

# Film Analysis: “The Swimmers” and the Refugee Journey Activity #3

## Teacher Instructions

### 1. Overview & Learning Objectives

**Media:** The Swimmers (2022) - Available on Netflix.

**Estimated Time:** 120 minutes (pre-screening preparation, plus 60-90 minutes of dedicated discussion time).

**Context:** This activity uses the true story of Yusra and Sara Mardini, two Syrian sisters who fled the war in 2015 and used their swimming skills to save fellow refugees, to explore the complexities of forced migration, policy barriers, and the application of social migration theories.

**Learning Objectives (LOs):** Upon completion, students will be able to:

- Analyze the emotional, physical, and legal challenges faced by refugees.
- Critically evaluate the role and nature of migration intermediaries (smugglers, NGOs, etc.).
- Apply Network Theory to understand how family and community ties facilitate and complicate the migration journey.
- Assess the portrayal of Europe as a destination for asylum seekers.

### 2. Materials and Preparation

- **Required Resources:** Access to the film *The Swimmers* (2 hours, 14 minutes).
- **Pre-work:** Students must watch the film prior to the seminar discussion (in-class or at home) and take notes guided by the questions.
- **Setup:** Divide the students into discussion groups (4-5 students) to structure the conversation before bringing the class back together for a whole-group discussion.

### 3. Activity Flow and Discussion Guidance

Stage	Time	Teacher Role / Instructions
<b>A. Introduction</b>	5 min	Briefly introduce the historical context of the 2015 European refugee crisis and the film's subject. Emphasize sensitive viewing.
<b>B. Small Group Discussion</b>	30 min	Groups discuss questions 1 and 2 (personal reaction, general challenges) to ground the conversation in the film's emotional reality.
<b>C. Structured Analysis</b>	30 min	Guide groups through questions 3, 4, 5, and 6, focusing on theoretical application and critical analysis of policy/representation.
<b>D. Whole Class Debrief</b>	45-55 min	Bring the class together. Use specific scenes to prompt deeper discussion, particularly around the ambiguity of intermediaries (Q3) and the role of social ties (Q5 & Q6).

### 4. Assessment / Key Discussion Points

- **Migration Intermediaries (Q3):** Discuss the difference between smugglers and traffickers. Are the intermediaries in the film purely criminal, or are they filling a gap left by restrictive policy?
- **Network Theory (Q5):** How did the existence of a destination contact (relative/friend) affect the sisters' decision to move, their route, or their chances of success? Discuss the concept of **social capital** in migration.
- **European Representation (Q4):** Discuss the contrast between the *idealized* Europe (safe haven, opportunity) and the *reality* shown (fences, bureaucratic complexity, xenophobia).

# Film Analysis of *The Swimmers* Activity #3

## Student Materials

**Preparation:** You must watch the film *The Swimmers* (2022) before the seminar discussion. Take detailed notes while watching to prepare for the questions below.

### Discussion Questions

- 1. Personal Response and Surprises:** What were your feelings while watching the movie? Is there anything in the movie that surprised you regarding the experiences of the refugees? If so, what exactly, and why?
- 2. The Refugee Journey: Challenges and Struggles** In what ways does the movie highlight the **challenges and struggles** faced by refugees, both **during their journey** (physical safety, logistics, decision-making) and in their attempts to **rebuild their lives** in new countries (legal status, integration, identity)?
- 3. Migration Intermediaries:** Discuss the role of **migration intermediaries** (such as the smugglers or agents) in the movie. How are they presented? Are they depicted as solely helpful, solely exploitative, or does the film present a more complex or ambiguous view of their function in the migration process?
- 4. The Representation of Europe:** How is Europe (and European countries like Germany or the countries along the route) represented in the movie? Discuss both the **pull factors** (the hope for safety and opportunity) and the **pushbacks** (the borders, the reception conditions, and the political atmosphere).

**5. Network Theory Application:** How can the Mardini sisters' story be interpreted from the perspective of the **migration network theory**? Identify specific moments where family connections, friends, or contacts (social capital) influenced their journey, survival, or settlement.

**6. Comparative Experiences:** How does the story and outcome of the Mardini sisters (Yusra and Sara) differ from their cousin Nizar's experience and perspective? What factors (e.g.: social ties, personal skills, opportunity, gender, or motivation) might explain these differences?



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