



Teaching *for*
TRANSFORMATION

Art for Heart ELA - 6th Grade

Sharon Calarco
Coulee Christian School



Deep Hope:

Students will grow as **image reflectors** of Christ by using their God-given talents to empathize with others, advocate for justice, and build a compassionate community. I want them to recognize that their voices and creativity can be used to **Do Better and Be Better**, not just within the classroom, but in the world around them.

Long Term Learning Targets:

- 🎯 **I can...** I can reflect God's image by using my creative gifts to bring awareness to real-world injustices.
- 🎯 **I can...** I can grow as a community builder by creating art that inspires others to take action.
- 🎯 **I can...** I can connect literature to real-world needs by identifying how stories of struggle and resilience can inspire service and advocacy.



Curricular Outcomes:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6-8.3 – Analyze how particular elements of a story interact (e.g., how setting shapes characters or plot).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6-8.9 – Compare and contrast texts to real-world experiences and historical events.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6-8.4 – Produce clear and coherent writing appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.



Habit(s) of Learning:

Courageous Designing

I use my God-given imagination to solve problems, tell stories, and create beauty that points to truth.

Students create meaningful artwork that reflects the reality of hardship and hope, using their creative gifts to inspire others and advocate for justice through beauty and expression.

Joy-filled Collaboration

I work with others in a spirit of humility and teamwork, valuing each person's gifts and contributions.

By partnering with **Arrive Ministries**, students learn the power of collaboration. Their efforts are part of something bigger—joining hands with an organization that actively serves refugee families and showing what it means to be the body of Christ in action.



See God's Story:

Through *Art for Heart*, I want my students to see that **they are active participants in God's story of restoration**. God's redemptive plan includes healing what is broken, lifting up the oppressed, and bringing light into darkness—and He chooses to work through His people to accomplish that.

By engaging deeply with *Refugee*, reflecting through art, and partnering with Arrive Ministries, students come to understand:

- **God is a God of justice**—He sees the suffering and calls His people to respond.
- **Jesus stepped into our brokenness**—and we are called to step into the pain of others with empathy and hope.
- **We are image bearers**—created to reflect His compassion, creativity, and love in a hurting world.
- **We are community builders**—partnering with ministries like Arrive helps students see they are part of something bigger than themselves.

Ultimately, I want students to see that **God's story is not just something we read about—it's something we live**. They have a role to play in His unfolding story of love, justice, and redemption.

Storyline:

I want them to recognize that their voices and creativity can be used to **Do Better and Be Better**, not just within the classroom, but in the world around them. Do Better, Be Better recognizes students to become image reflectors, community builders, and God worshippers.



Throughlines:

Image Reflector: Students will practice being **Image Reflectors** by treating others with kindness and respect, using their words to build up rather than tear down, and reflecting on how their actions represent Christ both in and out of the classroom. The **Image Reflector** throughline deepens understanding of the *Refugee* novel by helping students see each character—not just as fictional individuals, but as real people created in God’s image, deserving of dignity, compassion, and justice. It challenges students to look beyond borders and labels, fostering empathy as they reflect on how their own actions and responses can mirror Christ’s love in a broken world.



Throughlines

Community Builder: Students will practice being **Community Builders** by creating a classroom culture of inclusion, encouragement, and respect—where every voice is valued and everyone feels they belong. The **Community Builder** throughline deepens understanding of *Refugee* by helping students recognize the power of belonging, both in the characters' journeys and in their own lives. It encourages them to move from passive observers to active participants—seeing the importance of welcoming others, standing against injustice, and working together to create communities rooted in empathy, support, and shared responsibility.



Formational Learning Experience:

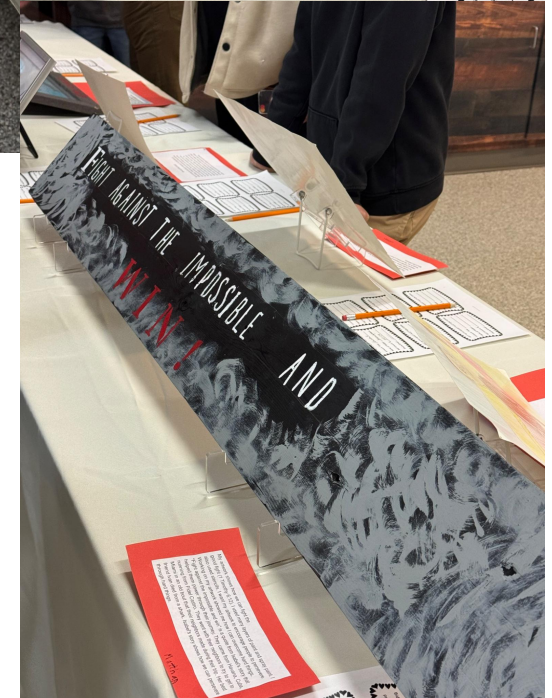
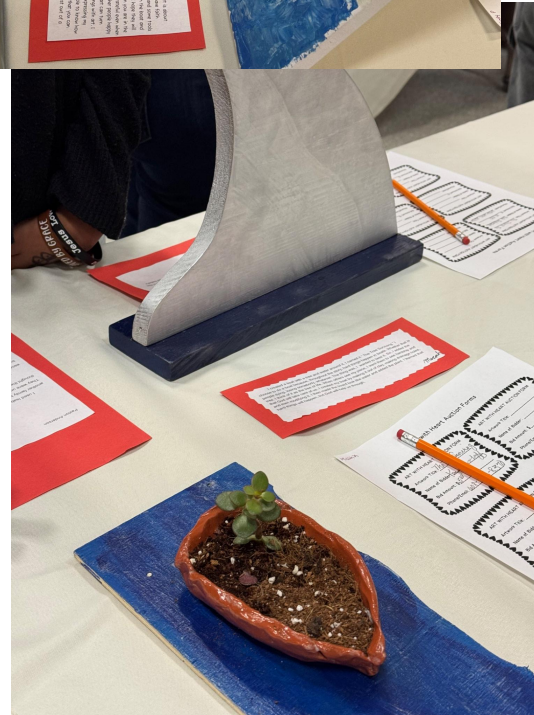
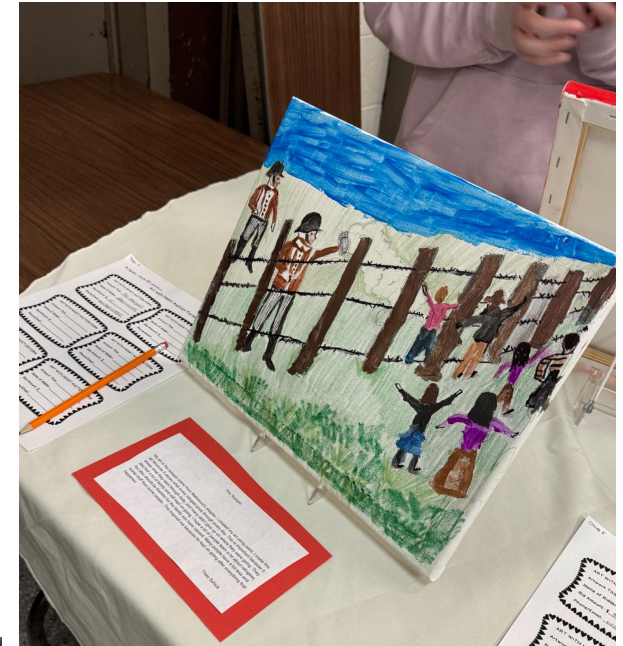
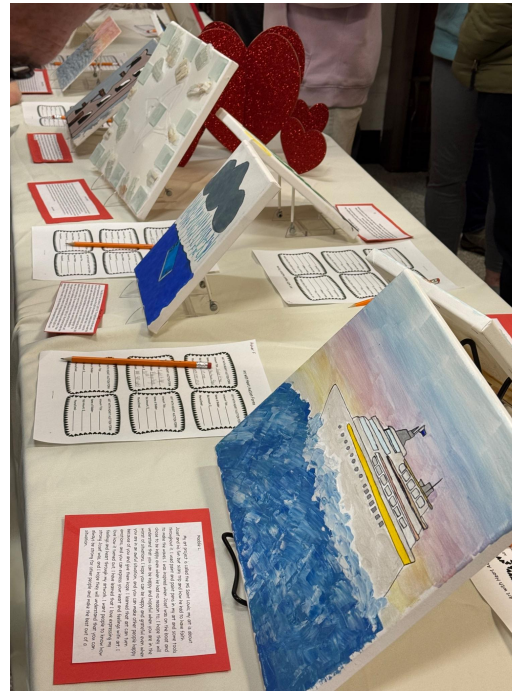
Real needs: Refugees face urgent, tangible needs: safety, shelter, food, emotional healing, and a sense of belonging. *Art for Heart Responded* to these real needs by raising funds to support resettlement services and care efforts through Arrive Ministries. Students learned that their work can directly meet the needs of people who are fleeing hardship and rebuilding their lives.

Real people: Student's were supporting *real individuals and families* who are navigating trauma, displacement, and new beginnings. Through Art for Heart, students connected with the stories of those served by Arrive Ministries, seeing them as image-bearers of God and neighbors to love. This made the learning personal, emotional, and deeply meaningful.

Real work: Creating original art, organizing an auction, and promoting the event required creativity, collaboration, and purpose. This was not just a school project—it was authentic work that mattered. The students' efforts raised over \$1,000, demonstrating that their gifts and actions can truly impact lives. Their art became a **voice of advocacy**, a **tool for justice**, and a **reflection of Christ's love** in action.

INVITE

- Students were invited into this FLEx by first reading *Refugee* and then brainstorming ways they could creatively capture the characters' stories through artistic expression. This led to the idea of using visual art to raise awareness for real refugees, helping students connect literature to real-world issues and use their creativity to advocate for those in need. Through *Art for Heart*, their ideas became action—shining light on refugee experiences and supporting Arrive Ministries with over \$1,000 raised.



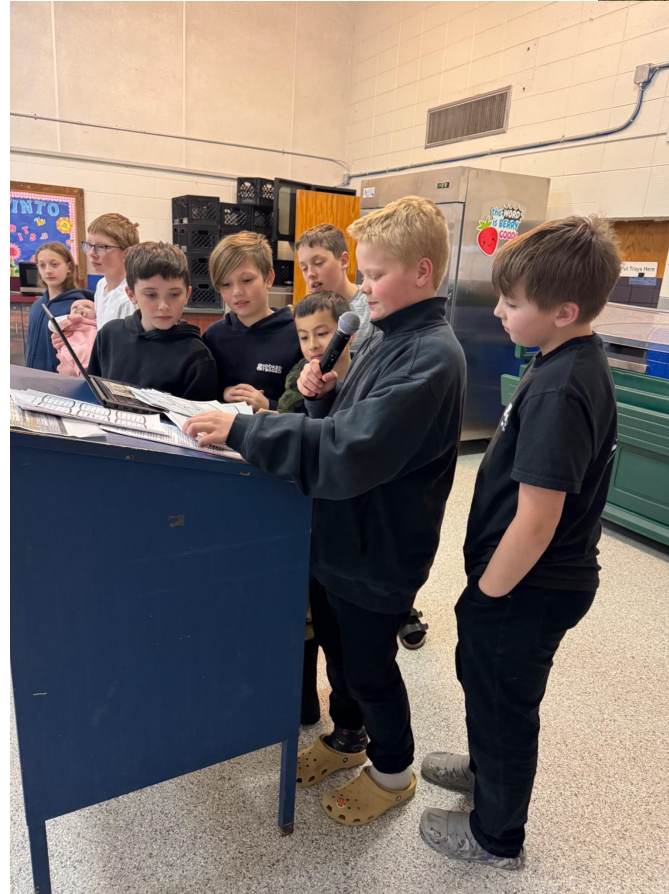


NURTURE

- Students were nurtured during this FLEx by being given space to process emotional themes, ask hard questions, and reflect on the value of every human life through a biblical lens. They were supported in exploring their creative gifts, encouraged to collaborate with compassion, and reminded that their voices and talents matter. Through class discussions, prayer, and personal reflection, they experienced a safe, Christ-centered environment where they could grow in empathy, purpose, and confidence as both learners and servant-leaders.

EMPOWER

- Students were empowered to take action by realizing that their creativity could serve a greater purpose. They weren't just making art—they were using their voices to tell powerful stories, raise awareness, and support real refugees through their partnership with Arrive Ministries. By planning, creating, and presenting their work at *Art for Heart*, they saw firsthand that their efforts could make a tangible difference, inspiring them to live out their faith through compassion, advocacy, and community impact.



Student Reflections:



Student Reflection

Student reflections demonstrated a deepening understanding of what it means to "**see the story**" of God's heart for justice, compassion, and restoration—and to "**live the story**" by stepping into their role as His hands and feet. Through *Art for Heart*, students recognized that their creativity and empathy are powerful tools to reflect Christ's love and bring awareness to real-world needs. After our time of reflection, each student was awarded a "**Do Better, Be Better**" bracelet as a tangible reminder of their calling to be **Image Reflectors** and **Community Builders**, both in our classroom and in the world around them.



Teacher Reflections:

The **Deep Hope** and **long-term learning targets** were realized as students moved beyond simply understanding the text *Refugee* to actively living out the truths it revealed. Through the *Art for Heart* project, students communicated with honesty and empathy, practiced kindness through advocacy, and made a lasting impact by raising over \$1,000 for Arrive Ministries. They demonstrated growth in their ability to reflect God's image through their words and actions, and to build community by using their gifts to serve others. Their participation showed they not only grasped the academic content, but also embodied the spiritual and character-based goals of our classroom: to **Do Better, Be Better** for God's glory and others' good.

Additional Information to tell the story:



Arrive Ministries FaceBook post



Letters from Arrive Ministries and Author Alan Gratz

April 17, 2025

Alan Gratz
PO Box 2932
Portland, OR 97208
USA

Dear Readers at Coulee Christian School,

Thank you so much for reading *Refugee* together, and for writing to me about it! I'm so glad it spurred you to raise money for refugee aid with your Art for Heart initiative.

Refugee started for me with the story of the MS *St. Louis*. It was a real ship, and it was famous in 1939, and has been ever since. There have been books about it, and movies, even an opera! But there wasn't a book about the MS *St. Louis* for young readers. So I decided to write one!

I was in the middle of figuring out who my main character would be and what the story would be when my family and I went on a vacation to the Florida Keys. One morning we got up to walk on the beach, and we found a raft refugees had taken to come to the United States. No one was on board, and I still don't know where it came from, but my best guess is that it came from Cuba. I asked myself—why was I writing a book about Jewish refugees seventy-five years ago, when there were refugees right here, right now, I could be writing about?

At the same time, I was seeing images on the news about the Syrian Civil War, and the millions of Syrian refugees looking for some place of safety. I couldn't decide—which book should I write first? They are all important stories! And then I realized—why do I have to write three different books? What if I just wrote one book, and combined all three stories? And that's how the book *Refugee* was born.

My hope for *Refugee* is that it shines a light on the plight of refugees past and present, and opens hearts and minds to the plight of people the world over who have been driven from their homes by violence and need our help. From your wonderful response, it sounds like I've done just that.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alan Gratz".

Alan Gratz



Sharon Calarco <scalarco@couleechristian.org>

Donation

Christopher Nelson <cnelson@arriveministries.org>

Tue, Apr 22, 2025 at 12:48 PM

To: Sharon Calarco <scalarco@couleechristian.org>

Cc: Kate Shermer <kshermer@arriveministries.org>, Adam Cheney <acheney@arriveministries.org>

Sharon,

This is amazing! We are blessed by you and your students. I'm sorry about this delayed communication. I was traveling and then wrapping things up as my last day of work is today.

Kate Shermer is on the email, Arrive's Director of Communication and our Rochester Area Coordinator, Adam. I'll fill Kate in on what you guys did, so cool what you and your students have done!

Thanks again for caring for our refugee neighbors!

[Quoted text hidden]



Teaching *for*
TRANSFORMATION

Checklist for website publication

As part of our ongoing curation of TfT stories, we invite you to prepare your TfT story for inclusion on our website! Please complete the checklist (right) and email your PowerPoint to your school designer. Please include your information below so we can reach out to you with questions, should they arise.

Name: Sharon Calarco

Email: scalarco@couleechristian.org

School: Coulee Christian School

Overall:

- ☐ Story is easily understood by someone not familiar with it.
- ☐ Permission for student names/photos to be shared throughout TfT network
- ☐ Spelling/grammar/sentence structure
- ☐ Links are active (and are linked to items that can be shared throughout TfT network)
- ☐ Photos & artifacts included and plentiful; photos and student reflections are used to tell the story

Slides include:

- ☐ Deep Hope
- ☐ Long Term Targets
- ☐ Curricular Outcomes
- ☐ Habits of Learning
- ☐ See God's Story
- ☐ Storyline
- ☐ Throughlines
- ☐ FLEx
 - ☐ Includes real work, real needs, real people
 - ☐ Involves "top 3 tier" real people
 - ☐ Tied to curricular outcomes
- ☐ Invite
- ☐ Nurture
- ☐ Empower
- ☐ Student Reflection
- ☐ Teacher Reflection