesis Unit overall taught me not to think of a refugee in a stereotypical way, but to realize they’re just ordinary people like us who were unfortunate and had to leave their home.”

- 11th Grade

“The speaker we Skyped with who was a Chaldean Christian migrant was very impactful on me. To hear what she went through was incredible. I had never met a migrant until then. It was just so amazing.”

- 7th Grade

“I’ve seen migration referenced many times on the news but never really understood it. After the Synthesis Unit, I feel I have been educated on the matter with regard to whom the people are, why they’re migrating, and where they want to go. These families have to risk everything to get to a safe place. One presentation that had a particular impact on me was that of the Italian Consul General. His information was excellent and it made me really emotional because people would literally risk their lives to make their family safe.”

- 11th Grade

“During the Synthesis Unit I learned about the causes of specific migrations and how these migrants are affecting people, economics, and politics. The detail that speakers went into helped me gain a better understanding. I was very touched by the presentation by the Santa Barbara couple from Lesbos. It opened my eyes even more to how much I have and how lucky I am in every aspect of my life. Seeing the children’s drawings and holding them in my hand made me emotional.”

- 9th Grade

“One thing that stuck in my mind was the refugee crisis on the island of Lesbos and the influx of people coupled with destruction of the environment. Knowing about how there are many different migrations, the influxes of migrants, and the cause of immigration helps me understand what is happening now and as events unfold.

- 12th Grade

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“The Synthesis Unit has helped me gain a better understanding of global issues by knowing how and why people migrate. I’ve also learned that the life stories of immigrants are very deep and often sad. They suffer from lack of food, money, clothing, and education. I’m very thankful that I have what I need.”

- 7th Grade