Little Amal is a puppet of a 10-year old Syrian girl refugee. She was created by the Handspring Puppet Company\(^1\) of Cape Town, South Africa and the Good Chance Production company and has been on tour across Europe. She is now in New York.

Amal began her trip, *The Walk*, in July 2021. She has walked approximately 9,000 km and has visited Turkey, Greece, Italy, France, Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, the United Kingdom, and now New York. She is controlled by 3 or 4 puppeteers and meets, dances, reacts to and hugs people along her way. Just like any refugee from anywhere, she is surrounded by new sites and people. She shows emotions with her body movements. People can clearly see and feel her insecurity, fear, joy, confusion and tenderness.

The intent of her creators is to show a more balanced view of what it is like to be a refugee. Amal has lost her mother and is searching for her while she travels the world and looks for a new place to live.

A huge percent of the refugees that have left their homes are children. So, Amal represents one of many immigrants.

1. What percent of refugees throughout the world do you think may be children?

Handling a giant puppet and making her respond to her environment in an empathetic manner is not an easy task. The puppeteers have to be talented and act as one-mind to make Amal’s visits powerful. Each puppeteer can only perform for one hour because of the strength and energy that is required to do the performance. There are 3 sets of Amal puppets and 12 puppeteers in total.

2. What questions do you have about how she is made, how she is operated, or what her mission is?
3. Why do you suppose Amal is described as a refugee and not an immigrant? What are the connotation of those two words to you.

Amal is made of light-weight materials. She has to be light enough for her puppeteers to handle and animate her with feeling, rhythm and realistic reactions.

Her two major construction materials are molded cane (hollow reeds like bamboo) and carbon fiber.

We didn’t know what a carbon fiber was. Evidently it’s a very thin fiber made up of carbon atoms. Below is a picture of a carbon fiber compared to a human hair. The carbon fiber runs from the bottom left to the top right.

4. How many times thicker does the human hair appear to be than the carbon fiber?

The carbon fiber’s diameter is measured in microns (μm). A micron is one-one thousandths (1/1,000) of a millimeter.

5. In the picture the carbon fiber has a diameter of 6 microns. By comparing that carbon fiber to the human hair, what would you approximate is the diameter of the human hair?

6. How much do you guess that Amal could weigh?

The puppeteer inside of her is walking on stilts. Amal is 11 feet tall and we can see that the puppeteers head reaches to the middle of her chest.

7. Use the pictures that we’ve found of her stilts and total body to calculate how high her/his stilts are raising the puppeteer off the ground?

Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

1She was built by the Handspring Puppet Company and designed by the team of puppeteers and the founders Adrian Kohler and Basil Jones

Sources: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little_Amal

Brought to you by YummyMath.com