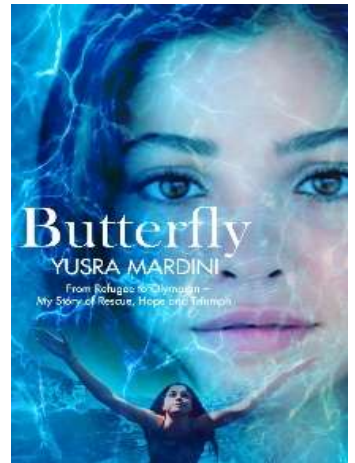


Interview with Yusra Mardini

Yusra Mardini is an Olympic Athlete and Syrian Refugee. In 2016 she competed at Rio as part of the first Olympic Refugee Team. In 2017 she was appointed a UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador. Her book 'Butterfly' was first published in 2018 and tells the story of her and her family's incredible journey from Syria to Berlin



R: What was it like training in swimming competitively from a young age?

Y: It was hard sometimes because I never had time to do what normal kids do, I was so busy studying and training all the time but I'm glad I did swimming and it made me learn lots of valuable things about life and goals.

R: In your book you describe how at one point you decided to stop swimming – what made you come back to it?

Y: I came back to swimming because I saw the Syrian team win a bronze medal in relay in the world cup and I started crying because I realised that could've been me and that my dream is really being a good swimmer and reaching the Olympic Games.

R: Your story of your journey from Syria to Berlin is incredible – what was it like for you and your sister Sara having to swim the open sea to keep the boat afloat?

D: It was hard, we were afraid and we thought it would be a shame to die here and let people die if we are swimmers, it was a hard experience because we were only teenagers but I'm glad we made it.

R: How did it feel when you found out you were going to Rio 2016?

Y: I didn't believe it I started jumping and crying and I was very happy because I knew how hard I worked for my dream and it is finally a reality!

R: What did being in the Olympic Refugee Team mean to you?

Y: It meant a lot to me, it made me understand that being a refugee isn't a bad thing and that what the team went through a lot and they anyway continued to dream and work hard for their goals and in the end we represented the first ever refugee Olympic team and the hope of it.

R: Do you think it's important for young people to get involved in sport and fitness?

Y: Yes for sure, sport is very important because it teaches kids and young people how to work hard for their dreams and how to try over and over again, it teaches them how to be a team and of course it is good for their health.

R: What would you say to young people who are nervous to get involved in sport/fitness?

Y: I say don't be afraid before even trying, go try out a sport and if you don't like it go dancing! Just don't stop trying till you find a passion, something that makes you happy in life.

