

# HALIMA MOHAMED

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**Class grouping:**

whole class and pairs/small groups

**Time:**

60–90 minutes

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this activity is to introduce students to the context of Halima Mohamed's work prior to visiting the *Her Place* exhibition. Specifically, students will contemplate their existing knowledge about Somalia, including its history, geography, culture, and the role of women in Somalia. The class will also complete a short introductory activity based on Halima herself. The first activity in this resource works best if you are able to begin the class without disclosing the country that students will be investigating. This allows for a more meaningful reflection when undertaking the visual analysis activity. If doing that is impractical, you will need to adapt some of the questions for the task accordingly.

**Activities:**

**1. Visual analysis and group discussion**

**2. Mini-history/history jigsaw**

**3. Quick questions: Halima Mohamed**

**Preparation and Materials:**

Print a colour copy of the photographs attached to this lesson (remove captions if desired). You will need enough copies so that each group of students in your class has an image to study. Double up as required.

## Procedure:

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### Activity 1

1. Organise students into groups of 4-5. Ask each group of students to nominate a note taker and a member to report back to the class. Distribute one photograph of Somalia to each group of students and ask them to consider the following questions:

- What do you see in this image? Carefully describe the photograph.
- What sorts of things can you infer from the image?  
For example:
- Where do you think it might have been taken? Which country?  
What location in that country?
- Who do you think might be depicted?
- What do you think the person/people in the image are doing?
- What might the facial expressions and dress of the person/people depicted tell us?

2. Allow each group some time to feed their thoughts back to the class. Once this has occurred, reveal to students the details of each of the photographs. Discuss as a group.

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### Activity 2

1. Allow students to choose a partner or allocate students to pairs. Allocate two of the questions/topics below to each pair. The questions have been designed with a range of abilities in mind.

Ask students to research the questions and to present the information they find to the class. Depending on the year level and time available, this presentation could involve the design of a poster, delivering a short presentation, creating a power point, making a short film, sharing information on a class page, or simply feeding the information back to the class verbally. Each piece of information fed back will provide part of a 'jigsaw' of information about Somalia.

Questions:

- Where is Somalia located and with which countries does it share its borders?
- What is the approximate population of Somalia and what is its primary religion?
- What sorts of dishes form part of the Somalian cuisine?
- What is the geography of Somalia like?
- Which countries were involved in the colonisation of Somalia and when did it declare independence?
- What key event occurred in Somalia in 1991 and what have been the consequences?
- Why did Somali people flee their country and which country did most initially flee to?
- What are the causes and aggravating factors of the famine in Somalia?
- Who are the Somali Bantu and what is their status in Somalia?
- How many Somalian refugees has Australia accepted?
- Who are Al Shabaab and what are they responsible for in terms of aid for Somalia?
- What are some of the major clans in Somalia? Provide some details about each one.
- What role do women play in Somalian society?
- What important rights did the 1975 Somali Family Law Act give to women?
- Read 'The women of Somalia are living in hell' by Maryan Qasim and summarise her key points.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/jun/17/women-somalia-hell-worst-world>

## Halima Mohamed

Halima Mohamed is a Somali woman and a leader in her community. She has established an organisation called the Skilling Employment and Aid Enterprises Australia (SEAS), which recruits and trains women from different clans from Somali background with the intention of promoting unity within the community. Other initiatives that Halima has established include a program for women to gather in Footscray to learn sewing and develop skills that will enable them to pursue employment by establishing small businesses. In addition, Halima has organised English classes for the women. In addition to the work that she does here in Australia, Halima also has formed partnerships with Rotary and various community organisations in order to organise shipments of containers back to Somalia that contain medical supplies and equipment.

1. What sorts of activities does Halima undertake with her community?
2. What sort of training do you think SEAS might provide to the women in Halima's community? Why?
3. How would English classes benefit the women Halima and her organisation work with?
4. How does Halima's work benefit women who are still living in Somalia?



**Figure 1.** *Camps for displaced people have sprouted all across the crumbling, bullet-riddled ruins of Mogadishu, but there is not enough help to meet the huge demand for food and medical care.*



**Figure 2.** *Every day more than a thousand people materialise out of the thin desert air to take their places at the gates of the world's largest refugee camp in Dadaab, Kenya. They are fleeing one of the worst droughts in Somalia in 60 years and many have walked for weeks through an anarchic landscape replete with bandits and militants but little food.*



**Figure 3.** *The magnitude of the suffering could shift the political landscape here, which has been dominated by chaos since 1991 when clan warlords overthrew the central government, then tore apart the country.*



**Figure 4.** *Somalia seems to be perpetually on the brink. With a shattered economy, no functioning central government and aid flows blocked, countless Somalis starve every year. According to a famine monitoring program financed by the United States, “over the past year, the eastern Horn of Africa has experienced consecutive poor rainy seasons, resulting in one of the driest years since 1950-1951 in many pastoral zones.”*



**Figure 5.** Millions of famished Somalis have two bleak choices: they can beg for help from a weak, corrupt and divided transitional government, or remain in areas controlled by the Shabaab, the ruthless, Al Qaeda-linked group that rules much of southern Somalia and has banned most Western aid organizations, even in a time of famine.



**Figure 6.** New arrivals in Mogadishu. Of all the places in the Horn of Africa that have been struck this summer by one of the worst droughts in 60 years, the only areas the United Nations has declared a famine by scientific criteria of death rates and malnutrition rates are two Shabaab-controlled swathes of southern Somalia.



**Figure 7.** *The United Nations has started airlifting food and medicine and working with partners in the region, and donors are increasing their philanthropy. But the southern part of Somalia has been mostly a no-go zone for years, and it is a race against time.*



**Figure 8.** *Women wait for rations during food distribution.*

