

# WELCOME TO THE UK!

For hundreds of years, people escaping war and persecution have been welcomed by British communities. We chat to **Marwa, 9**, and her dad, **Abdul**, refugees from **Syria** who have found a **new home** here in **Britain**...



There are over **5.7 million Syrian refugees** worldwide. That's because a **terrible war** has been going on there for over **eight years**. More than **500,000 Syrians** are **dead** or **missing**, and over **half** of all Syrian people have had to **leave their homes**. Many different groups and countries are involved in the fighting, which **shows no sign of stopping**.



**Refugee Week is from 17-23 June**

This year's theme is **'You, me or those who came before'**, and is all about the **history of refugees** and the people who have welcomed them.

Around **half** of the world's **22.5 million refugees** are **kids**.

Pop star **Rita Ora** was a refugee from **Kosovo**. She came to live in **Britain** when she was **one year old**.



*Marhaba! That means 'hello' in Arabic!*

*Back in Syria, I was a lawyer!*

**ABDUL**

**MARWA**

**Name:** Marwa  
**Age:** 9  
**Country of origin:** Syria  
**Now lives:** Coventry, UK  
**Fave hobbies:** Taekwondo and swimming  
**Best subject:** Maths  
**Fave pop star:** Ariana Grande

**Hi Marwa and Abdul. Where in Syria are you from and why did you have to leave?**  
**Abdul:** We're from the city of **Homs**, which is the **third biggest city in Syria**. We had to leave because the **violence got worse** and it was an **unsafe place to live**.  
**Do you remember much about that time, Marwa?**  
**Marwa:** I don't really have many memories of Syria, because I was **two years old** when the war began. It spread really quickly and there were a **lot of bombs dropping by our house**. It was **risky** for us so we had to leave. But my **brothers** tell me stories about what it was like **before the war**. I like looking at the **photos** for **good memories**.  
**Where did you go after leaving Syria?**  
**Abdul:** We made it to **Jordan** and were there for around **two and a half years**, when we got the opportunity to come to the UK with the **resettlement scheme**.  
**Marwa:** We weren't living a good life in Jordan. We **didn't have any friends** and we

**were not treated properly**. We were **laughed at** and they told us we were **beggars**.  
**Did you know much about the UK before coming here?**  
**Marwa:** I didn't know anything! But we were all really **excited** to come, because people said it was a **good and safe place**.  
**What do you like about being in the UK?**  
**Marwa:** I like that it's **clean** here, and the **weather is good in the summer**, so we get to play out a lot. The **trees and nature** are nice, too. But sometimes the **winter** is a bit too long!  
**How did people make you feel welcome?**  
**Marwa:** When I first started school, **many people were kind to me**. The children **showed me around the class** and **played with me**. They **never left me alone to feel sad**. They all **welcomed me** in beautifully and we were all very happy because of this.  
**Was it difficult to learn English?**  
**Marwa:** Not really, because I just started **copying the people in my class** speaking English. I think it took about two months.  
**Abdul:** My children definitely **picked up English quicker than me!** It's more difficult to learn the older you get.

**What language do you speak at home?**  
**Marwa:** We all speak **English and Arabic** but my **baby brother** speaks more English.  
**Abdul:** He pronounces English words really well, whereas I have a **slight accent**. Sometimes Marwa speaks in **half English and half Arabic**.  
**Marwa:** Yeah, and sometimes I get **confused** and say the opposite of what I mean to say. It's funny and **makes us all laugh!**  
**Were there any things you found strange when you first moved here?**  
**Abdul:** The accent! For example, the word water is pronounced by some people as **"wartah"**. Another one is **"thinkin"** instead of "thinking".  
**Are there any Syrian traditions you still do at home?**  
**Abdul:** We still eat a lot of the same dishes, like **Kabseh** (mixed rice with chicken) and **Mutabbal** (similar to humus), and celebrate the same holidays, like **Eid**. But we do enjoy picking up **new traditions from the British culture**.  
**Marwa:** I really like **Christmas!**  
**Are there any other UK traditions you enjoy?**  
**Marwa:** When we first came, we didn't know what **Halloween** was. But last year we all

dressed up and I was a **skeleton**. It was great and we got to go out trick or treating. And **fish fingers** is my **favourite food** now. I love that, or **fish and chips**.  
**Abdul:** Yeah, we've even started making fish and chips at home now!  
**What hobbies or activities have you done since you've been in the UK?**  
**Marwa:** My main hobby is **taekwondo**. I've been very lucky because I've managed to **win quite a few trophies!** Our coach always tell us to be **kind** and to **not show it off**. It's only to be used in serious cases, like if you're in danger and need to **protect yourself**.  
**Abdul:** We found out about it during **Refugee Week** last year. There was a taekwondo demonstration at an event in Coventry, and my children were interested. Marwa took it very seriously, and only **two months after starting**, she won **bronze** in the **national championships!**  
**Wow, that's amazing! What is your biggest achievement do you think?**  
**Marwa:** In my last taekwondo competition, I won the **silver medal!** The next competition is an international one. If you win gold in

that competition, our coach said its basically like winning a **world championship!**  
**What are your plans or hopes for the future?**  
**Marwa:** I'd like to be a **midwife**. I've had a bit of practice looking after my younger brother.  
**Abdul:** Myself and my wife's dream is for our children to become **successful, achieve their goals** and become **good members of society**. Maybe one day, I can become a **lawyer** here, like I was in Syria.  
**What's the best thing that's happened since coming to the UK?**  
**Marwa:** There are **no bombs** here and it's **safe**, so that's the best thing. I also like how **kind** people are. In Syria, you couldn't even play out or leave the house. If you did, you might be **shot** or hit by a **bomb**.  
**Thanks for chatting to us – and good luck with the Taekwondo!**



## GET INVOLVED! Try one of these simple acts to discover more about refugees!

**1. Find out who you really are**  
Is there a story of **migration** in your **family** or **community** that you didn't know about? Do you know your **parents' history**? Have you ever seen a **family tree**? Do a little **digging** and see what you find.



To help in your search, you might:  
● Talk to your **grandparents** or **older relatives**  
● Look up the **meaning** of your **name** or **surname**  
● Do a **DNA test!**

**2. Go on a fact-finding mission**  
There's lots of **misinformation** out there about **refugees**. And the truth can be quite shocking. So **find** and **share** a **fact about refugees** throughout **history**. Here are four to get your started...

We have **Jewish refugees** to thank for the **fish in fish and chips!**

The inventor of the **Mini** was a **Greek refugee!**

**Most** refugees are looked after by **poor countries**, not rich ones like **Britain**.

**One in every four** refugees worldwide is **Syrian**.

If you **uncover a fact** that **surprised** you, **tell a friend**, or share it on social media using the hashtags **#SimpleActs** and **#Generations**.

Find more simple acts at [refugeeweek.org.uk/simple-acts](http://refugeeweek.org.uk/simple-acts)