



Students Rebuild Healing Classrooms Challenge

Lesson Resources



Since 2011, Syria has been a country in crisis.

Civil war, unrest, and violence have displaced nearly 11 million people. For students and families living in refugee camps or temporary housing outside of Syria, trauma and toxic stress are ever present. The [Students Rebuild Healing Classrooms Challenge](#), a partnership between **Students Rebuild**, the **International Rescue Committee (IRC)** and **Global Nomads Group**, will support Syrian children by funding the IRC's *Healing Classrooms* program. *Healing Classrooms* trains teachers in special techniques to engage conflict-affected children with social-emotional learning opportunities and to create secure, nurturing learning environments.

Children affected by crisis—whether war or natural disaster—need help restoring a sense of normalcy and safety in their lives. One of the best ways to do this is to reintroduce the familiar routine of school, where teachers can provide structure and stability, and can work with children to heal. IRC partners with schools in crisis zones to create *Healing Classrooms*—paired with support from parents and the community—so children can recover, grow, develop and learn.

Below you will find links and a brief overview of several educational resources that we have curated for this Healing Classrooms Challenge. We encourage you to pick and choose from these lessons as way to help your students understand the interconnected issues at play in the Syrian conflict and connect in a meaningful way to the experience of their Syrian peers—empathy is built on understanding. Consider adapting what you find here and elsewhere to be developmentally appropriate for your classroom or aligned with your discipline and learning goals. Let your students use this learning to fuel their creativity and thoughtfulness as they make pinwheels for the Healing Classrooms Challenge and participate fully in Students Rebuild.

We love hearing about the many ways educators use Students Rebuild – please [send us an email](#) or connect over social media to highlight how you're using the Healing Classrooms Challenge in your home, community group or classroom!



Lesson Resources – Understanding the Syrian Conflict

Global Nomads Group (GNG)

Reimagine: Syria Curriculum & Webcasts

Healing Classrooms Challenge partner [Global Nomads Group](#) worked with Immersive Journalism's Project Syria and Save the Children to connect Los Angeles, California high school students with their peers in Amman, Jordan. Prior to an interactive video conference / virtual exchange between the American and Syrian students, the American students participated in a virtual reality simulation of a bombing in Aleppo, Syria.

Through independent and collaborative work, the curriculum developed for this exchange asked students to conduct background research on the conflict, media analysis, reflection and actionable solutions. The Reimagine: Syria exchange is available for viewing [here](#) and illustrates how technology is being used to connect and foster empathy among young people in an exciting and powerful way.

In Spring 2016, GNG will produce a **Healing Classrooms Challenge live webcast** with Syrian students and educators from on the ground in the Middle East. Students Rebuild webcasts are free and only require an internet connection to watch and participate through a live chat feature. Click [here](#) for more information about the Students Rebuild Healing Classrooms Challenge webcast.

Teaching and Learning with the *New York Times*

The Fog of War: Helping Students Make Sense of Syria

Middle Level – High School

This lesson plan uses articles and video from the *New York Times* to help students understand the roots of the conflict in Syria, the major participants in the civil war and the international efforts of outside governments to aid a resolution. Additionally several readings are first-person accounts from those living in Syria, which provide an opportunity for students to use a responsive lens and understand the challenges of daily life during wartime. Students are asked to engage with, analyze and reflect on the information they find in assigned news articles and videos through written response and strong group discussion led by provided questions.

7 Top Classroom Resources for Teaching Syria

Middle Level – High School

This compilation of resources mainly produced by PBS includes infographics, lesson plans, a quick reference guide, video content and articles. The three lesson plans will help students contextualize the geopolitical landscape surrounding the Syrian conflict and challenge them to weigh and take a position on military intervention through essays and hypothetical, collaborative simulations. Diplomacy, constitutional principles and international relations are examined and used to inform students' perspective and support reasoning. Incorporated into this collection from PBS is a zero-prep lesson plan from IAmSyria.org, produced in coordination with [Syria Deeply](http://SyriaDeeply.com) – a news source offering in-depth and evolving coverage of the conflict.

The Choices Education Program

The Conflict in Syria

Middle Level – High School

This lesson asks students to work in small groups to research Syria, Syria's surrounding nations or the international community's participation in the conflict. Research is applied to answering provided questions and students then present their findings for large group discussion. Students are prompted to consider multiple perspectives on the conflict, talk about overarching challenges to achieving peace and determine possible solutions. Students will understand how Syria is impacting the Middle East either through economic strain, sanctions, refugee camps or political tensions.



Incorporating Students Rebuild into Service Programs, Art Education and Project Based Learning

Service Learning

Many Students Rebuild participants use our Challenges to satisfy [service learning](#) requirements, and there are many ways to incorporate the Healing Classrooms Challenge into your service program to foster a robust experience. In addition to creating pinwheels, here are some ideas to get you started:

- Students can learn about the issue and creative call to action then bring the Challenge to other student and community groups as educators and facilitators. We've had student leaders take our Challenges into kindergarten classrooms, to adult groups transitioning from homelessness and even to seniors living in residential facilities.
- Consider the ways that the issues addressed by the Healing Classrooms Challenge have parallels in your own community. None of us are immune from the possibility of homelessness, displacement, conflict between different groups and [trauma or toxic stress](#). How can you perform service locally that is aligned with and helps inform your understanding of the Challenge?

Art Education

Students Rebuild Challenges always have a creative call to action, an art-making component that fuses thoughtfulness, personalization and originality. Challenge items arrive from all over the world and no two are ever quite alike.

Think creatively! During our Literacy Challenge we received bookmarks made from wood, canvas, yarn, duct tape and even tin. Our Flowers for Nepal Challenge brought garlands made of cupcake liners, potato sacks, newspaper and even melted beads. The design possibilities are endless. What are you focused on in the visual arts that can be aligned with creating pinwheels for the Healing Classrooms Challenge? We offer these ideas to get the ball rolling:

- **Elements of Design:** Use the pinwheels to teach and experiment with line and color and create interesting contrast between the front and back designs. Guide students in making something colorful and joyful that reflects a return to carefree childhood for the young people they are working to help.

- **Art genre pinwheels:** Think [impressionism](#), [abstract art](#) and [optical illusion](#).
- **Diverse Mediums:** Consider watercolor, collage, pastels, photography, textiles, acrylic and more.
- **Art Integration:** Students Rebuild projects always align with current events and social justice topics, but making pinwheels can also incorporate [geometry](#), [science](#) and even [literature](#).

Project-Based Learning

There are countless ways young people can get experience in [project-based learning](#) using the issues and causes Students Rebuild addresses. Jumping off from the Healing Classrooms Challenge, students can take what they've learned and design resource solutions and awareness campaigns around the Syrian refugee crisis. While student voice and choice is first and foremost, consider these suggestions:

- **Temporary Housing Design:** Governments and aid organizations are always trying to improve transitional housing units to be more comfortable, efficient and cost effective. Students have the option of working together to design and improve these structures using an empathetic lens and [human-centered design approach](#).
- **Transitional Technologies:** Many organizations are harnessing [solar energy](#), improved [water filtration](#) systems and other [technology](#) to help empower and connect those who have been displaced. Many items are needed to make a refugee community run safely and efficiently. Students can reflect on these needs and design products that help ease the transition and resource scarcity experienced in many locations.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Designing compelling, relevant and well-communicated campaigns to raise awareness about the Syrian conflict and the concerns of displaced peoples is an interesting and complex task. Creating innovative strategies and social media opportunities for young people displaced outside of Syria to share their experiences presents a rich opportunity for reflection and learning. Related tools like digital media—and even new technology like the [virtual reality and interactive web exchange](#) produced by Global Nomads Group—can tell powerful stories.

Take Action, See Change

Even though the Syrian struggle seems overwhelming, we can make a difference. Young people around the world can assist their Syrian peers right now by making pinwheels for the [Students Rebuild Healing Classrooms Challenge](#). How does it work? For every pinwheel Students Rebuild receives, the Bezos Family Foundation will donate \$2—up to \$400,000—to the International Rescue Committee’s *Healing Classrooms* program. Additionally, the IRC will distribute a selection of your pinwheels to *Healing Classrooms* students!

The first step is a [quick registration](#) and then you can [get started](#) with making and mailing in pinwheels. Have additional questions? Check out our [Healing Classrooms FAQ page](#) and [free resources](#) including a helpful, comprehensive Toolkit with step-by-step instructions for participation.

With every pinwheel you make for the Students Rebuild Healing Classrooms Challenge, you’ll take a stand for children living in conflict, improve their well-being and learning—and help them gain the peace and security all children deserve.

