

A photograph showing two young boys standing behind a barbed-wire fence. The boy on the left is wearing a black t-shirt with a graphic design featuring a car and the year 1989. The boy on the right is wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt. They appear to be in a dry, dusty environment, possibly a refugee camp.

Syria: No Lost Generation

The lives of millions of
children have been forever
changed by conflict.

GRADES 3-5

Three Years of Conflict in Syria

Spring usually comes in March in the Arab world, but in 2011 spring came in the dead of winter. Beginning in January, a series of **protests** against the government spread across the Middle East in countries including Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, and Libya. By March the media was using the term “Arab Spring” to describe this wave of **uprisings**. The cause of the unrest was different in each country, but some common demands included fairer government, more freedoms, and opportunities to earn a better living.

The spirit of protest spread to Syria in March 2011. In the southern city of Daraa, a group of children and teenagers were arrested for painting anti-government graffiti on the walls of a school. When **demonstrators** demanded that they be released, the police cracked down and dozens of protesters were killed. Many people were soon calling for Syria’s president, Bashar al-Assad, to step down.



Children stand in the entryway of their tent shelter, in a camp for internally displaced persons, near Turkey.

© UNICEF/NYHQ2014-0003/GIOVANNI DIFFIDENTI

Since that time violence has increased between Assad’s forces and **rebel** groups fighting to bring down the government. By the summer of 2012 fighting had reached Damascus, Syria’s capital, and Aleppo, its largest city. In July of that year the Red Cross declared the **conflict** a **civil war**.

As the war neared its third anniversary in 2014, a peace conference began in Switzerland, where world leaders discussed how to bring the conflict to an end. At that time more than 140,000 lives had been lost in Syria and millions of people had been forced to flee their homes.

WORD MATCH

Draw a line between each vocabulary word from the reading and its meaning.

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| 1. Civil war | a. Someone who participates in an event to show he or she is for or against a cause |
| 2. Conflict | b. A person who fights against a government |
| 3. Demonstrator | c. An effort by many people to change the government or leader of a country |
| 4. Protest | d. A strong disagreement; also a struggle for power |
| 5. Rebel | e. An event at which people gather to show their disapproval |
| 6. Uprising | f. A battle between groups of people in the same country |



Mystery Man

Do you like grooving to tunes on your iPod? Playing games on your iPad? Well, you have me to thank! I was born and raised in San Francisco, but I’m actually of half Syrian descent (on my biological father’s side). I was fascinated with electronics as a kid, and grew up to be one of the most well-known inventors and businessmen in the world. Who am I? [See page 6 for the answer.]

3, 2, 1 Map it!

Use the reading on page 2 and the map and compass below to answer the following questions.

3. Name **three** countries discussed in the reading besides Syria. Use the compass to indicate their direction in relation to Syria. *For example: Iraq (East)*

_____ , _____ , _____

2. Name **two** major cities in Syria. Use the compass to indicate what part of the country they are located in.

_____ , _____

1. Name **one** sea that borders Syria. Use the compass to indicate its direction in relation to Syria.



Reflect: Many Syrians are fleeing their country to escape the war. What countries do you think most are going to? Why?

Feature Story

No Lost Generation

The #ChildrenOfSyria are a generation at risk of losing everything. They want and need to go to school, to be protected, to be comforted. These children need champions. These children need you to be their champion, because the children of Syria . . . are the future of Syria.

Imagine that you and your peers have been shut out of school for a month. A year. Three years. How would you feel? How would you spend your time? What would happen when your **generation** reached adulthood with many years of missed schooling?

For millions of children in Syria, this is a real problem. The civil war in Syria has **displaced** almost 3 million children from their homes. A million more children are **refugees**, who have fled Syria seeking safety in neighboring countries. About 8,000 of these refugees have been separated from their families. The experience for these children is frightful.

The war has forced many Syrian families into poverty. To survive, even very young children must go to work instead of spending their time studying and playing. It is common for refugee children to work in restaurants, in auto repair shops, and on farms.

One young boy named Saad explains how he has been spending his time: "I

am four years old. I make concrete blocks. I hurt here and here," Saad says, pointing to his knees and shoulders. He works with his family, who are paid \$8 for every hundred concrete blocks they make.¹

In addition to performing hard and dangerous work, many Syrian children face violence, are forced to join armed groups, and are married off at young ages. There are so many problems in Syria today that the police and other groups are not able to help all of the people in need.

That's why the world community must step up to help protect the **human rights** of the children of Syria. All people have basic rights, including the rights to safety, nutrition, health care, and education. It is especially important that Syrian children get back to school, where they can learn, play with friends, and be protected from crime.

We all must champion the rights of Syrian children before we lose a whole generation.

vocabulary in context

After reviewing the definitions below, write an original paragraph using all four words.

- **Displaced:** Forced to flee from one's home or homeland
- **Generation:** All of the people born and living at about the same time
- **Human Rights:** The freedoms that belong to all people, no matter who they are
- **Refugee:** A person who has been forced to leave his or her country



A young girl and a woman walk past destroyed buildings and mounds of rubble in the city of Maarat al-Numaan.

Read Between the Lines:

Why are many people referring to this generation of Syrian children as a "lost generation"? Why is this article called "No Lost Generation"?

1 Syria Response Team, *Stand With Me: Children's Rights, Wronged* (Uxbridge, United Kingdom: World Vision International, 2014), 3, accessed February 10, 2014, http://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/WV_SYRIA_CWV_Report_JAN2014.pdf.

Oujelan's Story²

At 13 years old, Oujelan works 12-hour days. His jeans and boots are caked in mud; his hands hardened and dirty. They're the hands of a man, yet they hold a stack of brightly colored certificates, covered with stars and teenage mutant ninja turtles. Red pen marks exclaim "Excellent!" and "Number one in the class!" They are his certificates from his school in Syria, before the war.

"Every week I look at these and they remind me of my school, of my friends and how I played at school," he says. The last one is dated more than two years ago – before his family had to flee Syria and the violence.

Oujelan used to dream of becoming a teacher of Arabic. "If I get an education, I can get a real job. I'll be an employee instead of a worker. I want to go back and have a future. I would change everything. I would go to school. I would build a house."

For now, Oujelan has little time for dreams. He falls asleep shortly after coming home from his job picking grapes. "I'm very tired from working. I'm always on my feet," he says.

Oujelan's mother tears up as she looks at the certificates, her face a mix of pride and sadness. The family has no money to send him to school. They can't afford to lose the pay he brings home each day. "When he wakes up at 5 a.m. to leave for work, I wake up too," she says. "I cry as he leaves. He gets angry, but it's his right. He should be in school."



© World Vision/Lauren Fisher

Think, Write, Discuss...

- What would getting an education mean to Oujelan? What would it change for him?
- Oujelan is a child laborer due to war. What other conditions lead to child labor in other parts of the world?
- What rights are children being denied when forced to work? What can be done to protect these rights?
- What would you say to Oujelan if you met him? How would you help him if you could?

Compose Your Thoughts:

Draft a diary entry from Oujelan's perspective in which he describes a day in his life and his thoughts about work, school, and the war in his homeland.



High Five

Did you know that these words originally come from Arabic, Syria's main language? Can you research five other common words that migrated from Arabic to English?

1. **Admiral** (*ami:r-al-bahr*, ruler of the seas)
2. **Candy** (*qand*, cane sugar)
3. **Ghoul** (*ghu:l*, demon; *gha:la*, take suddenly)
4. **Safari** (*safari:y*, journey; *safara*, travel)
5. **Sofa** (*s,uffah*, raised dais with cushions)



1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Helping the Children of Syria

UNICEF and its partners are helping Syrian children and their families by setting up child-friendly spaces where kids can learn, play, and get counseling. They are also providing supplies, such as food, blankets, soap, and mattresses. In 2013 UNICEF and its partners reached 1.5 million children in Syria with school supplies, enrolled more than 300,000 children displaced to neighboring countries in school, provided over 10 million children with safe drinking water, and vaccinated almost 24 million children against polio (a disease of the nervous system).

There are many ways that you can help, too:

- **Stay Informed** – Learn more about the crisis in Syria and help to educate your friends and family. Check out these news and current events websites created especially for children: [CBBC News](#), [DOGOnews](#), [Indy Kids](#), [KidsPost](#), [Teaching Kids News](#).
- **Advocate** – Write to your United States [senators](#) and [members of Congress](#) sharing your concern for the children of Syria. Encourage them to increase funds for international aid.
- **Donate** – Visit [teachunicef.org/taking-action-syrias-children](#) to learn about hosting a fundraiser to benefit UNICEF or another organization that helps children. A bake sale, a movie night, or another event can be used to raise awareness and funds for children in need.
- **Make a Birthday Wish** – If you have a birthday or other special day coming soon, make a wish for the children of Syria. When asked what you want, say that a contribution to UNICEF or another organization that helps children is on your wish list.
- **Add Your Voice** – Send a message to the #ChildrenOfSyria at [childrenofsyria.info/add-your-voice](#) to help prevent a lost generation and see what other people are saying.

#ChildrenofSyria

The lives of 5.5m children have been forever changed by conflict. Spread the word:
#NoLostGENERATION



11-year-old Zainab answers a question in a UNICEF-supported school in Za'atari refugee camp.

© UNICEF/NYHQ2013-0561/SHEHZAD NOORANI

 works in more than 190 countries to help kids survive and grow. UNICEF supplies medicines and vaccinations, clean water, nutrition, shelter, and education. UNICEF also responds when emergencies occur, such as earthquakes, floods, and war.

How your donations help:

- \$30 supplies 60 children with notebooks and pencils.
- \$36 delivers 200 doses of polio vaccine to protect 66 children.
- \$57 buys 1 full set of warm winter clothes.
- \$68 provides 10 hungry children with nutrition for 5 days.



Answer to Mystery Man (page 2): Steve Jobs was the co-founder, Chairman, and CEO of Apple, Inc. Jobs was adopted at birth. His biological father is from Syria.

Think – Plan – Do

How will you help the children of Syria? Work with your friends, family, and classmates to come up with an idea. Use this worksheet to help work out your thoughts and put your plan into action.

Think

1. What help is most needed?
2. What are our skills? How can we best contribute?
3. How much time can we devote?
4. What resources are available to us?

Plan

1. What will we achieve and by when?
2. What steps do we need to take to achieve our goal?
3. What help do we need from others? Whom will we ask?
4. What materials and supplies do we need? How will we get them?

Do

1. What tasks need to be completed?
2. Who will take responsibility for each task?
3. How will we know if we achieved our goal?
4. How will we let others know what we have achieved?

Last Look...

What do you think this young girl has been doing? Read below to find out.



© UNICEF/NYHQ2013-1347/SHEHZAD NOORANI

This girl has been going to school in Iraq's Arbat refugee camp – in a tent!

Even in times of war, there is hope. In 2013 UNICEF enrolled over 300,000 children displaced by the conflict in school, and provided 1.5 million children with school supplies.

The cost of this tent is about \$2,000. If you had \$2,000 to help educate the victims of the Syrian war, how would you spend it? Use this supply list from UNICEF's Inspired Gifts catalog to create a budget.

This amount...

\$30

Can help buy these supplies...

8 local-language books

\$30

Notebooks and pencils for 60 children

\$48

1 soccer ball and enough notebooks, pencils, and storybooks to help 10 children

\$100

25 textbooks

\$213

A School-in-a-Box kit that meets the needs of 1 teacher and 40 students to carry on classes for 3 months

\$224

An Early Childhood Kit with puzzles, art materials, and toys – 37 items in all that help 50 young children