

What is Identity?

- What do you think identity is?
- Identity is defined as “the fact of being who or what a person or thing is” (Oxford dictionary). For example, it could be your age, name, gender, etc. But does that tell us everything about you?
- What makes up our identity?
- Write 1-3 descriptive words beside each question:
 - How do you identify yourself? (e.g. I am honest, Londoner, netball player)
 - How might your parents identify you? (e.g. I am the oldest, helpful...)
 - How might your friends identify you?
 - How might your teacher identify you?
 - How might your Prime Minister identify you?
- Are all these answers the same? Why or why not?



Enquiry Question:
**How did coming to Britain change
refugees' identities?**

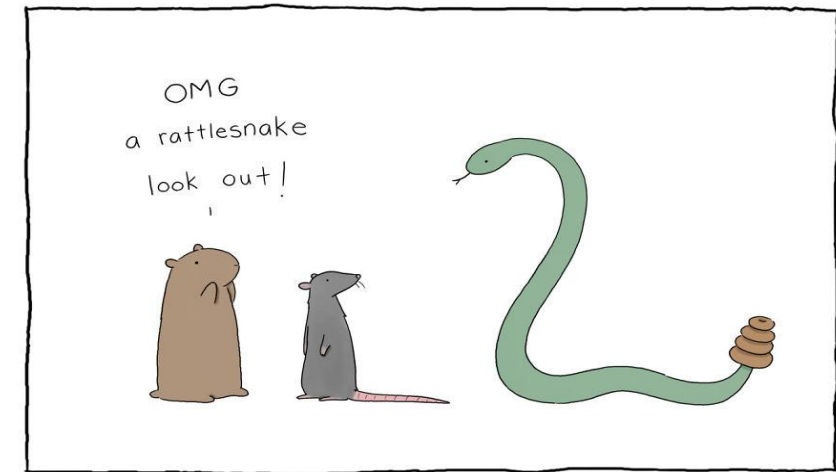
Lesson Title:
**Confronting One's Identity: How
Coming to Britain Changed
Refugees' Ideas About Themselves**



Born in Mogadishu, Hussein Abdi Kahin was brought illegally to Britain as a 9 year old boy and forced to work as a domestic servant. Today, he is a famous British Olympian with a different name. Who is he?

Studies say...

- Psychologists say that “a fully unified, completed, secure and coherent identity is a fantasy”
- Instead, we all have multiple different identities depending on the situation
- These identities often collide, and can cause confusion to us and others
- How does the cartoon demonstrate different perceptions of identities?



Refugees, Migrants and their Identities

- When someone is forced from their home, possibly even to another country, they undergo a big change in their identity. But often people do not want to change, or refuse to accept how others' perceive them. For example:

“

“I am not a refugee; it is true that I have lived in a refugee camp and asked for refugee status and the protection that comes with it, but right now, I am not a refugee.”

Sewite Solomon Kebede, an Ethiopian refugee who migrated to Sweden, Refugee Studies Centre, Oxford, 2010 Report

- How do you think calling someone a ‘refugee’ might make him/her/them feel?
- Have you ever been called something that wasn’t your identity? Why?

Refugees and their Identities

- Many refugees who come to Britain struggle to come to terms with their experiences – this is true even today
- Many will change their name to sound more 'English' (for example, German Jewish refugee Rudi Librowicz changed his name to Rudi Leavor shortly after arriving in Britain)
- Many struggle to join religious communities, sometimes because of prejudice in Britain, from both religious and non-religious groups
- Many will always have an accent when they speak English, which means they will always sound a little 'different' and also accents spoken in Britain may make it hard for them to understand British people
- In what other ways might refugees' identities change when coming to Britain?



"I tried to listen to what they were saying. And I couldn't understand one word, it was broad Yorkshire. That sort of dialect is no longer spoken certainly not in towns and I couldn't understand a word. I thought my god I've wasted my time at college."

Heinz Skyte on arriving in
Leeds, *Holocaust Centre*
North

Example 1: Changing Physical Identity

- Ellen Kerry Davis, a German Jew who came to Britain on the Kindertransport, remembers being fostered by a childless couple who were both in their 50s.
- Listen to her [testimony](#) (48:00 to 50:25). Ellen Kerry recalls that she felt like a “stranger among strangers”. Why do you think she felt that way?



Ellen Kerry Davis being interviewed by the USC Shoah Foundation in 1996

Example 2: Changing Community Identity

“

“The people here, well, the people here, the neighbours were nice, where we were in Loughborough. We didn’t know many people, but the house we rented was from a Jewish woman [...]. With two small children, there wasn’t really much chance to go and socialise or do anything, especially when we were strangers to, let’s face it, to the Jewish community as well. I don’t think they took to us very much. We were just as foreign as anyone else, you know? People from Baghdad, you know, that was a different world.”

Esperance David, *Gathering the Voices*

- Esperance David was an Iraqi-born Jew who eventually settled in Scotland in the 1950s, after surviving an anti-Jewish pogrom in Baghdad in 1941
- Listen [here](#) for her interview
- Esperance has two aspects of her identity she discusses – she is Jewish and she is Iraqi. How has this dual identity affected her?

Example 3: Changing Religious Identity

- After Rudi Leavor came to Britain in 1937 as a young Jewish boy from Berlin, Germany, he and his family settled in Bradford and joined an orthodox Jewish synagogue. This meant that his family were very strict in their religious worship
- However, in the early 1950s, Rudi's orthodox synagogue was at risk of shutting down because it had so few members. Another synagogue nearby, the Reform Synagogue, invited Rudi and his family to join their community instead. This community was more liberal in their religious worship.



Rudi Leavor as a little boy in Berlin,
Holocaust Centre North

Example 3: Changing Religious Identity

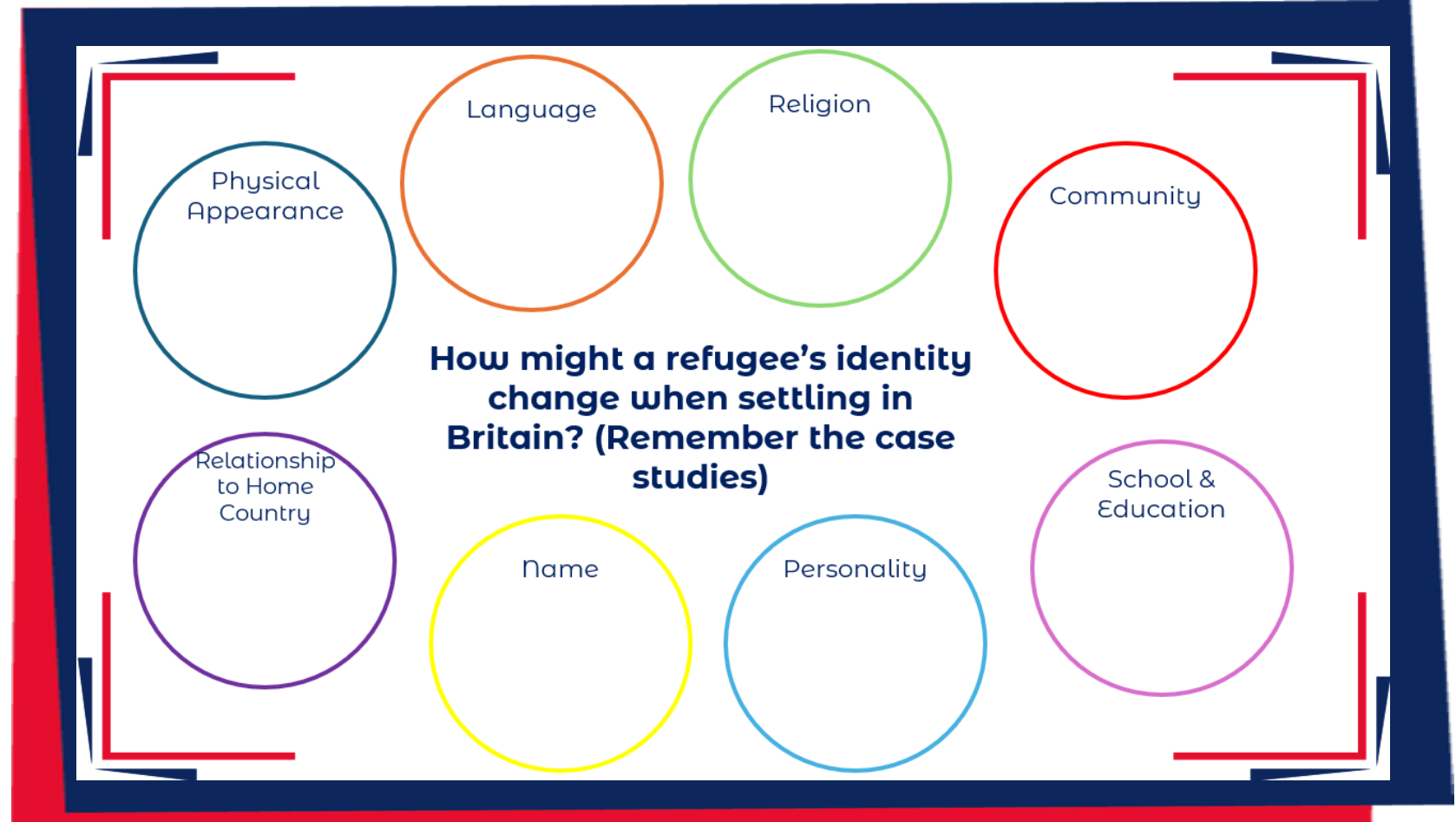
- Listen to Rudi's testimony about joining the Reform Synagogue (22:05 to 25:25)



- What impact did joining the new synagogue have on Rudi?
- What can we learn about Rudi's identity from this testimony?
- How important do you think religion is to Rudi's identity?

On the worksheet you have lots of circles with headings in – consider how moving to a new country might change a refugee's identity in each of the areas.

For example: if a child leave their home country and begins speaking English, they may forget their first language.



Summary: How did coming to Britain change refugees' identities?

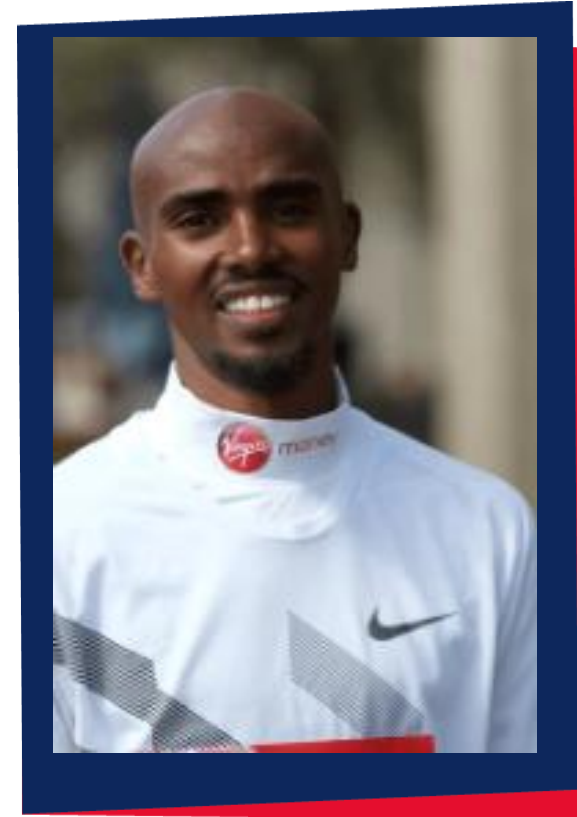
- Can you guess who Kahin from Mogadishu is today? (Click)
- Consider how refugees' identities may have changed based on today's lesson. Be ready to feedback your thoughts.
- You may want to consider:
 - How do people see themselves, as opposed to how others see them?
 - In what ways can someone's identity change?
 - Do people always accept their 'new' identities? Why or why not?



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Sir Mo Farah!! Yes! He won gold medals at both the 2012 and 2016 Olympics. He was also the first British athlete to win a 10,000 meter race. In what ways has his identity changed?