

# **Tales of Watan: Animation and Myth as a Participatory Storytelling Tool with Displaced Children.**

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## Abstract

Forced displacement because of war and political struggles followed by resettlement in a new country could form a turning point in the lives of the people affected in relation to their perceived identity, social connections and concept of home. Children and youth go through different experiences in dealing with these life changes than adults. Therefore, their stories are different. With the goal to empower children to share their personal narratives at heart, this project aims to document displaced children's narratives about home using the combination of animation and myth and evaluate the effectiveness of the methodology and the resulting barriers and strengths in narrating stories about home and forced displacement. The paper focuses on the visual experience of a group of young Syrian girls in resettling in the Scarborough area in Toronto, Canada in 2016. The participants were asked to join a three days' workshop to create short films using a participatory storytelling tool called "The Wanderer's Journey." A couple of weeks later, they were invited to bring family and friends to attend a community screening. As a part of the qualitative research, they were asked to evaluate their experience in the workshop in a group discussion. A thematic analysis was conducted on the transcript of the recording to determine the central themes. The girls reflected on the process, the product and the research methodology. They noted the importance of the process and the method in raising their artistic awareness about animation and self-expression tools, increasing their self-esteem and confidence to create and to lead. They also mentioned facing numerous challenges in teamwork, planning and technicality. By analyzing the stories and the recordings, we conclude that the children viewed the ongoing process of homemaking in Scarborough in enriching their active social connections both with pairs and family from ethnic and host communities, living in safety and stability and overcoming school and language difficulties.

**Keywords:** Animation, Myth, Storytelling, Home, Displaced Children

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## Foreword

*The stranger is not simply a newcomer, a person temporarily out of place. S/he is an eternal wanderer, homeless always and everywhere. The nightmare is to be uprooted, to be without papers, stateless, alone, alienated and adrift in a world of organized others.” Madan Sarup, 2012.*

Life is changeable, and change is the only steady thing in life. These words could be used to persuade and encourage someone to make a decision or push her to deal with life challenges. However when this change is so drastic, when it leaves you with nothing, precisely at that moment, you start looking for reasons. It’s a long quest for the truth and choice. It is that kind of change that gives you a new life and a new beginning. Whether or not you were accepting it, that’s another story.

I started my masters at York University with one idea in mind that I’m going to embrace all the changes my study and journey will drag into my life and try to determine what set of new glasses to use to look at the world. And it did pull a lot of changes. I knew that ahead of me was a challenging task. I arrived at a new country that I was previously inspired by its actions and humanitarian stand with many oppressed people from other countries. Actions that touched me personally the moment that I read about the willingness of people to take in thousands of people from a different country that is struggling from a long civil war that left almost everyone in the country affected economically, mentally, physically and socially. I was still in that country when I made up my mind that I will do my best to get to Canada and try to help its people out in their attempt to offer some help to others.

I was and still am a citizen of that country that Canada tried to assist. Syria is my home country where until the fall of 2016 I spent every day of my life. I spent my most challenging days in and my funniest as well. In that fall I was finally here, thinking about what to study at York U. It was going to be something I find meaning in and that I can relate to. So, I was torn

between green business and art. I took classes in each interest along refugee studies courses. I knew that I was leaning towards doing a project because both my supervisor and I thought that it would present the right opportunity for me to use my connections and skills and not to be overwhelmed with academic writing which I was new to. By moving from one methodology course to the next, I started learning about qualitative research and more specifically visual participatory research and decided to use it as my method in my project. Guided by people I got to know around the city, I took two field experiences courses with the Syrian refugee community in Toronto, these courses helped me more to narrow down my focus to a section in the community that I felt needs to gain back their voices and provide them with tools to narrate their sides of the story. From my observations, as minors, children aren't decision makers in their parents' choices to come to Canada however at the same time, parents usually use children's welfare to justify their decision. Therefore, excluding them from the homemaking conversation and expecting them to integrate rapidly because of their young age.

When I understood participation in research as a journey of inclusion and partnership along the way from the process to the product, I decided to provide children with a visual method that helps them narrate their side of the integration story without having to speak to it directly. As I was facing challenges myself in my new place, so were they, and I was curious to know how they felt about these changes and adapted to them.

### Key Learning Objectives

In this foreword, As I am explaining how MES was a journey of change for me. I should also note the link between my study and the project. My Major Project could be linked to the three areas of concentration and learning objectives. The idea of designing a visual research tool "The Wanderer's Journey" is carefully structured and included in my research question and the first component "exploring the concept of home and belonging in displacement and resettlement." The project could also be linked to my second component "Popular Education and Storytelling" by adding myth and folktales as the theme to the tool. It also has a strong connection to my third component "Visual participation research methods and cultural production" because my major project allowed me to employ visuals in the art form of animation in the research method with the participants.

**First component: Forced displacement identity and the concept of home:**

One of my learning objectives is to be able to give examples of forced displacement real-life stories in a new environment and explain the bridge between practice and theory: My major project provided me with the platform and the tool to identify my participants' visual representations of their wandering journeys through personal experiences. Allowing me, to collect visual data related to the concept of home and analyze it using other scholarly work.

**Second component: Popular Education and Storytelling:**

One of my learning objectives is to understand storytelling as research, praxis, popular education technique: My major project allowed me to continue developing my understanding around storytelling as a research technique and combine it with visual method (animation). It also helped me put my content creating skills to test by designing the workshop.

**Third component: Visual participation research methods and cultural production**

One of my learning objectives is to explore visuals and arts as an essential part of Participatory Research and community engagement. My major project served as a concentrated application to what I have previously learned in the past courses in MES about PVRM, by allowing me to utilize a participatory visual method (animation) and design it to explore personal narratives around home.

I would add to that the following soft skills that I think became stronger after doing the major project:

- The ability to manage unexpected situations.
- The development of long-lasting relationships with the community partner, the parents and the children.

My plan of study in FES was a journey of change. It passed through many ups and downs before the points and events finally connected in this project. Starting from courses I used to strengthen my knowledge in topics I like "Perspectives on green business" and courses that I relayed heavily on to do my research "Visual participatory research methods" to courses that really changed the way I view the world "Imagining cosmopolitanism" and how I view myself and my past "Popular education for social change." Every one of these courses helped me in this "Wanderer's journey" of mine. In 2016, my changes weren't career or location changes.

They were dramatic and turning points that drove me to launch a quest through FES to search for the meaning of home in my work and the work of the participating girls. As I am turning the page on this chapter of my life in FES, I know that this isn't the end of my journey for change. If anything, it's only the foreword of my beginning.

## Introduction

Much of the refugee studies literature aims to answer questions about resettlement service access needs. However, in this project, I am interested in designing, applying and evaluating a visual storytelling tool, "The Wanderer's Journey." I have chosen this focus because I feel that I can relate to it both personally because as a recent arrival in Canada I felt the need to understand my place in this new space and professionally because I was always interested in developing art workshops and introducing children to new visual skills. In this project, I link stop-motion methods, with folktales and myths traditions, to build on participatory visual research methods (PVRM) literature. Here, I also describe the process, present the short films that were produced collaboratively with a group of Syrian refugee girls, and reflect on the project.

My goal is to help empower children who have experienced forced displacement and resettlement. Together, we explored their stories of belonging, roots and home indirectly and collaboratively. We used 3D and 2D real-life objects as animation props and fictional stories as a framework. Eventually, this research will create a starting point for future researchers, artists, art therapists and community organizers to use this combination to explore different narratives with children.

## Literature Review

In the sections below, I provide a brief overview of several bodies of literature to help situate my work.

### Brief Background on the Syrian Refugee Crisis

The Syrian Refugee crisis has worsened as the conflict continues in its seventh year; millions of people have sought refuge and fled from their homes into safe shelters. Many found



sanctuary in the four neighbouring countries: Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, and Iraq. Other refugees crossed the seas to get to European countries like Germany or got the chance to start a new life in North American countries ("Syria Emergency," n.d.). The number of Syrians registered in 2017 as refugees is more than five million; almost half of them are children ("UNICEF Syria Crisis Situation Report (Humanitarian Results) - August 2017", n.d.) ("Syria Emergency," n.d.). Their chances of resettlement in a third country are slim; only 77,200 Syrian Refugees benefited from the UNHCR resettlement program in 2016 ("Resettlement," n.d.). According to the CIC (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) data published in February 2017, Canada has welcomed about 49,810 Syrian refugees since 2015. In Ontario, around 10,700 are children (Under 17) ("Syrian Refugees – Monthly IRCC Updates - Open Government Portal," n.d.). Having experienced both forced displacement and resettlement, refugee children go through identity changes on personal, social and cultural levels, which might emerge through their new roles and responsibilities or social interactions. Because of this journey, their personal views and narratives on the spatial concept of home and belonging often shifts and changes.

### [From the Wanderer's Home to The Wanderer's Journey](#)

In this section, I examine two conceptual frameworks about making home in long-term forced displacement and resettlement; then I will define the terms home, stranger, exile, guest and host.

In "Making Homes in Limbo," Burn, and Fabos (2015) offer a feminist conceptual framework to understand homemaking in long-term forced displacement; their analysis is built upon three pillars "home, Home and HOME" or what they call "The constellation of home." They start with "home," which means the daily homemaking practices of a territorial and non-territorial nature to transform the place of displacement into a transitional dwelling. On the other hand, Home is the imagined ideal that lives in the memories of a displaced person. The third notion is HOME, which refers to the global understanding of Home in reflection on how the policy makers try to control movement and homemaking. Ager and Strang (2008) proposed another conceptual framework to define the core indicators of successful refugee integration. They conceptualized ten core domains supported by interviews and surveys which are constructed upon four levels; foundation (rights and citizenship), facilitators (language and

culture, safety), social connections (bridges, bonds, links) and markers and means (Employment, health, education, housing). I will return to their framework later to look deeper into the girls' stories.

Resettlement creates estrangement in the self of the guest. Westmoreland analyzed Derrida's "hospitality," looking through Derrida's eyes; Westmoreland agreed that the western hospitality is condemned to be conditional. By entering a Derridean home, the guest is falling into a power relationship of conditional hospitality with the master of the home. To Derrida, absolute hospitality is impossible; it transforms a guest into a host and the host into a guest. Therefore it is an interruption of self. To Derrida, home is described by its master and by putting conditions on hospitality towards the guest; the master/host is committing an act of violence and limiting their relationship to power and authority (Westmoreland, 2008). This contrasting dualism of terms is an emerging theme in *Trinh T. Minh-ha's* article "Other than myself/my other self" in the book "Travelers tales" (2012). She describes the city as an entity where insiders do not accept the form of outsidership from the outsiders. She also views a stranger as a dislocated person, a foreigner and a wanderer continually questioning borders, both mapped spatial borders and cultural self-ones. As a part of forced displacement, she argues that a refugee, as a stateless wanderer, has an urgent need to integrate, to become a part and stop being a wanderer or an alien to avoid the embarrassment of their story. A refugee also must deal with their social heritage being lost. This notion drives her to open up a conversation about language and stories; she explains that "third world" writers' use of language in tale-telling and storytelling is a tool that frees them from home. To her, these tales have a transformable spatial element. Said (2000) on the other hand, due to his personal experience, is more interested in the connection between exile and nationalism. He describes the exile's journey as an unhealable experience and the exiles as solitudes outside the group with no roots nor land and an urgent urge to rebuild their lost souls thus he or she becomes a "Jealous state" exiling the outsiders and refusing to belong (P141-145).

### Storytelling to question the "Truth."

In her chapter "The public role of storytelling," Shari (2003) reviewed Arendt's critical "storytelling" approach in her book "Totalitarianism." Arendt was interested in narrating her

comprehension of Nazism focusing on social conditions, ideological thinking and loneliness in prewar Germany. According to Shari, “storytelling” could be used to foster public political critical judgment, political participation and political debates. “Storytelling” opens opportunities for dialogue by offering a “story” that invites communities to have different interpretations rather than simply “knowledge.” It also helps to create a community of storytellers where the listeners become co-storytellers and nurture an empathetic common sense that promotes inclusion and harmony.

Margaret and Springett (2010) also wrote about the participatory practices of storytelling. To them, a story is as valuable to a teller as getting the chance to be heard with respect. They reviewed the strengths and weaknesses of myth, emphasizing the importance of regularly questioning the “truth” of a story for it to become a transformative tool. By telling a story, a person holds on to her identity, and by questioning and criticizing her story, she collectively identifies with other tellers and they become a force challenging the dominant narrative and the common sense. They also highlighted the connection between collective storytelling and theatre of the oppressed in which the audience becomes spect “actors.”

### Participation in Art Creation

In this section, I will review the main streams of thoughts about what participation means in research and socially-engaging arts. I will also explain terms like desire-based research, “knowledge for action” and strength-based research. Envisioning participatory research was the topic of Eve Tuck’s letter (2009) from the disenfranchised and invisible communities; she speaks against the trend of “damage-centered research” and calls on these communities to step up and make decisions to end this research approach because it represents just another layer of surveillance and superiority. Arguably, this type of research invites participants to document their pain and loss only to analyze it through oppression and colonization lenses to create flawed material for a political change. Instead, she advocates for a moratorium to consider a desire-based research approach, which gives the participants more than the opportunity to put on a broken mask of sorrow; it allows them to be complex persons with both hope and pain.

Cornwall and Jewkes (1995) on the other hand, launch a quest to define participatory research in health studies. One of the strengths behind such a research approach, as they

explain, comes from being a “knowledge for action” framework based on the needs and for the use of local people. They argue that involving participants does not mean that research is necessarily participatory. They raise the issues of power and representation. To them, the answer lies in the attitude of the researcher towards the communities and “who” generates and analyzes the data and the results. They emphasize the importance of the process to determine the level of participation and to provide opportunities for expression with a consideration of the ongoing ethical issues.

Helguera (2011) addresses socially engaged art. He defines it as art which transforms its creator into a sociologist who provokes and problematizes. For him, socially engaged art stands on three pillars: the level of participation, the audience, and the invested time. Similar to the previous researchers and their views on the role of a researcher, he explains how the artist employing social engagement should become curious about people’s knowledge and interested in seeing their narratives (Helguera, 2011). In this form of art, the curator becomes an advocate for change—a voice of resistance to break the status quo of the ownership and authorship over self-expression rights in art institutions. One strong example of a socially engaged artist is Rebecca Belmore who protested the role of Shell Canada and her right to equity in visual representation in front of the Glenbow Museum (Robertson & Cronin, 2011).

Packard (2008) steps back to analyze the limitations and power of visual participatory methods with marginalized persons. In his research with homeless individuals, he followed a native image-making approach, which situated him in a relationship that sought to transfer power to the participants. The participants, as he stated, bring their own ethical concerns and influences on the complex collaboration between them as partners.

### Participatory Visual Research Method and Refugee Children Literature

The literature supporting the use of PVRM with forcefully displaced persons is budding. In the last ten years, there has been a growing interest in using these methodologies to develop an understanding of refugees’ essential needs and personal narratives in temporary places (e.g. camps) or more permanent spaces (e.g. settlement countries). In the following section, I will review this literature.

Use of PVRM is somewhat dependent on researcher's interests and capacity to engage participants in both a co-learning process and product development. Photovoice, for example, was used as an advocacy tool with refugee parents to transfer their messages, concerns and reflections to welfare workers and policymakers to destigmatize their connections (Dumbrill, 2009). Sutherland & Cheng used Photovoice as a tool to address barriers by comparing the "sense of space" for international students and immigrant women in smaller cities in Ontario (Sutherland & Cheng, 2009). Similarly, Photovoice was also used with migrant adults to understand their physical activity and food habits (Turk et al., 2015). In some cases, a photography exhibition becomes a product to value the produced materials (Campbell, 2013). Digital storytelling was evaluated as a social work tool used to document women's counter-narratives about forced displacement (Lenette et al., 2015).

Oh (2012) noted the importance of PVRM and photovoice in giving voice to Burmese children displaced in camps in Thailand. By narrating their stories accompanied with an image, she hoped to help them to overcome assumed inherited vulnerability accompanied with being a refugee and a child. Her goal in the project "Photofriend" could be summarized as *"to gather meaningful child-centred and child-generated perspectives of their everyday lives"* (Oh, 2012, P. 282). A drawing activity, on the other hand, was used with refugee youth in Toronto to develop an understanding of their new roles and responsibilities in their communities using a pre/post-migration framework. The authors found the method to be particularly helpful in providing marginalized communities with various possibilities of expression (Guruge et al., 2015).

Oh (2012) used Hart's framework for understanding children's participation. Supporting young people's participation, according to Hart, means providing help to them to gain a voice. It is about fostering the democratic decision-making process that includes young people in projects related to their lives. He adapted Arnstein's ladder (1969) of participation for adults to add new categories for young people. The ladder is divided into two sections; Non-participation levels which start from manipulation to tokenism and participation levels which begin from assigned but informed to child-initiated decisions shared with adults. I feel that this ladder offers people working with children and youth a tool to measure up their designed activities or intended research to. A higher level of participation doesn't strictly mean a successful project

or research. The researcher must make her choice depending on what she is looking forward to achieving within the community and in the project.

Visual personal narratives have been the interest of many social science researchers. For example, while researching the changes in roles and responsibilities with resettled refugee youth in Canada, Guruge et al. (2015) used the youth's narratives in the focus group discussions and drawings as the collected data, therefore introducing it to the participants as an art-informed method. In a similar approach, while working with Indigenous youth, Flicker et al. (2014) focused on evaluating the process and the products of the strength-based art method by the participants themselves. They spoke to the importance of both product and process as an extension of the participant's complex identity.

In their manual "Children in focus: A manual for participatory research with children," Judith and Jo (2012) discussed children's representation through visual methods, mentioning the role of puppets and sculptures. These representations could be used to understand children's narratives and explore their stories. The authors noted that the process is on the same level of importance as the product. They also critiqued the approaches where the researcher added their own interpretation without asking the children what they meant by their production and advised against using visuals when it might provoke stressful memories for the child. The drawings are both cultural and individual representations.

### Potential of using stop-motion animation and real-life props

Mason (2011) drew attention to the hidden potential of stop-motion animation as a playful person-centred therapeutic and community work tool. She used real objects as the art supplies. As a therapist, her work focused on developing a theory to back her re-animation approach. The approach combines the tools developed by professional animators with those developed by therapists and psychotherapists in family and creative practices. The approach creates opportunities. Animation becomes a platform for visual expression and communication of personal stories, complicated ideas and emotions as well as myths, fairy tales and metaphors. She used her reanimation approach with forcefully displaced children in South Sudan. Mason explains:

Animation, with its roots in illusion and magic, presents opportunities for novelty and lends itself to being used to unlock potential to play in clients who may otherwise appear

stuck. The playful character of animation gives the person or family a space where they can produce their own world or show things from their own perspective. (Mason, 2011, P.42).

In their conference paper, Mason and Ashworth (2013) both highlighted the accessibility and simplicity of animation as a technology for various users. They also documented the animators' and the therapists' reflections on the empowering expressive nature of using everyday materials (e.g. clay – buttons) as props. They once again noted the importance of metaphors and myth to navigate personal stories without having to address the problematic parts of the story directly. To them, stop-motion animation can be an empowering multilayered healing journey for the participants.

### Potentials of using myths in research

Fairytales, metaphors and folktales can all be used to externalize a problematic aspect of a personal story and create joyful expression processes. Orde (2013) reviews Bruno Bettelheim's book "The Uses of Enchantment," a well-known publication that discusses the importance of fairy tales and folktales in children's lives. In the book, as she describes it,

Bettelheim puts forward the thesis that fairy tales give children the opportunity to understand inner conflicts which they experience in the phases of their spiritual and intellectual development, and to act these out and resolve them in their imagination. (P.17)

The stories, as he claims, help the children deal with their feelings. Rousseau, Lacroix, Bagilishya, and Heusch (2003) picked up on Bettelheim's argument and used it to build their framework "Working with myths" as a part of creative expression workshops with refugee and migrant children.

Rousseau, Lacroix, Bagilishya, and Heusch (2003) started using myth as a creative expression tool, during their creative workshops with refugee and immigrant children in schools after they noticed it as an emerging framework in their data collection. The second phase "working with myth" was established on the idea of the therapeutic role of myth, especially homeland myths for their cultural dimensions. They used non-dominate myths and family and community myths and stories. Their proposed framework is built on three themes; the first

“Working with Myth” which involves the children talking and drawing myths about a trip and another one about danger and strategies. The second, “The Trip”, which involves the children drawing and writing about four images: A hero (a character of their choice) who is going to take a trip to another country; a description about the life before the trip, the journey itself, the arrival in a new land, the future. Lastly, the third, which involves the children illustrating stories from their homeland (ROUSSEAU et al., 2003).

I was inspired by these approaches and combined Rousseau’s “The Trip” (2003) and Joseph Campbell’s “The Hero’s Journey” (2004), which I will explain in the methods, approaches to working with myth. In the following chapter, I explain the resulting tool used in my research, which I have called “The Wanderer’s Journey.”

## Methods

This chapter discusses the process that went into designing my methodology. I recognize my community partner; the strategy used for sampling and identify the criteria that led to the selection of the participants. I describe my approach to data collection and analysis. Where appropriate, I explain what alterations were undertaken to my proposal and the reasons for these changes.

### The Community Partner: The Arab Community Center (ACCT)

I reached out to several potential community partners started at the beginning of February. The Arab Community Center (ACCT) was decided upon because of a pre-existing relationship that facilitated the connection with the children and their community. Together, we settled on March break to host the workshop. However, due to unfortunate circumstances on the partner’s side, we had to reschedule for April. This meant that the time spent with the children, as well as the program, had to be managed in a more flexible manner because of their limited availability during after-school hours and competing hosting site space issues.

### Sampling

The participants were recruited with the support of The Arab Community Center of Toronto (ACCT) staff at their Scarborough site. Initially, the number of proposed participants



was ten children, but only five were able to participate due to rescheduling issues. The parents/legal guardians signed the consent form agreeing to their children's participation before the workshop. Forms were available in Arabic and English. To make sure that the consent was an ongoing process, I continued reaching out to parents for the duration of the workshop and on the film screening day. Later, they filled out a demographic questionnaire. The children received their modest honoraria at the end of the third day.

### The participants

The participants were a convenience sample of five girls attending the Centre. These participants were between 12 - 13 years old and of Syrian nationality. All arrived in GTA in 2016. They were privately sponsored refugees (PSR) accompanied by their parents/guardians. All currently lived in Scarborough or North York. Their previous country of residence was Lebanon, where they stayed between 5 months and two years. They also attend the same school. The table below details the demographics of the group.

|   | Age | Grade | Current Residency | Date of arrival in the GTA | Form of sponsorship | Second country of residency/the duration |
|---|-----|-------|-------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|--|
| 1 | 13  | 7     | Scarborough, ON   | Jan 2016                   | PSR                 | Lebanon/2 years                          |
| 2 | 12  | 6     | North York, ON    | Oct 2016                   | PSR                 | Lebanon/1 year                           |
| 3 | 12  | 6     | Scarborough, ON   | Oct 2016                   | PSR                 | Lebanon/5 months                         |
| 4 | 13  | 7     | Scarborough, ON   | May 2016                   | PSR                 | Lebanon/2 years                          |
| 5 | 13  | 7     | Scarborough, ON   | May 2016                   | PSR                 | Lebanon/2 years                          |

### The Wanderer's Journey: The Proposed, The Applied and The Process

Several influential practices were referenced during the design of my method. These practices were included on three primary levels: the creative narrative, participation in the narrative and animating the narrative. First, regarding the creative narrative framework, Rousseau's "The Trip" which was previously explained in the introduction offered the participant an engaging tool that touches on her personal stories using myth. The framework "The Trip" consisted of four main images; an image of life before going on a trip, an image of the journey, an image of the new land and lastly the arrival (Rousseau et al., 2003). Second, in consideration of Hart's ladder of young people's participation, I designed my tool to fall onto

level five (Consulted and Informed). This meant that the children were included as consultants in the evaluating process (Hart, 1992). Third, regarding the animating of the narrative, I adapted a stop-motion animation curriculum successfully employed in other contexts (Art Education) and rearranged it to serve the research need. Tomlinson and Kuthy's curriculum can be simply described as a Do It Yourself (DIY) tool. It provides children with guidelines and examples along with the freedom of narrative creation. Their blog briefly mentions their strategy ("Animate Imaginary Worlds," n.d.).

1. The principles of stop-motion animation and medium choosing.
2. Tutorials for using the stop-motion application
3. Guidelines for creating the characters
4. Historical examples and inspiration for stop-motion animation
5. Plans for building an animation stand.
6. Ideas for developing narrative and thematic structures.

While designing the workshop, the following pedagogical and research goals were considered, and they were also included in writing the evaluating questions.

- 1- Providing the children with an opportunity to create visual content based on their resettlement and displacement experiences.
- 2- Encouraging the children to develop bonds while participating in something playful and collective.
- 3- Communicating children's narratives of home to their parents, their new communities and potential change makers.
- 4- Defining the indicators of strengths and challenges in using myths and animation to help children narrate their displacement stories.
- 5- Suggestions for further developing of the tool "The Wanderer's Journey."

When considering the three resources and the research goals cited before, I arrived at the following as my proposed method.

1) Animation Activity: The participants learn the principles of stop-motion animation using Tomlinson and Kuthy's cut-out animation curriculum ("Animate Imaginary Worlds," n.d.).

2) Collective Creative Narration: The participants learn about the main components of storytelling through reading stories written by other children (Beginning, Middle and End). They imagine the characters and structure the story using a framework like "The Trip." The framework was suggested as a structure for the children's narratives. At this stage, the tool was called "The Wanderer."

- The beginning: Imagine the hero's mythical homeland; The hero's feelings, Her support system, and her strength and weaknesses.

- The middle: Imagine the journey. The reason for leaving, the hero's feelings, her support system and her changes, weaknesses and strengths.

- The end: Imagine the new place. Where is the hero now? The hero's feelings, her support system, her changes, weaknesses and strengths and future expectations.

3) Animating the narrative: The participants turn their ideas into reality by visualizing and finalizing their proposed stories.

4) Focus group evaluation: The participants reflect through a group discussion on the following levels: emotional, artistic, self-expression, and collective.

5) Film release: The participants are offered the opportunity to share the product with their community.

The concept of "The Wanderer" developed as I spent more time preparing for the workshop in the summer. I was introduced to Joseph Campbell's "The Hero's Journey" (2004),

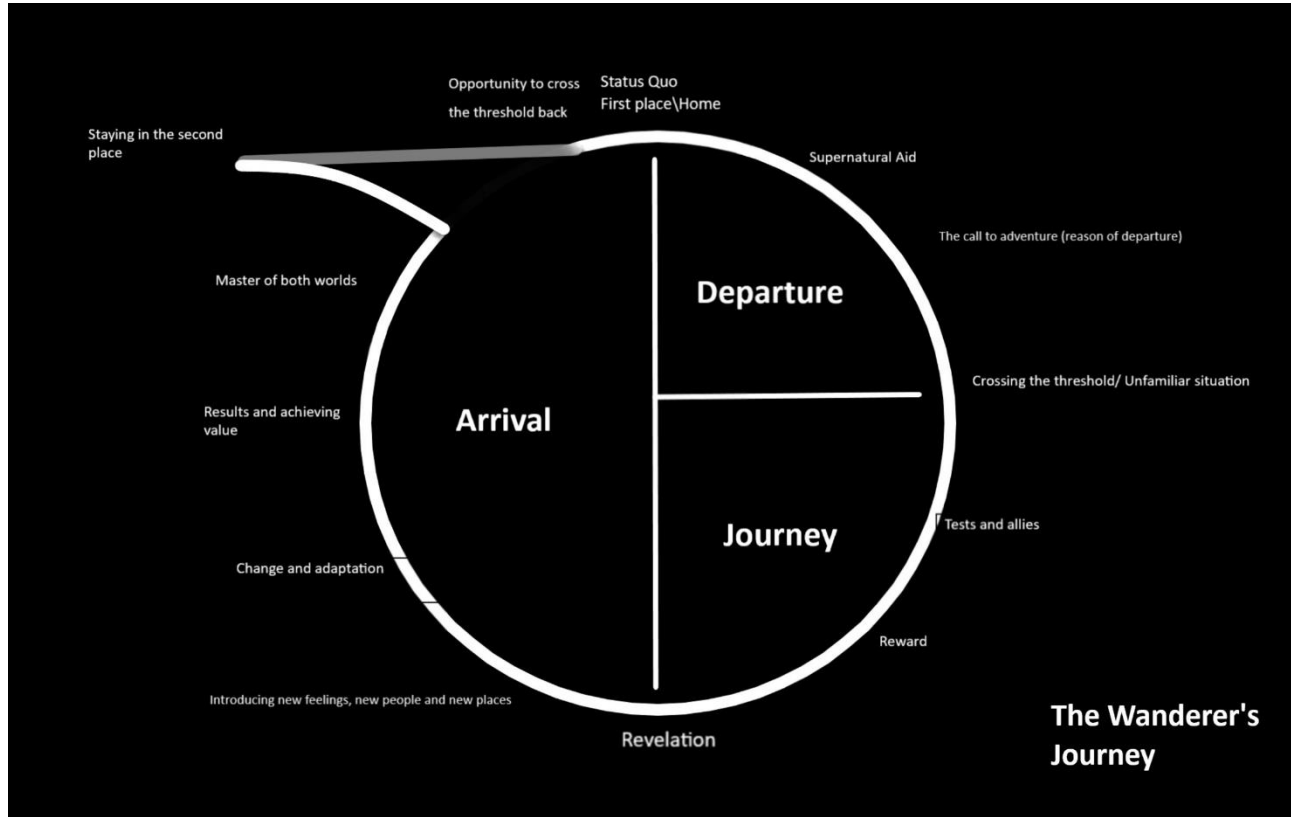
and I decided to simplify it to add more structure to “The Wanderer” which transformed the tool to what I called “The Wanderer’s Journey.”

Using Campbell’s “The Hero with a Thousand Faces” framework, I analyzed two stories, “The Traveling Princess” and “The Girl in The Flower,” from a similar project which was designed as a platform for Syrian children in Greece to write fairytales based on their traveling experiences (Traveling Tales, 2017). With the help of these two child-centred products, I adapted the “The Hero’s Journey” into what I called “Wanderer’s Journey” and offered it to my participants as a framework. The following table explains the analysis I did on the two tales and compares the two frameworks together “The Hero’s Journey” and “The Wanderer’s Journey”:

| The Travelling Princess |  |   |   |  |
|-------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| Departure               | Status quo<br>(living in a castle with a mean mother)                        | Supernatural aid (helped by a magic fairy)  | Call to adventure<br>(decides to travel and discover the world) |  |
| Journey                 | Threshold\Unfamiliar situation\ travel (she visited all the forests)         | Change (she dressed up in very simple clothes)  | Challenge (she found gold and people who need the money)        | Revelation (she gave them gold as she travelled) |
| Arrival                 | Arrive in a new place (she arrived in Greece)                                | New Life, current state and the award (she decided to help migrants, she found happiness) |   |  |
| The Girl in The Flower  |  |   |   |  |
| Departure               | Status quo (Rama is born inside a flower)                                    | Call to adventure, departure reason (the frog kidnapped her)                              |   |  |
| Journey                 | Threshold\Unfamiliar situation\ travel (she escaped and started her journey) | Meet a challenge and got help (she helped a bird, and it helped her back)                 |   |  |

|         |   |                       |                                       |                         |
|---------|---|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Arrival | Introducing new feelings, new people and new places | Change and adaptation | New Life, current state and the award | Opportunity to go back. |
|---------|---|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|

| The Hero's Journey (Joseph Campbell) |                                      | The Wanderer's Journey |   |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|---|
| <b>Departure</b>                     | The call to adventure                | <b>Departure</b>       | Status Quo  |
|                                      | Refusal of the call                  |                        | Supernatural Aid                                    |
|                                      | Supernatural Aid                     |                        | The call to adventure (reason of departure)         |
|                                      | Crossing the threshold               |                        |   |
|                                      | Belly of the whale                   |                        |   |
| <b>Initiation</b>                    | The road of trials                   | <b>Journey</b>         | Crossing the threshold/ Unfamiliar situation        |
|                                      | The meeting with the goddess         |                        | Tests and allies                                    |
|                                      | Woman as Temptress                   |                        | Reward  |
|                                      | Atonement with the father            |                        |   |
|                                      | Apotheosis                           |                        | Revelation  |
|                                      | The ultimate boon                    |                        |   |
| <b>Return</b>                        | Refusal of the return                | <b>Arrival</b>         | Introducing new feelings, new people and new places |
|                                      | The magic flight                     |                        | Change and adaptation                               |
|                                      | Rescue from without                  |                        | Master of the second world                          |
|                                      | The crossing of the return threshold |                        |   |
|                                      | Master of two worlds                 |                        | Opportunity to cross the threshold back             |
|                                      | Freedom to live                      |                        |   |



### The English copy of what was given to the children

Last April, I was given a chance to test the workshop with five young participants. All activities took place in a site in Scarborough offered by the ACCT. Workshops were held on Wednesdays of April 11<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> from 4 pm to 6:30 pm; the film screening was on Wednesday, May 30<sup>th</sup> from 5 pm to 6 pm.

**Day one:** On the first day, four of the five participants were introduced to the concept of stop-motion animation. Having just arrived from school, they were eager to start, and they requested to start directly with the practical part. I chose to skip parts of the material which includes video examples, while also considering that the wireless at the site wasn't working that day. They narrated in turns to the others the two forced migration stories written by other Syrian children in Greece "Traveling tales:" "The Traveling Princess" and "The Girl in The Flower." Through the previously introduced framework "The Wanderer's Journey," I analyzed

the stories with them. It was suggested at this point that they follow the circle of the journey in their own stories but were given the option of going outside the structure if they wished or to change the order of the steps.

In teams of two, the participants brainstormed the stories that they want to animate and documented that version in writing or, as they suggested in the workshop, recording on their personal devices. They were given about an hour and a half for this step. During that time, I was listening to the stories, commenting and asking questions to provoke them to sharpen their thoughts about the plot and the characters further. For the rest of the day, the girls began working on their studios as can be seen in the pictures in Appendix One.

**Day two:** On that day, the girls continued working on decorating and polishing their sets as well as their clay made characters. One of the teams began experimenting with the application “Stop motion Studio” on an IOS device (iPhone 6) and learned how to set the shot and when to capture photos. The fifth participant joined team Two at this point. She started helping them with the animation process. At the end of the day, final audio recording with team two was completed in the form of a group discussion among the team members.

**Day three:** Both teams used this day to continue animating of their stories. Team one finished their work. Team Two needed another day to finish up. The audio discussion with team one happened at this point.

**Day four:** Both teams finished their work on the beginning of this day, and they all engaged in a large group discussion to reflect on the process.

**Community Screening:** A week before May 30<sup>th</sup>, the participants were invited to bring friends and family members for a film screening. Parents were called and asked to join as well. Photos of the four days process and the two short films were shared as a presentation to the attendees.

## Data collection

The data included the produced films, “The Lost Princess,” and “A Girl with Wings.” Each last approximately 90 seconds. In addition, there was an hour and a half of audio recordings from three group discussions. There were transcribed in their original language and coded.

## Data Analysis

The two stories were deconstructed using The Wanderer’s Journey framework. Then, I examined the feedback from participants with regards to the process, the product and method. Key participant supporting quotes were translated for this paper. Data analysis was based on core themes coded using the transcript of the recordings and stories and based on the design of the evaluation questions. These questions were designed to help the girls address the process from four aspects: personal, artistic, self-expression regarding the story and the process and teamwork.

## Results

### Following the steps of The Wanderer’s Journey

The stories were initially written in Arabic; the following is my translation. This documentation includes both parts from the final animated copy and the written or the recorded draft. The differences between the texts will be recorded using a different colour. The film’s transcript is written in black; red denotes the original written scripts. I felt the need to document both because the girls did not have the time to animate everything they wanted which I will address more in the discussion and to add more layers to the context.

### Story One: The Lost Princess

*Once upon a time, **(there was a girl who speaks with animals and sings, however, she is messy and sweet)**. She was sitting on a shell on the beach, then came the prince who was racing **(Hunting)** with his friends. **(She liked him, and he liked her back)**. Then the horse fell, and the girl saved it, and they fell in love (with the prince), but his evil mother **(stepmother)** didn’t love her, and she took her to the magical lake and tricked her to look towards a bird, and she fell in the magical lake, and she went to the human world, she saw a lot of cars. She was afraid and*



*almost got hit by a car. She began to ask people however they didn't know her language. She continued walking until she reached a forest. The animal sage came, and he decided to help her. He pointed out a key for her and gave her a map to get to it so that she can go back to her home. He warned her from the witch's twin who is guarding the key. In the fortress, the witch was there, and the princess arrived at the fortress. The witch threw her in prison. She found a person who speaks her language from her country, and he freed her from prison, and he guided her to the key. She found it and through it in another lake and went back. The villain turned into a monster, and the princess fought her with a sword. She married the prince, and they lived happily ever after.*

#### Story Two: The girl with wings

*There was a girl who had (born with) wings; she was very beautiful and smart (She had a big brain and was very smart). (However, the children used to laugh at her, and she was under a lot of mental stress.) And in the school, the students began to mock her because of her wings. Therefore, she left the school sad. Then she met a guy (and this person wanted to mock her as well, and he told her that he loved her, but he was lying. However, she really loved him) and thought that he loved her. She loved him back, but he deceived her (After a while he brought his male friends, and they laughed at her and told her that she was really ugly, but she was beautiful, but her wings were not). And she became very sad and started sobbing and crying (and for that reason, she really hated her wings, and she decided to kill herself). Then she found a person who was a relative of hers, and he tried to persuade her to travel to another country (he persuades her not to kill herself and to travel to a European country). She struggled a lot in the trip, and she went to a strange school (A special school that deals with similar cases, children with wings and mental problems and then she travelled and travelled and toured the world. She later found a magical lamp with a Jinni inside. He asked her for one wish, and she chose to get rid of her wings, and she became very beautiful). She grew up and met a person, and they fell in love very much. They decided to get married after that they met their friends. She later found a magic wand and decided to give her wings up she was very happy with her choice, and she became a very beautiful girl (and gave birth to boys and girls who look like us). This is the ending of our magnificent story.*

### Story structure: Characters and Plot in the “Wanderer’s Journey”

The girls relied heavily on fantasy elements to narrate their stories. Each group relied on several different character archetypes to flesh out their stories. Furthermore, each story followed a young women’s fantastical journey and triumph over adversity. (See summary tables below).

| Main Characters             | The Lost Princess   | The Girl with Wings  |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| The Protagonist\The Heroine | the girl who echoed the participants’ voices and was in the center of the story.                    | The girl with wings; the main character who we follow her character arc. |
| The antagonist\The villain  | The evil stepmother and her twin  | The double-crossing love interest who was the reason for the departure.  |
| The Sidekick                | The villains’ helpers   | The bullies at school  |
| The love interest           | The prince who appeared at the beginning and the end of the story and was the reason for the quest. | The boy she met in her new school  |
| The allies                  | Supernatural aid and convenient aid   | A relative who convinced her to travel.                                  |

| The Wanderer’s Journey |  | The lost princess   | The girl with wings   |
|------------------------|--|---|---|
| Departure              | Status Quo                                   | A girl in her fantasy world   | A girl in her school  |
|                        | Supernatural Aid                             | She speaks animals’ language  |   |
|                        | The call to adventure (reason of departure)  | Meeting the love interest and the antagonist (the stepmother).  | Being mocked by the love interest.                          |
| Journey                | Crossing the threshold/ Unfamiliar situation | Being thrown in a magical lake  | Travelling by a vehicle to another country.                 |
| Arrival                | Tests and allies                             | Almost being run down by a car.<br>Being prisoned and getting help from a person who speaks her language and the animal sage. | Reaching a suicidal state and getting help from a relative. |
|                        | Reward                                       | Getting the key   | Travelling to other countries around the world              |

|  |   |                                   |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Revelation</b>  | Deciding to go back   | Going back to the second country. |
| <b>Introducing new feelings, new people and new places</b> | Meeting people at the princess store.                                   | Meeting a new love interest.      |
| <b>Change and adaptation</b>                               | Deciding to go back to the old world and winning over the villain there | Deciding to lose her wings        |
| <b>Master of the second world</b>                          |   | Staying in the second world       |
| <b>Opportunity to cross the threshold back</b>             | Choosing to cross   | Choosing not to cross             |

### The narratives and the influence of popular culture

In both stories, the reader can sense the power of popular fairy tales and children's visual media in the narrating style of the participants. The girls emphasized these elements in the group discussion when they were asked about their source of inspiration. After saying that they used what one of them called "the genie of ideas in my brain," they cited popular movies and television shows that influenced them. One example included Disney's "Princess Sofia" where they got inspired by the idea of human\animal supernatural interactions. The following conversation indicates their response to that influence.

- Group 1 (*The Lost Princess*)

*Researcher: Is there any story that you mainly depended on or did you add multiple things?*

*P1: We used movies.*

*P2: in the time of the villain, there are many movies like Cinderella and Snow White.*

- Group two (*A girl with wings*)

*P2: We stole it from a film.*

*(All laugh)*

*R: Ok I'll write in my essay that they stole it from a film.*

This influence also affected the gender roles in the first story, the antagonist\protagonist dualism and the characters' arcs. When we read the first story, we think of a combination of Disney princesses movies like snow-white going to the unknown world of the seven dwarfs. We

are also reminded of the film “Enchanted”; the princess in that movie crossed into the human world after being attacked by a villainess, however, she chose to remain in the human world after meeting her true love. The story also reinforces stereotypes like the evil stepmother and the damsel in distress, while destroying other stereotypes like the idea that princesses can’t save themselves.

While the girls were writing the second story, I found myself wondering about the idea. To me, it sounded like an Xmen movie, where a mutant is being challenged in her community and becoming an outcast. However, until today I still don’t know which movie exactly the girls “stole” the idea of the story from.

### The process in the eyes of the participants

Before we look at the participants’ views on the links between this story and their personal experiences, we need to learn about how they saw the process and what improvements they suggested, as well as challenges they faced.

### The role of the workshop in developing skills

**Artistic skills:** The girls commented on the role of the workshop in gaining more information about animation as a form of expression and other art forms it got linked with. About connecting their new skills to their general art interest, one of the girls said that she learned how to do a fashion show and design the clothes of the character, while her teammate noted that she now knows how to make a studio. The other team mentioned photography and animation as the two skills they acquired in the workshop. One participant said, *“It didn’t develop interest however we learnt many things that might be useful in the future.”* While another said, she didn’t develop any artistic interest because *“I don’t have any.”* On the third day, the fifth participant explained how this workshop raised her awareness about animation and said *“We were usually surprised when we saw people moving, what is this magic however now after we learnt we felt something changed we understand for example if you saw a video you understand how the people move how they add audio and get it to fix, it’s now easy for us to do one.”*

**Soft skills; Leadership and taking initiative:** Leadership is the soft skill that they can take back to their school as one of the participants continued to say

*What we learnt today can help me make this video (for school about bullying) for example how I do animation, how we animate, how we add voice into it even when we want to do it for school we can say in the video that something like that (bullying) can hurt people and people can die because of that and in that video we can show them how to stop it, and I learnt many things that can help me in that*

Another described how animation as a skill could help her be the leader in her class *“the leader’s advantage over the follower is that the leader has more information, now I can be the leader and say what is really happening.”*

**Technical skills:** On the third day, I noticed when the girls were taking a break while others continue working is that two of the girls took out their mobile phone camera and started doing their own short video clip. I later asked one of the girls about whether this hobby of theirs began today in the workshop or before and she answered: *“No I started today, I felt more that I had learnt something, and I know how to take photos.”* I think they felt more empowered and confident to create and that reflected on their activities in break time.

### Challenges and Difficulties

**Technical and practical challenges:** Describing the process as both hard and entertaining, the girls went further in depth to explain the multiple challenges they faced to finish the project. P1 commented when asked about the challenges: *“It’s difficult regarding audio and picture, as in animation you need to sync them together.”*

Team One found designing the characters hard as well. Clay was an accessible medium to change, and mould in the workshop, however accidents still happened to the characters, and they had to redo some of them.

*P2: “We didn’t feel it was hard except sometimes in making the studios.*

*P1: and the characters. (Skipping two lines in the transcript)*

*P2: First we designed a prince, and then we changed, we created another prince because the first one was ruined.*

On top of other technical challenges, one of the girls felt that the photographer's camera and hand weren't as steady as it should, and she advised for more preparations for this step in the future.

**Planning challenges:** Time management also forced them to make multiple decisions about what to include in the film and what to keep out. As I will mention later, team One felt that the studios didn't fully meet their expectations. When asked to talk more about how they planned to manage these expectations and reality, P2 answered :

*"We felt that we should only animate the important part while we can narrate the rest. For example, we had the prince and princess in the same location and animated that, but at the same time there was a lot we didn't say because there wasn't ..."*

*R: "You can't animate everything."*

*P1+P2: "Yes yes."*

*P2: "That's how it was."*

**Teamwork challenges:** The girls worked on the film in teams or groups of their choice, they had to manage the roles between themselves and explore each other's strengths and weaknesses to be able to achieve the product. Curiously, I asked the two teams about that. Team One's strategy seems to be merely *"I did half of the work, and she did half."* The criteria that helped them to dedicate tasks for example that P1 would work on the studio and P2 would handle the character was the teammate's skill.

*P1: "I felt heart pain until we both knew what each one of us would do."*

*R: so, there wasn't any reason.*

*P1: I worked on the studio because I don't know how to make the characters and she worked on the characters because she wants to be a designer.*

Another teamwork challenge was having to compete with another team. It's something that I also noticed as I observed them. The girls got competitive, and they started comparing stories and characters to determine whose is "more beautiful" or better.

Team Two, on the other hand, had a very different dynamic. When I asked them about team roles, P2 admitted that she didn't help as much as P1; P1 agreed.

*P1: I made the studio and took the photos.* But when asked about who had the idea of the story

P1 gave the credit to P2 in Saying *“To be honest she started with the wings, and we continued together, I would add a bit of reality, she would add a bit of fiction. We completed each other; it turned out unlike we expected.”*

I think this sentence summarizes what the girls were trying to say. P1: *“we had some troubles communicating, each one of us has her own personality and wants to do more, but because I added some from my part about how I see life and each one sees life differently, so I felt that it was good like this, and so did she”*

As a newly arrived on day two to Team One, P3 had her distinguish experience with jumping straight into animation with the team. She spoke about the positive and negative aspects she encountered.

*The positive stuff was that as you work with people, you get to know more about them even if they were your friends from before, but you might find out what they are good at. The negative stuff was people talking over when you are audio recording (she laughs) you feel you must repeat that and that doesn’t work for you.*

#### Participants’ recommendations

The girls didn’t run out of ideas advising me on how to develop or conduct the workshop better in the future or giving specific advice to other children who are attending the workshop or watching the films.

**a) The need for a quieter space.** On the third day, one of the participants felt that the environment around her wasn’t quite enough for her to work because of the other girls and she mentioned to me that in the future the facilitator should provide a quieter room for those who want to work and for the rest to go to another place until their teammates are finished working.

**b) More time:** Team One advised other participants to imagine, create and use the time to narrate a longer story.

*P2: I recommend people to try it because it’s something fun.*

*P2: and they should put a lot of ideas from their heads.*

*R: they should put a lot of ideas*

*P1: and write them on papers, you wouldn’t know (what might happen).*

*P2: maybe because our story is very short but other people can make it longer, and it can become better than our story.*

On the other side, Team Two expressed different feelings about crafting everything by hand as one of them recommended for future participants not to “Do animation with their hands.”, While her teammate felt otherwise. P1: *“They should create everything with their hands, so they’d feel how much effort it takes and get a sense of what it means. They should try it because it’s very nice and gives a new experience.”* By trying animation as she continues they’ll learn to be patient and appreciate those who animate for a living.

**c) Screenings:** They also added recommendations for those viewing the film, Team Two’s participants pointed out that children younger than them might learn a small life lesson from the story; learn to love and not to bully others.

When asked about what she would do as a trailer to promote the work one of the girls said she might tell the audience about the story, how it was done and add action to the video (ex: music.)

In another recording, the girls argued a specific age limit for others to benefit from the experience and their stories. The children viewing these films should be ten was the argument of one of them. Another said younger than eight. A third insisted that the age doesn’t matter but if they were younger than five, they’d enjoy the film and learn new words in life lessons but will not have any idea on how to make something like it because the video is “A lot of work.” The participant continued to say: *“If you want to add audio, you need someone to teach you how if they saw the video and no one taught them, how will they learn?.”* An educational video in details that teach them the steps of creating the film might help, as she suggested.

#### The differences between expectations and process

**Comments about the story and the process:** As the process unfolded, the girls had to make many changes and edits to their work which resulted in differences between what they expected, planned and imagined and what ended up happening. These edits were sometimes limitations caused by skills, resources or time. In story One, the girls felt that they had to put boundaries around the story because of the environment of the studios they created, mainly



the heroine meeting the animal sage in the woods didn't convince them. They were leaning towards something else but were limited with the available studio and not having time to make another. When asked if animation helped them deliver the story, P1 said: *"The story wasn't as we wished because we needed a lot of studios, there was a place deleted from the story; when the prince and princess get spotted by the villainess."*

In the workshop, the girls got to experiment with different art mediums; they mainly enjoyed the tools that helped them create and design like fabric, clay and coloured papers. The girls commented that adding music and sound effects and adding more scenes and characters to the film made the product fun, enjoyable and not tedious.

It was noted before that participant five joined the process later, I asked her about whether she likes the story she worked on and if she would've added any other scene. She replied to that *"No I felt that I liked the story and I wanted to participate with them, I wasn't with them when they started, but when I joined the team, they explained the story to me, and I started filming at the end of the video. I started filming and animating, and I felt it was easy."*

**Comments about the time and the process:** Team Two felt they were limited by the available time. They wanted to add more details to the story but had to manage time. P1 Said, *"Me and her did a lot of other things if we continued the film would be more than two minutes, but you know the time is limited."* P2: *"When a person imagines the story, she imagines many things, we would've loved to add more but there wasn't enough time, and the process was hard. Photography isn't easy. I thought it was easy it's simply photography but each part you need to take 100 pictures."* To the girls, the process felt long, and one of them mentioned that she didn't like that, and the length of the story plays a role in determining how short or long is the process.

### Connection with the story on a personal level

I will get into more details about the girls' personal connection with the story later in the discussion as I introduce a conceptual framework to structure the ideas around home in resettlement in.

**1- Estrangement and forced displacement:** The participants were asked about whether they felt a connection to the story and if there is an event in the story that resembled their experiences. Fear and estrangement were the two emotions mentioned by the girls when talking about that topic.

These feelings of arriving in a strange country that they never set foot on are something they shared with the character. One participant said *"When I arrived in a new country, I didn't know anyone and I felt lost. Not lost I was in a country I knew and then got to a new country where I know no one"* She continued *"I struggled then I got used to it like the princess."* These emotions were no strangers to their heroine in her new environment at a city surrounded by cars and the possibility of real danger and wonder as they described *"felt she was like a stranger, she had no one to talk to so she felt estrangement and no one is there to help her, and she came to this country walking on the streets without finding anyone."*

This new feeling of a new country is like getting a new life, it is like the threshold the character fell into that took her to a new world, and this new feeling is what connects the maker to the story as the third participant in team One explained.

**2- School and forced displacement:** Team Two tried hard to find common grounds between the story and the reality of life. These grounds were related to bullying as one of them explained that the bullying that their lead went through in her school is something all girls might pass through and like every girl the main character faced troubles and challenges. The difficulties she faced at school was one way they felt they relate to the story.

**3- Language and forced displacement:** Language as a theme appeared underlined in the second story however it did come up when asked about how they relate to the story. One of the teammates noted that even if they didn't mention language, their character still like them struggled with it when she arrived at her new place.

**4- Social connections and forced displacement:** In story One, the heroine found support in the new world, that support took different forms; rescue and guidance. In the beginning, it was in the princess store where she saw someone speaking her language who helped her get where she needs to go which drives us to consider the link between mentioning this store in the story

and the role that ethnic stores play in the life of newcomers. Having strong allies was something they had in common with the character in the stories when asked about if they had similar help adjusting the girls simply answered “yes.”

Social connections were also the main reason the princess chose to go back home. The heroine felt the need to go, as the girls explained, find her love interest; the prince and to seek revenge from the villainess. Being a stranger and knowing no one also pushed her to choose to return.

The character left because of the bullying she faced, but that didn’t mean that the new country was more livable. In story Two, P1 felt that the new place was more challenging to the character not only she has to deal with the bullying there on top of that she’s not with her family and she is away from her homeland. However, she chose not to go back to her country and to stay with her love interest because she was humiliated there, felt betrayed and not respected.

### Connection with the lead character on a personal level

**1- Shared qualities:** When asked about what are the character traits that the girls share with the lead, the two teams answered using clear short sentences with visible or internal traits like; beauty, beautiful voice, niceness, and getting revenge against the wrongdoing.

**2- Learned lessons:** Like any adventure in life, in her journey, the heroine learnt lessons, gained skills and changed. Her lessons, according to the participants in story One, include learning new language, getting the experience of traveling, learning and meeting new people, fighting for her rights, not to trust strangers (in the city an old person stole her crown), learning how to protect herself (she was bullied because she doesn’t speak the human language). Team Two’s participant added to that, the increase in the heroine’s self-esteem and confidence because in the new country *“she found love and made sure he loved her too.”*

### The method in the eyes of the participants

**1- Myth for fun:** Myth was the heart of this research, so it felt natural to ask the girls to reflect on the role of fantasy, fiction or myth in the process and the product. When team One was asked about whether they felt Myth helped them get their stories through or hold it back, they

said that fantasy made it more “beautiful” even if it was very fictional as they describe it. P2 commented about using fiction to narrate a displacement story and interrupted by P1 echoing the same ideas *“Fiction is better (P1: Fantasy is better) it makes the story fun because, in reality, you can’t say a girl traveled to another country (P1: from the water system) in reality that she moved to a new place and came out from the water system, you feel without fantasy the story is boring”*

**2- Myth for social appropriation:** Team Two felt that their story was more real and close to regular life experience, therefore stepping away from a fantastical scenario like the other team. However even when stepping away from fantasy using a few glimpses of it permitted them to address a topic like disability or terminal disease without upsetting anyone. P1 added *“it helped us, a lot of girls maybe struggle with that (P2: Cancer), and they are disabled. They don’t have to be girls, they are people going through challenges and forced to travel to Canada maybe, and no one can talk about that topic with them, so the same thing like this helps you a bit to give your opinion. I didn’t give my entire opinion about that. I only gave a small part.”*

**1- Animation for expression:** Animation, on the other hand, allowed them to have more control over the movement of characters unlike acting for example, therefore it’s possible to use animation to express oneself and communicate with one another as one of the girls explained with an approachable example

*In my opinion, if a person is upset with something or trying to express her emotions about something, she can .., I’m not joking, she can animate it, for example, let us say she fought with her friend, she can put two friends crying, and each one is going in a different direction, therefore she can express her feelings if she doesn’t want to talk to other people and she’s not going to talk to the wall in the room. She can express with this stuff and have fun and express the feelings that she doesn’t want to tell anyone about.*

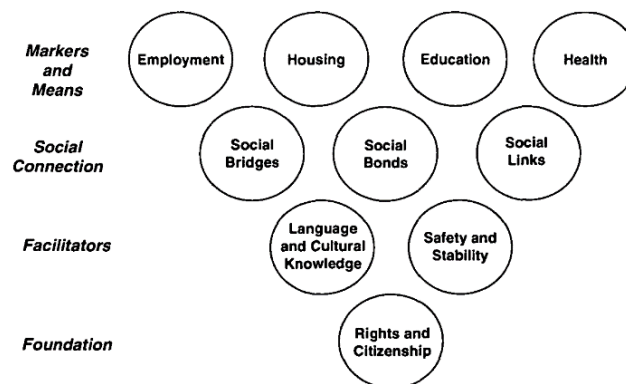
**2- Animation for fun:** As a new experience for the girls, animation proved to be fun and engaging. Adding to that, it becomes self-expression and a fun tool when you are using this app which allows the child to be the maker from the first shot. P1 said it better in her comment

*So, animation isn't easy or hard (P3: it needs brains) It's something fun at the same time because you take a few photos and move the thing and go again and take more shots and so on. And the best part is when you do editing, and you move the people and so on. You feel that it's something fun and that is the thing that attracts you to do videos and things like that.*

**3- Animation for Learning:** Animation is an ongoing learning process. The girls gained various skills some are technical others related to leadership; I already mentioned these skills in detail above. Skills that the girls didn't have before which helps them gain confidence and self-esteem. P1: *"Even when you are learning, I mean even when you are creating you learn things you didn't know before. For example, when I was in the sixth grade or something, I had no idea how you make videos, how you make a video. You animate ..."*

## Discussion

I had previously mentioned that in the discussion I would go back to the conceptual framework that I chose to reflect on the girls' ideas around home and roots through qualitatively analyzing their stories and audio narratives. Ager and Strang's domains are based on diverse data resources including surveys and qualitative fieldwork (P. 169). In 2008, Ager and Strange defined ten-core domains of successful integration. The reverse triangle below is based on rights and citizenship as a foundation and reaching up to employment, housing and health as the markers and means.



I will explain this diagram as intended by its creators and suggest an adaptation in reference to my qualitative work with my child participants as core domains for children

homemaking after forced displacement or core domains in integration. My work here doesn't aim to criticize the authors, however, to offer an alternative that I feel applies to my participants and might apply to other children.

### Core Domains of Homemaking inspired by the 'Wanderer's journey.'

#### Alternative Markers and Means

Ager and Strang start explaining their domains with markers and means as social rights or what they call "public outcomes" required and expected from the second country (P. 170). These domains' extended values are beyond being solely markers, they are also means for achievements, as these four (Employment – Housing – Education – Health) serve to support successful integration founded upon citizenship and rights.

Education was the primary theme that was frequently mentioned in the second story. As we've seen, the main reason for the lead character to forcibly move was bullying and harassment in her old school. When asked if they were projected to something similar in school the girls answered yes. Therefore, it leads up to the assumption that social connections in school in both places; the first and second country could be highlighted of high importance to the children. Negative social connections with others such as bullying and exclusion were linked to the character's mental struggles, sadness and stress, whereas the positive ones (love, interest and inclusion) that she encountered at her new school played a role in her well-being and overall happiness. The girls are between twelve and thirteen years old and being in their teens reflects on the nature of these interactions in the narrative. These relationships were strictly with their male counterparts taking the form of bullies, traitors, friends and love interest. Changing place as the girls later mentioned didn't mean that the negative interactions disappeared, it's just the character found enough support to overlook them and to instead focus on the positive. Ager and Strang linked the children's educational experience with the insufficient support for learning, building social interactions and shared experiences between the children and their counterparts.

Besides education, the girls didn't show interest while filming or recording in any of the other three domains: housing, employment and health. I think it is because of their dependency

on their parents as breadwinners, housing providers and accountable to accompany them to receive health services and access to other social services. So, the Alternative Marks and Means I will propose are depending on the parents and the social system providing the other two means: health and housing through employment would be solely education for this level.

#### Alternative social connections

In the results and analysis before, I noted the importance that social connections played in the children's stories. Therefore, I intend to spend more time explaining the theory behind these connections and the children's view on the topic in relation to their stories. After discussing the markers and means, Ager and Strang continued to consider the second level of their core domains, social connections (check diagram above). Social connection in integration as they classify is divided into three main cores: Social bridges, social bonds and social links. Along with the next level the facilitators, social connections form a link between the first and fourth level. It links means and markers with the foundation (P. 177). These connections are described more of a two-way local interaction than public outcomes. These local interactions move beyond the expectation of a one-way tolerance from others and enter the realm of mutual more active communication with their family, ethnic or religious communities and the hosting community. As they say, structuring these connections.

*Many additionally identified 'belonging' as the ultimate mark of living in an integrated community. This involved links with family, committed friendships and a sense of respect and shared values. Such shared values did not deny diversity, difference and one's identity within a particular group, but provided a wider context within which people had a sense of belonging. (P. 178)*

- Social bonds: Which represents "like-ethnic groups" including family, ethnic, national or religious groups. The authors state that the existence of this form of connections is strongly linked to refugee mental wellbeing.

- Social bridges: Regarding the refugee's relationship with the host communities, Ager and Strang describe it as a core connection to achieve inclusion, harmony and breaking obstacles facing refugee communities with their host. Which reflects in a general feeling of welcoming

and friendliness between the two giving the refugees a chance to create a sense of home in their new space (P. 180).

- Social links: are described as the links with the state like governmental services and individuals, and this type of links requires facilitation from the city's local services to achieve full access (P. 181).

In the girls' stories, we can find the first two types of social connections: bridges and bonds. As an example, for social bonds, in the first story "The lost princess" we can notice these connections in the heroine's interactions with others in the new space. Her first interactions were with the princess store, to which she found herself drawn to enter looking for answers. It could be classified as relationships with her "like-ethnic group." The same thing happens twice more in the story, when the princess found the sage who speaks her language (the animal language) and when she was saved by a previous ally to the villainess, someone "from her own country" as the girls describe it. The second type of connections we can notice in the stories was the social bridges. In the second story "A girl with wings," in her new school, the heroine was able to cope thanks to meaningful connections with her new classmates who she felt she was able to relate to and accept in return for her blending in. She eventually chose to give her wings up, and when I asked the girls about the reasons, they said that the wings caused her a lot of struggles and she found the chance to give them away. I read that choice as the need to assimilate and fit in that age and new conditions. As for the last connections, social links for the same reason I mentioned before with employment, housing and health, in my opinion, the girls don't seem to be interested in addressing the relationship with the state in these two stories because they continuously depend on their parents to provide these links and keep them active and reachable.

### Alternative facilitators

Ager and Strang see these factors as both barriers and facilitators depending on how they are addressed and what action is taking to make sure they are weakened. These two core elements are language and cultural knowledge and safety and stability. We will also rapidly examine the two elements and look at them from the girls' perspective.



- Language and cultural knowledge: language competence is a two-way barrier for both the hosting community and for the individuals. Not being able to speak the community's language can become a challenge for service providers including health and social services. Providing access to translating and interpreting services at an early stage has proven to be crucial to successful integration (P.183). Tackling both language and cultural knowledge should provide the chance to an individual to maintain traditions and to integrate with others in a diverse community to avoid exclusion in the hosting communities.

- Safety and stability: Ager and Strang continue to describe the refugee communities worries of living peacefully and avoiding conflict with other. Additionally, integrating into a community means an individual feels safe enough in that community. Long lasting relationships and having a support system help to promote stability and therefore integration (P. 184).

In the girls' stories, they indicated both the effect of language as a barrier to integration and stability and safety in avoiding estrangement. In the first story, the character didn't feel safe at the beginning in the new city. She couldn't communicate, and that made her feel like an outsider and a stranger to this new environment with no social connections which made her vulnerable to risk, and danger. The girls spoke to me about a part which they had no time to animate where the princess's crown was stolen from her because she put her trust in a stranger with no good intentions. In the second story, language also came up when the girls talked about barriers that their character faced in her new school.

Therefore, we can conclude that both Language and safety were the facilitators that the girls felt were a part of their personal journey.

#### Alternative foundation

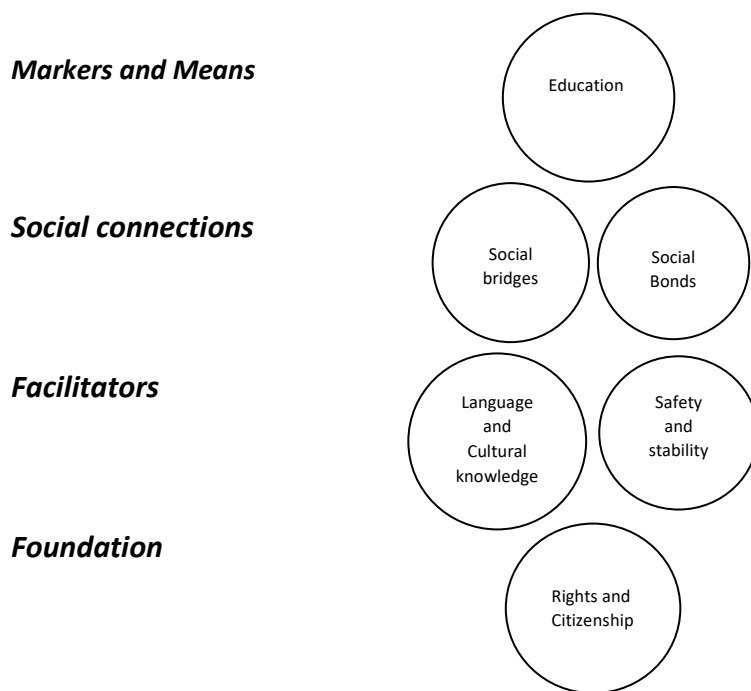
- Citizenship and rights: As the last core domain, Ager and Strang spoke to the topic of citizenship and rights which is the foundation of all three levels that were mentioned above. They argue different readings of the role of citizenship which varies depending on the country and the scholar. In some countries it's birth related, in others it's blood-line related shaping how integration is viewed in that country, their set of values and their sense of identity. These

given rights are the way that refugees in these countries get benefits and necessities to sustain, with the responsibility of partial or full assimilation falling on the individual (P. 176)

The girls didn't specifically mention rights and citizenship in their recordings or the stories, however because of its close ties with the rest of the themes and because other themes that they did mention like education and safety can't function without rights as a foundation, I will keep it in the proposed framework.

### Summary

In this section, I've argued that these six domains mainly represent the children's concept of homemaking in the new country they are living in. After analyzing all the four levels mentioned above, we can reach the following conceptual framework as an adaptation to Ager and Strang's core domains of integration. This diagram is inspired by the topics discussed by the girls in their stories and mentioned in the audio recording.



### A Personal Perspective on A Major Project

This project paper is the accumulated product of two years' work in FES and a developing interest in these three areas of concentration in my plan of study; forced displacement identity, storytelling, and visual participatory research methods. The paper was

constructed as a research paper which aimed to focus on answering my question: *What are the strengths and challenges of using a combination of animation and myth as participatory storytelling methods to help children who experienced forced displacement to narrate their stories of home, belonging and roots?* I discussed the proposed method and the changes that happened to it, I laid down the literature that I used to develop my research and presented my results and addressed them.

Lessons, of course, were learned from having to face many challenges in organizing the workshop. I also learned lessons from spending valuable time with the girls. In the following pages, I will look at the project from a personal perspective as an aspiring researcher and an artist. I will put together some thoughts and ideas about changes that I would do to the project and recommendations to people who want to take this further, what I would keep doing in the future, what I learned from the outcomes and how it matched up to my learning goals.

#### Keeps, Alterations and Recommendations: A step forward

This part of the report might be personal however I will still depend on the children's advice, and I will try to include them here.

#### 1- Alterations:

- **In the method:** when it comes to the method "The Wanderer's Journey" a lot could be done. I explained how I used Campbell's "The Hero's Journey" as a framework to propose another tool, which I found to be useful in working with the girls. However, I would suggest future edits to the method. Presenting the children with a couple of other possible tools to use might give them a wider spectrum to choose from, and using more folktales, education theories and popular stories to sharpen up "The Wanderer's Journey" might present a more precise guide for children to tell and narrate.
- **In the process:** The process was spontaneous at times, and the children were a bit of a handful for one facilitator to handle. I would spend more time trying to think of possible scenarios that might emerge and how to solve them. I would also ask for the help of a volunteer to co-facilitate the workshop and make it a quieter environment for the girls if needed.

- **In planning:** Planning the workshop was hard because of many reasons. Time was the biggest obstacle if more time was available more quality would be seen in the process and the products as the girls also mentioned. I felt that I was always rushed to complete the project because the community partner's space was unavailable most of the days and the girls were occupied with school in the rest. Regarding space, we also faced a few challenges. We changed space three times in the same building, and some rooms weren't art friendly, and I wasn't able to get the internet to show the girls some of the prepared materials there.

## 2- Keeps:

- **In the method:** I think that using animation as the artistic tool was a well-thought idea. The girls showed interest in learning more about it and said that it helped them convey their ideas. As a facilitator and a researcher in the workshop, watching the girls picking up fast on dealing with the application and the shots was really inspiring. They showed progress by the hour. As for using myth in the tool, I also think I would keep it as a part of the tool because it helped me address topics that might be challenging to communicate directly in the general context, like integration and educational barriers.
- **In the process:** The creativity and the eagerness of the girls changed the process at times. It switched the schedule and reorganized priorities. Like I said before more structure would've been helpful for me to achieve my goal easily. However, I think keeping the flexibility of the workshop was necessary to level up the field with the children. So, I would lean towards something that gives the children space in changing some parts of the schedule but keep the structure around the learning objectives and research goals.
- **In planning:** The help of a community partner was priceless. The girls were familiar with the space, and a few staff members so were the parents. Having a well-known community partner made many things easy for me like reaching out and recruiting participants. Being close to the girls' place of residence also made it easier for them to go home after the workshop.

## 3- Recommendations:

- **In the method:** I recommend to educators, art researchers and facilitators pursuing a similar project to spend more time with the framework “The Wanderer’s Journey,” to use it to analyze other stories and adapt it as they see fit their interest and goal. I also recommend continuing using myth and animation to display the children’s experiences. I would also refer them to the children’s recommendation in the results section to guide them to a better methodology.
- **In the process:** I recommend highlighting general ideas to be taught and let the process unfold as the days go. It is very tricky to limit the children’s time in story creation or animation; therefore, additional time should always be counted as a part of the overall schedule. I also would recommend getting a cofacilitator to keep up with the teams as they animate and manage logistics in the extra time.
- **In planning:** As for planning, strong relationships with a community partner and the participants are recommended. A researcher who focuses on participation must always have to maintain the relationships as a goal in sight. However, I would suggest more effort to be spent on planning the ideal time to host the workshop and insisting on hosting it in one place so that it can give a feeling of consistency to the participants.

### Limitations

I want my research to serve as the first building block for future endeavours by artists, researchers and others who are interested in collecting narratives with refugee communities. It holds potential for future development in designing the workshop and adapting the tool to fit the targeted children and for changes depending on the user and the application. I am aware that my sample of participants is not enough to get generalized results and it is very homogeneous (All were young girls, PSR and had lived in Lebanon before Canada). However their experience is still worth further exploration with other refugee children in the Syrian community or other communities.

### Conclusion

Many visual participatory research methods were designed to help refugee children narrate their side of the story about forced displacement. In my research, I focus on adding two

of these methods together and designing a framework of storytelling; these two art forms are animation and myth.

Animation, as we have seen, offered an active visual tool to the participants that facilitated the process of narration and allowed them to speak to a complicated topic like displacement and home. It was as the girls saw it a fun and engaging tool with a lot of skills to learn as the workshop unfolded. Some of these skills were technical; others were more social and artistic. When combined with a mythical storytelling framework to write the stories, the tool becomes indirect and nonpersonal. Therefore, helping the children work together to make the production.

The produced short films themselves hold many hidden meanings. They appear to convey the children's feelings about home and displacement. The discussion demonstrated that children had concerns when they arrived in Toronto about their social connections both in the host communities and in their own. They also experienced estrangement in school and the city and faced challenges with language and cultural knowledge.

Further work and development surrounding this project are encouraged and supported. Ideas for future work might include redesigning the tool using different cultural stories around the theme of departure and home and using a different method than animation perhaps a book or zine design and doing the research with diverse age group or different gender and comparing the results.

The project aimed to empower the girls to present the social, cultural and personal changes they went through in the past two years, how they adapted with these changes and how their new home comes with a set of challenges and barriers that they need to overcome. It helped me as a researcher to understand participation to create action and how to apply a creative method to get an answer to my questions.

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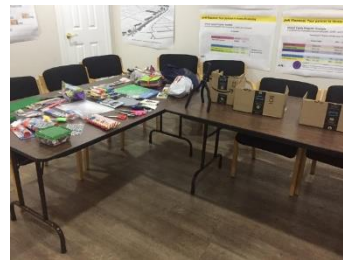
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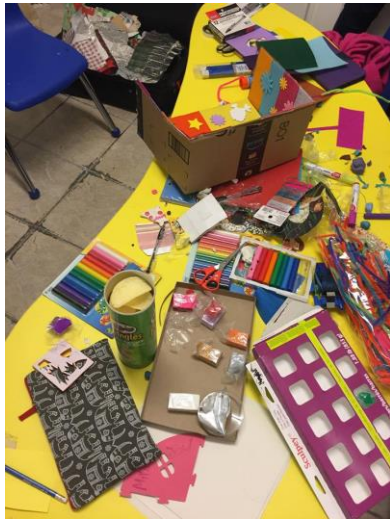
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## Appendix One: Photos

### Day 1: April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018



### Day 2: April 18<sup>th</sup> 2018



### Day 3: April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018



## Appendix Two: Workshop Items

### Items used in the sets:

- Clay
- Lego
- Fabric Sheets
- Reused packaging boxes
- Pencils, Crayons and pens
- Scissors
- Glue
- Colored papers

### Items used for animation:

- iPhone 6
- Tripod

### Application used in production:

- Stop motion studio IOS.

## Appendix Three: Workshop Presentation Material

### 1- Animation:

Stop Motion animation examples:

- Lotte Reiniger: <https://youtu.be/LvU55CUw5Ck?t=210>
- Yuri Norstein: <https://youtu.be/nKDeMBzXnpg?t=125>
- Guldies: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4yG\\_k2Zlw7Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4yG_k2Zlw7Y)
- Western Spaghetti: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBjLW5\\_dGAM&t=42s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBjLW5_dGAM&t=42s)

Proposed Techniques:

1- 2D Stop motion media: (ex: cut-out animation.)

2- 3D stop motion media: (ex: Lego animation- Clay figure animation)

Introduce Application: Stop Motion Studio

Explain Staging, film shots and the concepts of frames.

### 2- Character design:

Examples about different types of character design (2D – 3D)

### 3- Story and Storyboarding:

Examples about migration stories from non-dominate cultures (Syrian)

Introduce Pixar's story spine.

Introduce the Wanderer's Journey.

## Appendix Four: The Animated Short Films

- 1- **The Lost Princess: (1:44 sec) Marlin, Jniver, Lea**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ub5v5BaA12k>

- 2- **A girl with wings: (1:00 sec) Mirilla, Jowil**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tH887IGiR3U>