



Helping Refugees

Grade Level: High School (9-12)

Concept Areas: Social Studies, Government/Civics

Included:

Opening Activity: How does it feel?
Student Handout on Video: Working with Refugees
Symposium on UNHCR

HANDOUTS

Opening Activity – How Does it Feel?

Directions: Work with your group members on the following activity.

1. Look carefully at the poster entitled “How does it Feel?” Check out the crowd of Lego people closely. Look at their expressions, dress, and position.
2. List 5 details about the crowd you see in the poster.
3. Brainstorm with your group a list of the benefits you enjoy by having a home, family and friends. On a scale of 1 to 10 to rate how important these things are to your lives.
4. Now observe the person alone in the lower left-hand portion of the poster. Discuss what you see and what you think has happened to this person.
5. The lone Lego person represents a refugee. Now, place yourself in the position of this person and realize the things you listed about home, family and friends are suddenly gone. Without warning, in a matter of a few hours, your entire world and everything you know, your home, bedroom, possessions...friends...all are suddenly gone. Neighbors you’ve known for years are now under suspicion either of being enemies of the state or someone who might betray you for some special treatment by those now in charge. Tanks and soldiers prowl the streets of your neighborhood, looking for any pockets of resistance. Damage and destruction are everywhere. You arrive home to find no one. You’re not sure if your family members have been killed or taken away, but you fear the worst.
6. At this point you might consider participating in an online simulation presented on the UNHCR website entitled “Against All Odds” to give you a sense of the experience of becoming a refugee. Play the following chapters in this order:
 - a. From War and Conflict: # 2 “Running from Persecution”
 - b. From Border Country # 1 “Shelter for the Night”
 - c. From War and Conflict # 4 “Flee the Country”
7. Now consider your fate as a refugee. You have fled across the border into a neighboring country and have found yourself in a refugee camp. But now you are alone. Very alone. You don’t speak the language of the people in charge of the refugee camp and you don’t know anyone from your country in the camp. You can barely communicate with a translator. You have no money, nor job, nor any way to live on your own.

Write a brief passage about this experience. This could be in a letter to a friend or family member or diary entry. State how you feel right now. What are your fears and hopes? What do you think you can do to survive in the refugee camp and beyond? What are your immediate needs over the next few hours? What do you want over the next 5 to 10 days, or sometimes years, until you can either return to their country or be relocated to somewhere safe?

Student Handout on Video “Working with Refugees”

Directions: While viewing the video, take notes and discuss the following questions.

Part 1: What is the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)?

1. What is the responsibility of UNHCR?

2. When did the United Nations first set up the refugee agency? Why did this task not remain a short-term operation as originally intended?

3. Review the definition of refugee below.

“Someone who has been forced to flee their country and is unable or unwilling to return because of a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership of particular social group or political opinion.” – 1951 Refugee Convention.

Explain this definition in your own words:

4. Why are refugees vulnerable?

Part 2: What is Refugee Protection?

5. What kinds of protection and assistance does UNHCR provide to refugees, in addition to a safe haven and ensuring refugees are not forcibly returned to a country where they could be persecuted? _____

6. Why is it important for UNHCR to be on the ground at the point where people first become refugees?

7. Why is it important that refugees continue their education, learn new skills, or even start a new business until they can go back to their home?

8. Life in a refugee camp can only be a temporary solution. UNHCR tries to find “durable solutions” for refugees to take their first steps towards a normal life. There are three main durable solutions: repatriation, local integration, and resettlement. Answer the following questions regarding these three solutions:

a. Why do most refugees prefer to return to their home countries? Why is it so important? _____

b. How does local integration work?

c. What type of refugee qualifies for resettlement?

Part 3: Exodus and Emergency

9. How important are the first UNHCR staff who arrive to help refugees during an emergency? What do they try to do when they first arrive?

10. No two refugee crises are the same. Each presents its own set of challenges. Review the three examples of refugee situations from the video and comment on the problems faced.

Location	Problems faced
Refugees returning to Afghanistan to a destroyed country in 2002.	
In Guinea, UNHCR personnel move thousands of Sierra Leone refugees out of the cross-fire of the conflict in 2001.	
In Kosovo, there was a mass exit of thousands of weary and traumatized refugees and then weeks later a mass return home.	
The crisis in Rwanda when millions fled the country.	

Part 4: Refugee Women and Children

11. On the T-chart below, brainstorm a list of the basic necessities women and children go without when they are refugees and the added responsibilities women take on as refugees.

Loss of Basic Necessities Refugee	Added Responsibilities as a

12. List three reasons why it is important that refugee children spend time in school?

- a. _____

- b. _____

c. _____

13. What kind of assistance does UNHCR provide to women and children to keep them safe and help them become self-sufficient?	
Explain why these services are important.	

Symposium on UNHCR

Overview: This guide is to help you develop a comprehensive presentation (either for the “virtual symposium” or as a “live’ presentation) on UNHCR activities. You will want to plan your site carefully and research thoroughly to provide useful and accurate information. You might want to divide the work up among members of the group to better utilize your time for both the research phase and the “virtual symposium” or “live” presentation phase of your project.

Directions: In your groups, use the following guide to research your topic area. Present your information in creative ways incorporating maps, charts, and graphs, pictures, political cartoons, and video where appropriate. Use the appropriate resources listed below to help you with your research. Below this section are guides on presenting the “virtual” or the “live” symposium.

TOPIC 1: What is UNHCR?

- History of UNHCR
- UNHCR’s mandate
- Geographic areas where UNHCR works or has worked in the past

TOPIC 2: How do people become refugees?

- Overview of the Universal Declarations of Human Rights, and special focus on Article 14 of the UDHR.
- The definition of a refugee and its differentiation with internally displaced persons and asylum seekers
- Becoming a refugee
 - Initial loss of basic human rights
 - Avoid being captured
 - Fleeing the country
 - Life in a refugee camp

TOPIC 3: UNHCR’s Mandate

- Refugee Protection: physical safety and legal protection
- Meeting immediate needs once safe in a refugee camp
- Durable Solutions (repatriation, local integration, resettlement)

TOPIC 4: Emergency situations where UNHCR is currently operating (Sudan, Iraq, Afghanistan , Pakistan, Somalia, Colombia and Democratic Republic of the Congo)

- The estimated number of refugees and internally displaced persons in these countries
- Reasons refugee situations exist in each country
- Services offered for refugees in each country

TOPIC 5: Women and Children

- Status of women and children as refugees

- How UNHCR helps children
- UNHCR assistance programs for women
- Success stories: Women and children who have improved their lives

Virtual Symposium Development Tasks

Things to remember when constructing your Website:

- Place information on the Webpages.
- Title - make the title attractive and eye-catching.
- Make your main points in bullets. Explanations can go below these.
- Keep page scrolling to a minimum. Linking to new pages is preferable
- Page layout - Determine what information you want on your site and how best to arrange it so that all easily seen. You might want arrange information in columns or sections.
- Colors—select colors that are eye-catching and attract people to your site, but not distracting.
- Navigation—have any additional pages link back to your homepage also include necessary navigation buttons at the top, bottom, and/or side columns to help viewers navigate around your site.

Real Symposium Development Tasks

Things to remember when constructing your presentation:

- Place information on large poster board
- Title – make the title attractive and eye-catching
- Make your main points in bullets. You will explain the details in your presentation.
- Incorporate maps where appropriate and provide captions that explain their relevance to your presentation. You can refer to these captions as you introduce the maps.
- Poster layout – Remember, white space is an asset. Avoid crowding information on the poster. Use more than one piece of poster board if necessary. Use large font that can be seen easily.
- Colors—select colors that are eye-catching and attract people to your poster, but not distracting.
- Speak clearly and project your voice. Make eye-contact with the entire audience. Frequently refer to information on your poster board as you present.