



Lesson 4: The Plight of Refugees



This lesson continues discussion of refugees by focusing on those who flee their homes and/or their countries. Students use the experiences of the letter writers in *Adventurers Against Their Will* and refugees in more recent history to explore the varied reasons that people are forced to leave their country and what happens to them when they do so.

Objectives

Students will consider what happens to people who are forced to flee their homes and/or their homeland. The discussion will focus on the experiences of Jews and other refugees during World War II, as well as more recent history.

Students will be able to:

- Discuss how Jews and other refugees escaped from Germany and German-controlled territories in the 1930s and 1940s.
- Analyze factors that force people to flee their homes and/or their homeland.
- Assess the plight of refugees in history and today.
- Compare how refugees fared in the past to their situation today.

Florida Social Studies Standards:

SS.912.W.1.1: Utilize historical inquiry skills and analytical processes. Use timelines to establish cause-and-effect relationships of historical events.

SS.912.A.6.3: Analyze the impact of the Holocaust during World War II on Jews as well as other groups.

SS.912.A.6.8/SS.912.W.7.8: Explain the causes, events, and effects of the Holocaust (1933-1945) including its roots in the long tradition of anti-Semitism, 19th century ideas about race and nation, and Nazi dehumanization of the Jews and other victims.

SS.912.P.10.12: Examine how perspectives affect stereotypes and treatment of minority and majority groups in society.

SS.912.P.10.6: Discuss how privilege and social power structures relate to stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination.

SS.912.P.9.8: Discuss the nature and effects of stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination.

SS.912.C.4.3: Assess human rights policies of the United States and other countries.

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies:

ELA-RH.11-12.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

ELA- RH.11-12.3: Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

ELA-RH.11-12.7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) C3 Framework Standards:

D2.His.3.9-12. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context.

D2.His.5.9-12. Analyze how historical contexts shaped and continue to shape people's perspectives.

D2.His.14.9-12. Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past.

D2.His.15.9-12. Distinguish between long-term causes and triggering events in developing a historical argument.

D4.6.9-12. Use disciplinary and interdisciplinary lenses to understand the characteristics and causes of local, regional, and global problems; instances of such problems in multiple contexts; and challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address these problems over time and place.

D4.7.9-12. Assess options for individual and collective action to address local, regional, and global problems by engaging in self-reflection, strategy identification, and complex causal reasoning.

Preparation

Materials Required

Adventurers Against Their Will

Chalkboard/chalk or whiteboard/markers

Handouts:

- Map of where Jews found refuge, from the U.S. Holocaust Museum website, http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_nm.php?ModuleId=10005139&MediaId=467.
- The website of USA for UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency - <http://www.unrefugees.org/>
- "Refugees," from the U.S. Holocaust Museum website,

Lesson Procedure

Build Background

15 minutes

DOK 1-3

1. Begin the lesson by asking for general impressions of Chapters 5 and 6. Ask students to record at least one thing they have learned on their K-W-L chart. Allow a few minutes for students to do so, and then ask what facts stood out in the reading.
2. Ask a volunteer to read aloud the excerpt from the letter written by Bala to Valdik at the beginning of Chapter 5. Ask students to discuss how the letter makes them feel. Allow them to express their feelings and opinions about the excerpt, but guide them to recognize the mixed emotions and overall sense of uncertainty expressed in the letter.
3. Continue discussion of Chapter 5 by discussing Valdik's travel to China. Display a map of Europe and Asia to reinforce how far Valdik had to travel to safety. Then, guide students to identify when he fled the country, and add this to the timeline they began in Lesson 2.
4. Guide a discussion in which students list the factors that contributed to Valdik's ability to leave the country. Ask: *Why was Valdik able to leave when so many others did not?* List responses on the board. Include issues related to his own position as well as others. If students are unable to answer, lead a close reading of the beginning of Chapter 5. Ask the following text-based questions:
 - How did being a doctor impact his situation? (He was able to write his own orders and had a skill that was needed in other parts of the world.)
 - What other personal factors made it possible for him to leave? (He was single, so he did not have to worry about leaving behind a wife or children or trying to secure passage for anyone but himself.)
 - How did his knowledge of Nazi Germany impact his decision to leave? (“Having seen the Nazi war machine up close, my father almost certainly had a more realistic view of coming events than Bala, who like so many in Europe was still hoping the troubles were temporary”; Bala writes “I think that unless Adolf goes nuts there will be no war.”)
5. Turn attention to Valdik's experience as a refugee. Discuss the isolation he felt and his frustration at not being able to help those he left behind. Point out that he was homesick (e.g. “I am almost afraid that I will forget how to speak Czech.”).
6. Discuss how Valdik's experiences are similar to or different from those of refugees from other areas and different historical contexts.

Small Group Activity: Pairs or Triads

20 minutes

DOK 2-3

1. Have students work in pairs or triads to identify where the refugees landed. Ask students to identify people in *Adventurers Against Their Will* and the countries to which they escaped. Provide students with a blank outline of a world map, such as the one here. Point out that many of the emigrants moved many times. Have students use color-

coding or other features to show the places these emigrants lived. Students may want to use the timeline that is provided in *Adventurers Against Their Will* to help trace the movement of people.

2. Then, provide students with the following materials to help put the experiences of the people in *Adventurers Against Their Will* in context.
 - A map showing where Jews found refuge, such as this one from the U.S. Holocaust Museum:
http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_nm.php?ModuleId=10005139&MediaId=467.
 - “About Refugees,” a handout that summarizes the various types of refugees and refugee situations in the world today. There are multiple current refugee situations described on the website of USA for UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency. - <http://www.unrefugees.org/>
 - “Refugees,” which provides more targeted background information (see <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005139>).
3. Have students continue to work in pairs or triads to add at least one fact from the map and readings to their K-W-L chart. Pairs should also write a discussion question for the larger group.

Large Group Activity

25 minutes

DOK 3-4

1. Reconvene the group and have each pair or triad report its discussion question. Write the questions on the board. Then, use the questions to guide the discussion.
2. If the following questions have not been considered, use them to encourage students to focus on the plight of refugees:
 - Should countries have done more to help the Jews who were seeking asylum during the 1930s and 1940s?
 - How does our knowledge of what happened to the Jews in Europe change what we think other countries should have done? Do you think we would have felt or thought differently in the 1930s and 1940s?
 - What do you think would have been the most difficult part of being a refugee during the Holocaust? What do you think would be the most difficult part of being a refugee today? Do you think the plight of Jewish refugees in the 1930s and 1940s was different from the plight of refugees today? Why or why not?
 - How does it feel to be an outsider? Have you ever experienced a situation in which you were an outsider? What do you think it would be like to speak a different language, practice a different religion, and have a different culture?
 - Point out that Nazi Germany was able to carry out laws against the Jews by making them separate from other Germans. How and when did Jews become “others”? How do differences contribute to prejudices? Who are “outsiders” in our society today? What can

societies do to facilitate respect for differences?

Individual Reflection**10 minutes****DOK 3-4**

1. Have students record their thoughts and feelings in their journals. Ask them to write and record the following questions:
 - Of everything you learned today, what did you find the most surprising or upsetting? Why?
 - Based on today’s discussion, what do you believe would be the most difficult part of being a refugee?
 - Do you think being a new immigrant escaping persecution, civil war, or economic difficulties today would be easier or more difficult than for Jews in the 1930s or 1940s? Why?
 - Joanie Holzer Schirm writes, “As it turned out, the most important information was not in stories told, but in those untold. It was their way of protecting us from a past they did not want us to relive with them.” Do you think there are “untold stories” today? Why is it important for others to tell these stories?

Note: If students do not have enough time to complete the reflection questions in class, they may be assigned as homework. Remind students to bring their K-W-L sheets and journal to class each period, as they will add to them for the duration of the unit.

Homework

Assign as homework Chapters 7-8 of *Adventurers Against Their Will*. Ask students to take notes on what they read. In addition, students should come to the next class prepared to answer and discuss the questions that have been assigned to them.

Assessment

Consider students' participation in small- and large-group discussions to assess their understanding of the reading assignment and their ability to make connections among ideas. Review the responses to the reflection questions to assess whether students recognize the complexity of the factors that impact refugees.

Scoring Rubric

6	The student has shown a rigorous comprehension of the applicable concepts. The responses indicate a strong cognitive association between the topical concepts and their practical application. The student has offered a full and accurate answer to all relevant sections. The appropriate subject-related vocabulary or terms are used correctly. There are no major errors, although some minor errors may be present.
5	The student has shown a full comprehension of the applicable concepts. The responses indicate a cognitive association between the between the topical concepts and their practical application. The student has offered a full and accurate answer to all relevant sections. The appropriate subject-related vocabulary or terms are used. There are no major errors, although some minor errors may be present.
4	The student has shown an acceptable comprehension of the applicable concepts. The responses may indicate a cognitive association between the topical concepts and their practical application. The student provided a full and accurate answer to most relevant sections. There are minor errors in the use of subject-related vocabulary or terms. There are minor conceptual errors or omissions.
3	The student has shown a minimal comprehension of the applicable concepts. The responses indicate a narrow attempt to associate links between the topical concepts and their practical application. The student made an effort to answer two or more relevant sections. There is limited use of subject-related vocabulary or terms. The response contains some major errors or omissions. The response shows minimal comprehension.
2	The student has shown some comprehension of the applicable concepts. The responses do not indicate an effort to associate links between the topical concepts and their practical application. The student made an effort to answer one or more relevant sections. The use of subject-related vocabulary or terms may be absent. The response contains many major errors and omissions. The response shows limited comprehension.
1	The student's response is inadequate. Subject-related vocabulary or terms are absent. The answer(s) contains many substantial errors or omissions. The response shows little to no comprehension.
0	The student has shown no comprehension of the concepts and/or the response is impossible to understand.

Adapted from the website of USA for UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency

About Refugees

<http://www.unrefugees.org/>

A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries.

Who is an internally displaced person?

An internally displaced person (IDP) is a person who has been forced to flee his or her home for the same reason as a refugee, but remains in his or her own country and has not crossed an international border. Unlike refugees, IDPs are not protected by international law or eligible to receive many types of aid. As the nature of war has changed in the last few decades, with more and more internal conflicts replacing wars among countries, the number of IDPs has increased significantly.

A returnee is a refugee who has returned to his or her home country. The majority of refugees prefer to return home as soon as it is safe to do so, after a conflict and the country is being rebuilt. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) encourages voluntary repatriation, or return, as the best solution for displaced people. The agency often provides transportation and other assistance, such as money, tools and seeds. Occasionally, UNHCR helps rebuild homes, schools and roads.

Who is a stateless person?

A stateless person is someone who is not a citizen of any country. Citizenship is the legal bond between a government and an individual, and allows for certain political, economic, social and other rights of the individual, as well as the responsibilities of both government and citizen. A person can become stateless due to a variety of reasons, including sovereign, legal, technical or administrative decisions or oversights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights underlines that “Everyone has the right to a nationality.”

Who is an asylum seeker?

When people flee their own country and seek sanctuary in another country, they apply for asylum – the right to be recognized as a refugee and receive legal protection and material assistance. An asylum seeker must demonstrate that his or her fear of persecution in his or her home country is well-founded.

What is the difference between a refugee and an economic migrant?

An economic migrant normally leaves a country voluntarily to seek a better life. Should he or she decide to return home, they would continue to receive the protection of his or her government. Refugees flee because of the threat of persecution and cannot return safely to their homes.

What is the 1951 Refugee Convention?

The 1951 Geneva Convention is the main international instrument of refugee law. The Convention clearly spells out who a refugee is and the kind of legal protection, other assistance and social rights he or she should receive from the countries who have signed the document. The Convention also defines a refugee's obligations to host governments and certain categories of people, such as war criminals, who do not qualify for refugee status. The Convention was limited to protecting mainly European refugees in the aftermath of World War II, but another document, the 1967 Protocol, expanded the scope of the Convention as the problem of displacement spread around the world.

About UNHCR

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), also known as the UN Refugee Agency, is the world's leading organization aiding and protecting people forced to flee their homes due to violence, conflict and persecution. UNHCR provides shelter, food, water, medical care, and other life-saving assistance to refugees around the world.

The dream of most refugees is to return home. When possible, UNHCR helps refugees return to their homeland. When refugees can't go back home, UNHCR helps them rebuild their lives in another country. Since its formation by the United Nations General Assembly in 1950, UNHCR has helped an estimated 50 million refugees restart their lives and has twice received the Nobel Peace Prize.

Today, UNHCR's committed staff of 8,600 works in more than 125 countries — saving and protecting lives and building a better future for more than 36 million displaced people.

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