

# Refugees of yesterday and today

**WEMDING**

**ROME**

**LIEPAJA**

**ERASMUS PLUS**

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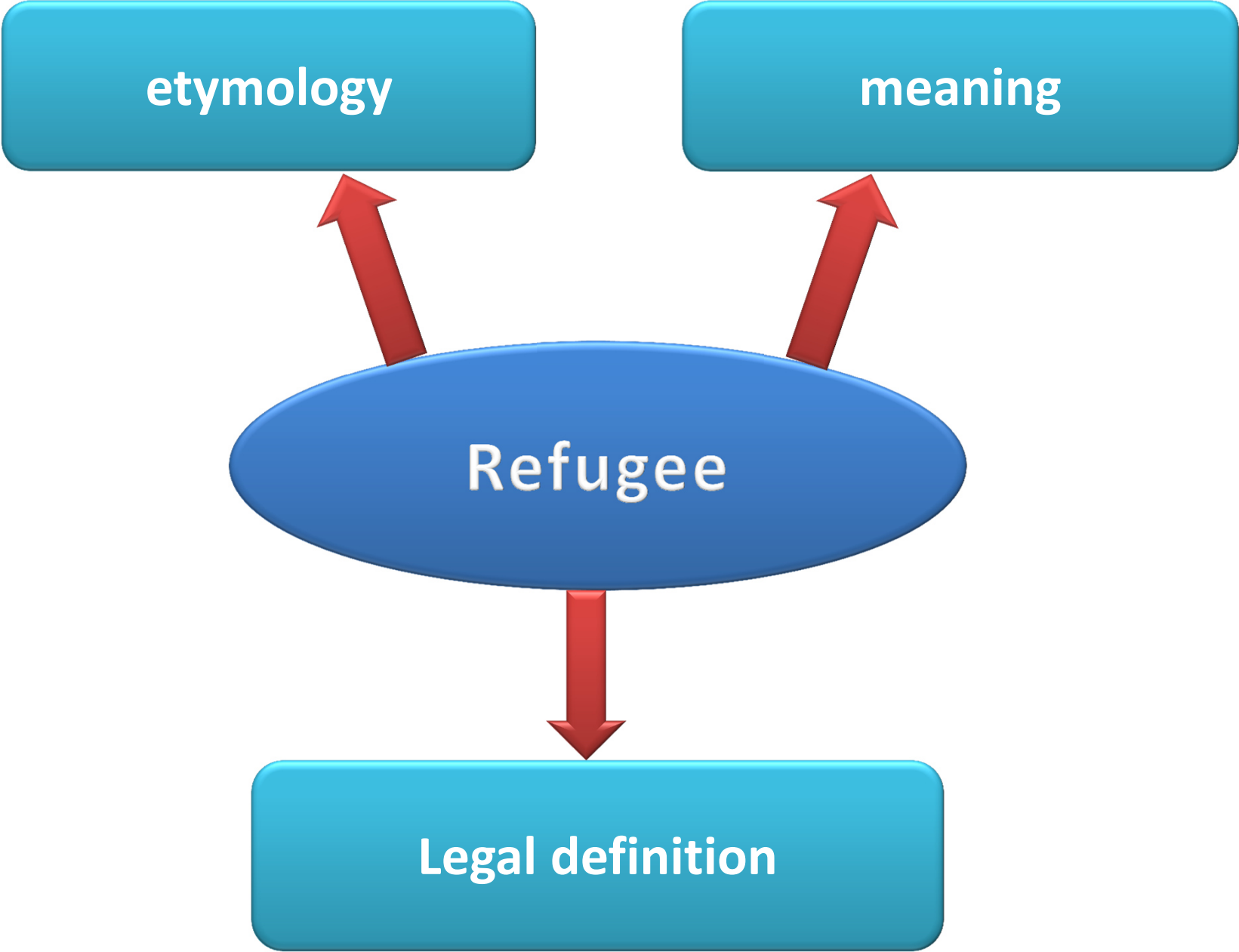
**2016-2018**

REFUGEES  
YESTERDAY

**School year  
2016/2017**

# THE PROJECT STEP BY STEP

- Refugee- meaning
- Refugees VS Migrants
- Exiled and interned people in Italy's past
- The Italians : a people of migrants
- 1900s : the horrors of the wars (Istrian exodus, Racial Laws, Holocaust and Shoa )
- A testimony
- Our feelings about the atrocities against people (thoughts, poems, drawings...)
- Learning from the past to avoid repeating the same mistakes and to overcome clichés and preconceptions
- Righteous among the nations
- An interview
- The stumbling stones



# ETYMOLOGY

In English, the term refugee derives from the root word refuge,

-in old French *refuge* meant “hiding place” and it refers to shelter or protection from danger or distress.

-in Latin *fugere* means “to flee” and *refugium* means a place where to take refuge.

# MEANING

A refugee is a person who has fled from some danger or problem especially political persecution.

We can also say that a refugee is a displaced person who has been forced to cross national boundaries and cannot return home safely.

The lead international agency coordinating refugee protection is the United Nations Office of the **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**.

A refugee may be called asylum seeker until granted refugee status by the contracting state or the UNHCR if they formally make a claim for asylum.



# LEGAL DEFINITION

This is the definition of *refugee* adopted by the UN1951 Refugee Convention:

“Owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”





# IF I WERE IN YOUR SHOES..

FEELINGS

THOUGHTS

EMOTIONS



LOOKING AT /REMEMBERING THE PAST SO AS  
NOT TO FORGET WHAT HAPPENED

**HOME**

**MISSING MY HOME**

**LOSING MY HOME**

**LEAVING MY HOME**

**LOSS**

**FRIENDS**

**RELATIVES**

**HOME**

**COUNTRY**

**DAILY LIFE**

# REFLECTION ON IMMIGRATES AND REFUGEES

They, too, like the Jews, are forced to flee from their country,

To abandon their homes, seeking for a better life.

But, coming here, they find only people who consider them strangers,

They are not integrated into the community but avoided because they are considered "different".

They, too, like butterflies repelled by the wind.



# My grandfather's testimony

My name is Yael and I am in my second year of middle school at the Regina Margherita Institute, the same school that my grandfather attended 79 years ago.

I feel it is important to tell the story of my grandfather, Giuseppe Sonnino, because I think it may be useful so as not to forget what happened and I hope that it will help everyone understand that not fighting against what we believe to be an injustice can have serious consequences.

I can still hear my grandfather telling me the story of his life...

“I was born in Rome on the 3rd of February 1929. I attended a private school in the Jewish quarter called “Venziani Elementary School” in via Sant’Ambrogio in the Sant’Angelo Rione (the old Ghetto) which then became a branch of the Regina Margherita school, although it no longer exists. The following annotation can be found in the old documents in the school archives: *Giuseppe Sonnino enrolled in the 1939-1940 school year, not attending*. This is the only reference to an official act of the drama of the racial laws.

When the racial laws were passed in September 1938, we were all ready to go back to school, and fool around and have fun with our friends during the lessons, but we understood right from the first days of school that something had happened. The way in which some parents looked at us and the fact that they no longer invited us to “their” parties so often... we soon learned that there was a **they** and an **us**. They told us that we could no longer frequent our classmates because we were DIFFERENT.

I was very young and didn't quite grasp yet why my parents continued to speak to each other with such worried looks on their faces.

We could attend lessons but at separate times, they in the morning, we in the afternoon, almost stealthily, like rats.

Soon after, we were expelled from the school along with our Hebrew religion teachers, and the Hebrew school, which still exists in the former Ghetto, was created.

None of my old friends asked for me or came to look for me; it became clearer still that I was different.

The Hebrew school wasn't bad; I had a lot of new friends who shared my fate.

Everything changed after 16 October 1945. My family was decimated: my father, two of my brothers and a sister were deported. My father was killed at Auschwitz as soon as he got off the train. Only my two brothers came back alive with an indelible mark on their body and soul. I decided then to start a new life in another country, with new hope in my heart. Like me, others, like Emilio Segrè ( Nobel prize in Physics) and Franco Modigliano (Nobel Prize for Economics), did the same.

In 1945 I emigrated to Israel. I was only 16 years old and there I was adopted by a family who lived in a kibbutz. They told me that not far from where I lived there was another family of Italian immigrants and it was there that I met my wife, Renata Pace. We lived in Israel for 25 years, but we missed Italy a lot and so we returned to Rome where my daughters were raised and our five grandchildren were born.

Letting our daughters send our grandchildren to the same school meant trying to leave the bad things behind and choosing to move on with our life".

My family and I are forced to leave our country because there is a war and unfortunately it lasts since a lot of time, too much for us.

Now we are in a lorry, it's cold and dirty. I have no air to breathe because the place is overcrowded, my legs start to feel numb from the way I am sitting. My family and I have travelled for two days and we are tired. I'm hungry. We have neither food nor water for the journey, just a piece of bread and a bottle of water for all my family that is composed by eight people. I fear for my life but I know I need an uncommon courage and perseverance to keep me moving forward. I want to reach a better life.

In my suitcase, packed in a great hurry, I put just few things: a pair of trousers, a T-shirt , my favorite book and my diary. During the flight I lost my most valuable possession, my charm, the only thing I had to remind me of my granny.

We are directed to the west where we hope we will find help and hospitality, but we aren't sure we will really find them...





May the 5th

Just terrible. I'm in a cold and old carriage of a train, it stinks I think that I'll stay here until I arrive somewhere.

I still have those horrible memories of gunshots and people crying the day that I left my country.

I've got only my little bag; when that guy knocked on my door, I was so nervous that inside I put just some water, this piece of paper where I am writing, a pencil and a little picture of my mum.

I forgot at home something to eat, but not only that. I terribly forgot at home my puppet, Lily, the only thing that makes me sleep. Without Lily I can't sleep.

It's a present. My grandma gave it to me in the moment that I was born, from then, I never left that puppet.

I still bring my mum in my heart. Just like my dad. He is in a war now. Maybe. Maybe he is dead. Maybe he is returning to my town, hoping that there it's all right and hoping that he will find me. But he will not. He will not find me and I will not find him.

Without my parents, I'm alone.

Sad and alone.

I often cry.

I ask myself why I was born.

...

I don't know what I'm doing. I don't know where I'm going.

I know nothing. And I can't be happy. Because everything that I had is gone. Even hope.

It was terrible.  
Before I was happy and then I felt empty. I was scared, confused.  
All happened in a short time...I was in my garden when three armed men approached me and started accusing me of things that were false, such as stealing and killing. I continued to defend myself, saying that a person like me would never have broken the law. Then I realized that they wanted to arrest me because I was "inconvenient" for their community, so I ran inside the house, I took my suitcase, I put a few things inside and went out rushing, as if after there had not been a future.



We escaped from the war, and one year ago we arrived here. My dad died during the war.

I was in my bed, when someone knocked the door. I was nervous. My mum opened the door, the policeman was in front of her. He said to us that we had to follow him. Mum was crying. He said that we had five minutes to go out with him. I took one suitcase and I put in it a pair of shoes, two old t-shirts, two pairs of trousers, my secret diary, my favorite doll and a picture of my dad. Then, the police man grabbed us by our T-shirts and he pushed us out.

In the car, I slept all time. When I woke up, I found myself lying on the ground, gasping for breath, there was a big stink.

My suitcase was open. The picture of my dad was under my arm. It was ripped. I cried and cried. That picture was the only thing I had to remind me of him... I was alone and sad.

