

Dear Parent or Carer,

After much thought, we have decided to use a refugee family's story, as the subject of our end of term play. The play is based on the story of a teenage girl, her baby and her young husband. This family came originally from an occupied, Middle Eastern country. The play will explain how dreadfully they were treated under an oppressive military regime and how their lives were made a misery by the actions of a dictator.

The play begins with the young family having to make a horrendous journey, forced upon them by the occupying force, at the command of the dictator, who wanted to know how many Jews lived in the country and from which district they had originated. Because the young husband had been born in a village 90 miles away from where they lived, they had to leave their home and return to this village to take part in the census. The couple were expecting a baby and the wife was very near her due delivery date, which made the journey even more hazardous and a slow process. Because they were poor they had to make most of the journey on foot, but on route they managed to borrow a donkey, which meant that the young woman could ride a little of the way.



When they arrived at their destination, they couldn't find anywhere to stay. They encountered barriers at every turn, no hospital, no hotel room, not even space in a hostel. Despite having a heavily pregnant wife, the only shelter the husband could find was a place used to house animals. Although built into a hillside, a bit like a cave, cold, smelly and less than hygienic, this is where the woman went into labour. She had no medical help and farm animals, ponies and donkeys were the only maternity staff. Against all odds the baby was born safely; the little boy and his mother both thankfully, survived.



News got out about the baby born in the stable. Kind local people brought them food and small gifts, they were easily able to find the animal house as the winter night sky was lit up by the stars, which almost seemed to guide the way. People marvelled at the baby born in such bad times, in a stable, surrounded by livestock! The little baby boy was like a light and gave them hope in a dark and dangerous time.

Eventually the family found a small house to rent for a short while, so they could stay in the village until mother and baby were strong enough to make the journey home. While they were there some unexpected visitors called. They had travelled even a greater distance than the young couple and were quite wealthy and important; they had been told about the baby and brought him gifts.

However, the travellers also brought news; they told the family that they were still at great risk, the roads were unsafe and soldiers were terrorising villages and towns. So with great sadness they decided not to return to their home town. They left the house under cover of darkness and secretly crossed the border into a neighbouring country, in the hope of keeping their baby safe. They did so just in time, as the village was attacked and young children were massacred by the dictator's soldiers. To stay would have been to face certain death. They sought refuge and were offered asylum and permitted to stay in the neighbouring country, only returning home once the dictator had died and they knew that it was safe for them to return.

We think this story is a reminder of the suffering and hardship experienced by many people today, who are persecuted and have to seek refuge and asylum in a strange place. It also shows that many people are still willing to help and to welcome people less fortunate than themselves. We hope taking part in this play will help our children to appreciate that we are all human and that we should treat other people with kindness and respect, no matter what their ethnicity, beliefs, place of birth or background. We hope to see you on the 'Opening Night' and hope that you will find the play meaningful; a story from the past that might influence what we do today and may inform our future actions.

Yours Faithfully

A. Headteacher

A Letter Home: the end of term play

A Refugee Family

1. Read the letter and concentrate on the story. Is it familiar? Why?
2. Read extracts from the Christmas story in Matthew and Luke in the Bible. Which bits match with the story in 'A Letter Home'?
3. Find out from evidence in the Bible stories:
 - The nationality of the occupying force
 - The name of the dictator
 - The name of the town that the baby's family lived in
 - The name of the village where the baby was born
 - The country the family escaped to
4. Decide on a title for the end of term play.
5. Discuss if and why there are refugee and asylum seekers today. Where do they come from? Why do they need to leave home? Where do they go? This website has lots of real stories, about real children and also a range of free resources: <https://www.savethechildren.org/us/what-we-do/emergency-response/refugee-children-crisis/refugee-stories>
6. Role play the story, as told in the letter; set the story and characters in a 21st century context; make it into your own end of term play.
7. Design a poster for the 'end of term play' which gets across the message of the play and would encourage someone to want to come and see the play.
8. Use the Red Cross website to explore asylum seeker and refugee experiences; there is a series of lesson plans and activities free to download here: <https://www.redcross.org.uk/get-involved/teaching-resources/refugees-welcome>