

Migration and Refugees - *The Tower* by Shereen Malherbe

Grade Level: 14+ (High School / Secondary Education)

Materials:

- Copies of *The Tower* by Shereen Malherbe (Excerpts or Full Text)

Bulk copies can be ordered direct from info@beaconbooks.net with reference 'Lesson Plans.'

- Whiteboard/Chalkboard
- Markers/Chalk
- Projector (Optional for multimedia presentations)
- Handouts with questions and activities
- Notebook or paper for student reflections

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will:

1. **Understand** the themes of migration, displacement, identity, and trauma as explored in *The Tower* by Shereen Malherbe.

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2. **Analyze** how the novel portrays the personal experiences of refugees and the broader societal and psychological impacts of migration.
3. **Reflect** on the emotional, social, and political dimensions of migration and apply these reflections to modern-day refugee crises.
4. **Engage** in discussions around empathy, the challenges of cultural integration, and the sense of belonging.
5. **Create** written or artistic responses to the novel's themes of displacement and home.

Lesson Structure:

1. Introduction and Warm-Up

- **Objective:** Introduce students to the central themes of migration, refugees, and displacement.

Activity:

1. Begin with a class discussion about migration and refugees. Ask:
 - a. What comes to mind when you think about refugees or migration?
 - b. Can you name some reasons why people might leave their home country and seek refuge elsewhere? (war, persecution, economic hardship, etc.)
 - c. What challenges do you think refugees face when trying to start over in a new country?
2. **Brief introduction to the novel:** Explain that *The Tower* by Shereen Malherbe is a story about a refugee named Reem, and a British woman called Leah whose lives intersect when they arrive at the Tower. Reem faces the challenges of starting a new life in a foreign land. The book explores themes of trauma, identity, the loss of home, and the emotional costs of displacement.
3. Show some current news headlines or statistics about refugees worldwide, connecting them to the themes of the novel. Mention recent refugee crises (e.g., Palestine, UK, Syria, Ukraine) to contextualize the story.

2. Reading Activity

- **Objective:** Engage students with an excerpt from *The Tower* that deals with displacement, identity, or migration.

Activity:

1. Provide students with an excerpt from *The Tower* by Shereen Malherbe, focusing on a key moment in Reem's journey, such as her arrival in the new country, her experience of homesickness, or her reflections on what it means to belong.

Suggested Passage:

Chapter 1

2. **Guided Reading:**

- a. Have students read the passage silently or read aloud as a class.
 - b. Encourage students to underline or make notes of words or phrases that relate to Reem's sense of loss, fear, hope, or identity.
3. **Comprehension Questions** (students can answer these in small groups or individually):
 - a. What is Reem's emotional state as she arrives in the new country?
 - b. What does the concept of "home" mean to Reem? How does this reflect the experience of many refugees?
 - c. What challenges does Reem face in adjusting to her new life?
 - d. How does Reem's journey in the book illustrate the theme of migration and displacement?

3. Class Discussion

- **Objective:** Foster deeper engagement with the text and its themes through discussion.

Activity:

1. Facilitate a class discussion around the key themes in the excerpt. Use these discussion prompts:
 - a. How does *The Tower* help us understand the psychological and emotional toll of migration? Can you relate to any of Reem's feelings of loss or displacement?
 - b. What role does memory play in Reem's journey? How does she navigate between her past (home) and her present (refugee life)?
 - c. How does the novel explore the idea of belonging and identity in the context of migration?
 - d. Do you think Reem's experiences reflect the challenges faced by refugees in today's world? Why or why not?
 - e. The book portrays a variety of responses to displacement—what might be some of the reasons why different characters react to migration differently?
2. In small groups, have students discuss how the themes in the novel connect to current global events. They can use the following questions:
 - a. What are some of the most pressing challenges refugees face today?
 - b. In your opinion, what is the role of empathy in responding to the refugee crisis?

4. Creative Reflection

- **Objective:** Encourage students to reflect creatively on the themes of migration and identity.

Activity:

1. Option 1: Journal Entry or Letter

Ask students to write a journal entry or letter from Reem's perspective (or their own creation) as she tries to adjust to life in the new country. Students should reflect on her emotions, fears, hopes, and what "home" means to her.

- a. **Prompt:** Write a letter from Reem to her family back home, describing her experience so far and the challenges she is facing in the new country. What does she miss the most? What are her fears and dreams for the future?

2. Option 2: Artwork or Visual Representation

Students can create a visual representation of a key scene from the novel or a symbolic image of displacement, migration, and identity. This could be a drawing, collage, or even a digital artwork. Students should also write a brief explanation of how their artwork relates to the themes in *The Tower*.

5. Wrap-Up and Homework

- **Objective:** Summarize the lesson and assign follow-up work.

Activity:

1. Recap the key themes discussed in the lesson: migration, identity, trauma, home, and belonging.
2. Ask students to share any final thoughts or reflections on the text. How has *The Tower* deepened their understanding of the refugee experience?
3. For homework, assign one of the following:
 - a. **Essay Option:** Write an essay on the theme of "identity and belonging" in *The Tower*. How does Reem's journey reflect the broader experiences of refugees and displaced persons?
 - b. **Research Option:** Research a refugee crisis that has occurred in the past decade (e.g., Syrian refugees, Rohingya refugees, or Ukrainian refugees).

Write a report on the challenges refugees in this crisis have faced and draw connections to *The Tower*.

Assessment:

- **Formative Assessment:**
 - Student participation in discussions and group work.
 - Creative reflection tasks (journal entries, letters, artwork).
- **Summative Assessment:**
 - Homework assignments (essay or research project).

Extension Activities:

- **Debate:** Organize a debate on the topic of refugee resettlement. Students can argue for or against the necessity of providing asylum to refugees, based on what they have learned from the novel and current refugee issues.
- **Guest Speaker:** Invite a refugee advocate, immigration lawyer, or someone who works with refugees to speak about the realities of displacement and the experiences of refugees today.

Reflection and Feedback:

At the end of the lesson, ask students to reflect on the themes explored in *The Tower*. You could use an exit ticket with the following question: "*What is one thing you learned today that changed the way you think about migration and refugees?*"