

Yusra Mardini: From swimming the Aegean Sea to Rio Olympics



You are going to hear the story of Yusra, a young Syrian swimmer who fled her country to escape war. How much do you know about the Syrian war? Do some research and answer the questions.

- * Where is Syria?
- * What is Syria's capital city?
- * When did the war start?
- * How did it start?
- * How is that movement called?

Preparation

1 Reorder the paragraphs.

Since then, Yusra has addressed the United Nations General Assembly and met world leaders such as US President Barack Obama and Pope Francis. She has been presented with a number of prestigious awards and has been recognized for her work by Time and People magazines.

Yusra now lives in Berlin, Germany and is concentrating on her professional swimming career. She aims to compete at the next Olympic Games in Tokyo in 2020. Yusra is a Goodwill Ambassador for UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and works to alter global perceptions of refugees. Her message of hope, determination and courage reminds us that those who flee their countries are capable of achieving great things.

Fifteen minutes into the sea crossing, there was a problem with the boat. As a professional swimmer, Yusra was determined not to let any of her fellow passengers drown. Yusra, her sister and two others jumped into the waves and swam for three and a half hours in open water to stop their dinghy capsizing, saving the lives of 20 people.

A year later, Yusra's courage, determination and strong swimming skills were recognized by the International Olympic Committee and became a member of the first ever Refugee Olympic Team. Yusra competed at the Olympic Games in Rio in 2016, helping to represent 65 million displaced people worldwide.

Yusra and her elder sister fled the Syrian war and set off on a perilous journey to find safety in Europe. In summer 2015, they travelled through Lebanon to Turkey before departing for Greece in an overcrowded dinghy.

2 Find words or phrases which mean the following. Write the words exactly as they are in the text.

- A. With too many people
- B. Small open boat
- C. To die under water
- D. To turn upside down by accident while on water
- E. Forced to leave their homes due to a war
- F. To change

Watch



Check your understanding

Choose the best option.

- * Yusra loves swimming because...
 - a) it helps her get fit.
 - b) it helps her forget about her problems.
 - c) she wants to become an Olympic swimmer.
- * Back in her hometown there were some days when she couldn't train because...
 - a) the water was too warm.
 - b) there were bombings.
 - c) all of the above.
- * What was the problem with the boat?
 - a) the engine stopped working.
 - b) there were too many people on the boat.
 - c) the boat sank.

- ✦ Although they were scared, Yusra and her sister jumped into the water because...
 - a) they both love swimming.
 - b) it was their only chance to survive.
 - c) they wanted to come back to Syria.
- ✦ Who found Yusra a swimming club?
 - a) a trainer.
 - b) the German Government.
 - c) a translator.
- ✦ According to the coach, Yusra is an inspiration because...
 - a) of her story.
 - b) of her determination.
 - c) she is in the first Refugee Olympic Team.
- ✦ What was one of obstacles she found in Germany?
 - a) the language.
 - b) people weren't very friendly.
 - c) she didn't have any problems.
- ✦ What does Yusra say about her new life?
 - a) it's great but she misses her family.
 - b) it was better back in her home country.
 - c) it's amazing but she misses her country.
- ✦ She encourages people to...
 - a) stop when they are in pain and move on when they feel better.
 - b) face their problems and fight for what they want.
 - c) move on and work on everything because life will wait until they are ready.