

Human Rights and Refugees – 9-11 years Unit and Lesson Plans



UNHCR Lego Posters TEACHERS' GUIDE IN: HUMAN RIGHTS AND REFUGEES

These posters have been reissued as a set of four, with an accompanying teacher's guide, to mark the 50th anniversary in 1998 of the proclamation by the United Nations General Assembly of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The guide has been designed to help teachers to prepare lessons which demonstrate the relationship between refugee protection and human rights. The posters, showing familiar LEGO models, are ideal stimulus materials for students between the ages of 9 and 14 (levels 1 and 2). For older students, a series of articles is used as a basis for classroom discussion for students between 15 and 18 (level 3).

HUMAN RIGHTS, REFUGEES AND UNHCR

A refugee is a person who "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country." (from the 1951 *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*)

When the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established in 1951, there were an estimated 1 million refugees to care for, the majority of whom were European. Currently, UNHCR cares for almost 19.8 million people, of whom 12 million are refugees, mainly from Africa and Asia. Eighty per cent of them are women and children. In addition to individual flight from persecution, the modern pattern of refugee movements is that of mass exoduses caused by ethnic conflicts and violations of rights of minorities.

People become refugees because one or more of their basic human rights have been violated or threatened. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) underlines the strong connection between human rights and the work of UNHCR. Article 14 of the UDHR states that "everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution."

The work carried out by UNHCR, whether involving protection or material assistance, is influenced by human rights considerations. Violations of human rights are one of the main causes of mass exoduses; they also eliminate the option of voluntary repatriation as long as the violations persist.



No one likes or chooses to be a refugee. Being a refugee means more than just being a foreigner. It means living in exile and often depending on others for basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter.

Where most people can look to their own governments to guarantee and protect their basic human rights and physical security, refugees cannot do so. Rather, their country of origin has proved itself unable or unwilling to protect those rights. UNHCR has been entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that refugees are protected by their country of asylum, and assists asylum countries as far as possible in that task. Its main role is to ensure that states are aware of, and respect, their obligations to protect refugees and persons seeking asylum and solutions.

A refugee has the right to safe asylum. However, international protection comprises more than physical safety. Refugees should receive at least the same rights and basic help as any other foreigner who is a legal resident, including certain fundamental entitlements of every individual: refugees have basic civil rights, including freedom of thought and of movement, and freedom from torture and degrading treatment. Similarly, economic and social rights apply to refugees as they do to other individuals. Every refugee should have access to medical care. Every adult refugee should have the right to work. No refugee child should be deprived of schooling, or recruited into military service or prostitution.

In certain circumstances, such as large-scale inflows of refugees, asylum states may feel obliged to restrict certain rights, such as freedom of movement, the right to work, or proper schooling for all children. Such gaps can and should be filled wherever possible by the international community. Thus, when there are no other resources available – from governments of the country of asylum or other agencies – UNHCR provides assistance to refugees who cannot meet their own basic needs. The assistance may be in the form of financial grants, food, equipment such as kitchenware and tools, sanitation and shelter. There are also programs to establish schools and clinics for refugees who are living in a camps or other communal groupings. UNHCR makes every effort to ensure that refugees can become self-sufficient as swiftly as possible – this may require formal income-generating activities or projects to teach new skills.

On the other hand, refugees also have certain obligations. In particular, they should respect the laws of their country of asylum.

Copies of regular size LEGO for teachers/schools from UNHCR e-mail: info@unhcr.org.uk, UNHCR, Millbank Tower, 21-24 Millbank, London, SW1P 4QP, UK

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES USING THE POSTERS TO LAUNCH DISCUSSIONS CONCERNING REFUGEE ISSUES

Have copies of three of the four posters set up in the classroom. Do not display *Spot the Refugee* yet.



As the teacher may not choose to use all the posters in class, a couple of the discussion questions in the lesson activities below have been repeated. If using all the posters, ignore the repeated questions.

When watching news reports and documentaries about the massive refugee flows which have occurred in the last decade, students may wonder how they can contribute their part to international cooperation to solve these tragedies. Students may sense that they are powerless to help, but this is not the case.

Introductory questions for the students

Who produced these posters?

Do you think the posters are advertisements for Lego? If not, why not?

Ask the students what similarities all the Lego people share? (Responses could include: all the figures have similarly-shaped yellow heads; the facial features are usually the same, i.e. two black spots for the eyes and a smile; they all have similarly-shaped hands, although pirate figures can have a hook instead of a hand; they all have a body and legs which are also similar in shape, but pirate figures can have a stump instead of a leg!)

Ask how they think the manufacturers make a Lego figure resemble a woman or a girl? (Possible replies could include: select a feminine hairstyle, female clothing, pastel colours, etc).

Spot the Refugee

Place a copy of the poster on the wall, folded, so that the writing is not visible.

Ask the students to look closely at the rows of Lego people. Ask them to suggest an identity for each figure, beginning from the first Lego person in the first row. After several have been identified, ask the students by what means they decided upon each identity? For example, did they look at the clothes, the facial appearance and/or the gender?

The students are informed that the people who designed this poster decided that one of the figures is supposed to be a refugee. Ask the students to **spot the refugee**, and to describe how they came up with their identification. Do any of their reasons match the descriptions written on the blackboard at the beginning of the lesson?

This is an important lesson in the dangers of *prejudice* and *stereotyping*. The students should be brought to understand the harm which can be caused by ignorant, thoughtless name-calling and attribution of negative characteristics to a whole social group.

Now unfold the poster to reveal the text and allow the students time to read the information quietly by themselves.



Comprehension and discussion questions

Ask the students to write answers to the following questions in their notebooks.

What is the one difference between refugees and you and me?

What events do you think could have happened to cause a person to flee and leave everything behind?

What types of experience might refugees endure during their flight?

How would you feel if you were a refugee who had to leave your home, family and possessions behind and live in another country?

Define the term 'open mind'. What does it mean? Why does UNHCR ask that people keep an open mind and a smile of welcome?

Discuss the answers to these questions around the class. Refer to the concept of *discrimination*.

How Does It Feel?

If the class is used to working in small groups, give each group one of the following scenarios and ask them to discuss among themselves how they would feel if they were:

a new student who has just joined their class in the middle of the school year

a child of their age who has been holidaying with his/her family in another country where the language is foreign, and the child has somehow been separated from the other family members

someone who has just heard the bad news that the breadwinner of the family no longer has a job

After a suitable time has elapsed, the students can reassemble as a class group, and are led by the teacher to share the fruits of their group discussions.

Now turn the class' attention to the UNHCR Lego poster *How Does It Feel?* Allow the students a few minutes to take in the picture and to read the text.

Comprehension and discussion questions

Use these questions as the basis of a discussion:

Thinking about the three situations we just discussed, what similar *feelings* might the lonely Lego person have?

What similarities and differences are there between the *situation* of the lonely Lego figure and the three cases we just considered?

What do you think the people who designed this poster are trying to suggest through the way the Lego figures have been arranged?

Who do you think is the intended audience of this poster?

What attitudes towards refugees is UNHCR encouraging people to adopt in this poster?

What's Wrong Here?

Discussion questions

UNHCR has the responsibility to ensure that refugees are protected in their country of asylum and assists refugees by coordinating the provision of shelter, food, water, sanitation and medical care in emergency situations.

What makes a person a refugee?



Why would a refugee have nothing?

How does UNHCR suggest, through this poster, that individuals can help refugees?

Do the students agree?

What else can governments do to protect the rights of refugees?

What responsibilities do you think refugees might have in their host countries?

What's The Difference?

Refugees have frequently been successful in finding asylum in countries in the industrialised world. Having found asylum, the refugees are safe from the persecution that they feared in their own home countries, but they may face the problem of not being thoroughly accepted in their new country.

Discussion questions

What is the difference between each Lego figure?

If there is no difference, why is there a different name underneath each one?

Why do you think some people call other people nasty names?

If you had to divide the Lego people into two groups, how would you do it? Would you group *you and me* in a small group of two, and put the *refugee* with the rest?

Or, would you group the last three Lego people, the *refugee, you and me*, together? Give your reasons for your decision.

re-read the last two sentences. What do you think is the message of these sentences?

Conclusion

Referring to all the posters, ask the students how they have previously regarded refugees about whom they have seen news stories, and how have they viewed refugees who live in their community. Do they sense any change within themselves, concerning their attitudes towards refugees, since starting this unit of work? What changes are there? The teacher needs to guide this discussion with sensitivity, encouraging the students to be frank, but being assertive if students rudely challenge each other over differing viewpoints.

UNIT PLAN FOR AGES 9-11 IN HUMAN RIGHT AND REFUGEES

UNIT OBJECTIVES

Knowledge

To understand clearly;

- a) the definition of a refugee
- b) the concept of human equality
- c) the meanings and possible sources of *stereotypes, prejudice, racism and discrimination*.

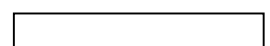
Values

To foster *open-mindedness and respect for others*.

To encourage in the students *empathy* for refugees who are similar to themselves but who have lost their homes, belongings and homelands.

Skills

To be able to identify similarities between people of different nationalities.



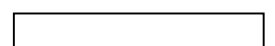
To be able to detect biases, stereotypes, and egocentric attitudes in oneself and in others.

LESSONS 1 and 2: SPOT THE REFUGEE

CONTENT	TEACHING METHODS/LEARNING STRATEGIES
<p>Stereotyping, Prejudice and Refugees</p> <p>The common human heritage shared by all humans alike, whether refugees or not.</p> <p>Refugees are the same as everyone else except for the loss of their country, home and possessions</p>	<p>Brainstorming session: Students are asked to give their impressions of who is a refugee.</p> <p>Students consider actual Lego figures and study the poster of Lego people, looking for similarities and differences between the figures, and inventing ways to give each Lego person an identity.</p> <p>Students 'spot the refugee' from amongst the Lego figures. Teacher uses the "spotting" exercise to explain stereotyping and prejudice.</p> <p>Teacher provides a definition of term refugee.</p> <p>Questions: Students answer in writing. Answers used as stimulus for discussion about refugee experience.</p>
<p>RESOURCES</p> <p>Lego poster entitled Spot the Refugee; A4 sets of four different posters Spot the Refugee, How Does It Feel?, What's Wrong Here?, and What's the Difference? are available free of charge from info@unhcr.org.uk, UNHCR, Millbank Tower, 21-24 Millbank, London, SW1P 4QP, UK</p> <p>For Teachers Geography unit for ages 9-11 can provide useful materials to convey how it is that people become refugees.</p> <p>United Nations CyberSchoolBus Web site:</p>	

LESSONS 3 and 4: HOW DOES IT FEEL?

CONTENT	TEACHING METHODS/LEARNING STRATEGIES
<p>Discrimination against refugees: Empathy with those who are in</p>	<p>Group work: Students discuss how they would feel in each of the following</p>



various unfortunate situations.

Overcoming loneliness and rejection.

scenarios:

as a new student who has just joined their class in the middle of the school year

as a child of their age who has accidentally been separated from the family while holidaying in a foreign land having just heard the bad news that the breadwinner of the family no longer has a job

Questions for discussion: Students assess the poster to gauge its message. Teacher uses the questions to stimulate discussion about acceptance and welcome of refugees.

RESOURCES

UNHCR Lego poster How Does It Feel?

LESSON PLANS FOR AGES 9-11 IN HUMAN RIGHTS AND REFUGEES

Purpose

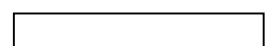
Refugees are people who flee their country because of a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. A refugee either cannot return home, or is afraid to do so.

The countries which generously offer refugees shelter are called countries of asylum. The word 'refugee' often conjures up images of immense movements of people fleeing through harsh terrain, carrying their various possessions, or images of sprawling camps where people live very close together under difficult conditions. The vast majority of refugees do seek and find shelter *in neighbouring countries*, and often live in camps organized by UNHCR and its partners, waiting for the time when conditions in their home countries are safe enough for a return. However, some refugees find themselves in faraway *countries outside their own region*. These people have been forced to move to a strange land where the language and culture are different to their own. They need to fit in, and begin their new lives.

This unit of lessons stresses the need to foster feelings of confidence in the students, and social tolerance for others. The students are led to recognize that differences between individuals certainly exist, but that the recognition of these differences should not lead to discrimination. Despite racial, ethnic or religious differences, all people, including students and refugees, share a common human heritage. This is in keeping with the first two articles of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

LESSON 1: SPOT THE REFUGEE

Preparation



Either the teacher can bring in several Lego model people, or ask the students 'for homework' to bring in their own Lego people for this lesson.

Run off a class set of the poster entitled *Spot the Refugee*. Fold each copy of the poster from just below the title so that the writing is hidden.

Procedure

This lesson begins with a brainstorming session. The students are asked what makes a person a refugee. Responses can be written on the blackboard by the teacher. Stress that people flee their country of origin out of a fear of persecution (serious ill treatment) because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. This part of the lesson need only take a few minutes.

If the children have brought in Lego people for this lesson, request them to arrange their Lego figures on their desks.

Ask the students what similarities all the Lego people share? (Responses could include: all the figures have similarly-shaped yellow heads; the facial features are usually the same, i.e. two black spots for the eyes and a smile; they all have similarly-shaped hands, although pirate figures can have a hook instead of a hand; they all have a body and legs which are also similar in shape, but pirate figures can have a stump instead of a leg!)

Ask how they think the manufacturers make a Lego figure resemble a woman or a girl? (Possible replies could include: select a feminine hairstyle, female clothing, pastel colours, etc).

Pass copies of the poster among the students and ask them to keep the poster folded, and to look closely at the rows of Lego people. Ask the students to suggest an identity for each figure, beginning from the first Lego person in the first row. After several have been identified, ask the students by what means they decided upon each identity? For example, did they look at the clothes, the facial appearance and/or the gender?

The students are informed that the people who designed this poster decided that one of the figures is supposed to be a refugee. Ask the students to **spot the refugee**, and to describe how they came up with their identification. Do any of their reasons match the descriptions written on the blackboard at the beginning of the lesson?

This is an important lesson in the dangers of *stereotyping* and *prejudice*. You may choose not to use those terms with this age group, but they should be brought to understand the harm which can be caused by thoughtless name-calling and attribution of negative characteristics to a whole social group.

Consolidation

Close the lesson by writing the correct definition of a refugee, in simple English, on



the board:

Refugees are people who have left their homeland because they fear that they will lose their lives or their freedom if they stay.

Ask the children to copy the definition into their notebooks.

LESSON 2: SPOT THE REFUGEE, continued

Recall Ask the students to explain what a refugee is. Draw out the elements of the definition by questioning around the class.

The students should open the Lego poster fully and read the supplied information quietly by themselves.

Comprehension and discussion questions

Ask the students to write answers to the following questions in their notebooks.

What is the one difference between refugees and you and me?

What events do you think could have happened to cause a person to flee and leave everything behind?

What types of experience might refugees endure during their flight?

How would you feel if you were a refugee who had to leave your home, family and possessions behind and live in another country?

Find the term 'open mind'. What does it mean? Why does UNHCR ask that people keep an open mind and a smile of welcome?

Discuss the answers to these questions around the class. Refer to the concept of *discrimination*.

At this point, you may wish to use some of the materials in For Teachers, Geography, Ages 9-11, which explain the reasons why people become refugees.

LESSON 3: HOW DOES IT FEEL?

Procedure

If the class is used to working in small groups, give each group one of the following scenarios and ask them to discuss among themselves how they would feel if they were:

a new student who has just joined their class in the middle of the school year

a child of their age who has been holidaying with his/her family in another country where the language is foreign, and the child has somehow been separated from the other family members

someone who has just heard the bad news that the breadwinner of the family no longer has a job

After a suitable time has elapsed, the students can reassemble as a class group, and are led by the teacher to share the fruits of their group discussions.

LESSON 4: HOW DOES IT FEEL? continued



Introduction

Pass out copies of the UNHCR Lego poster *How Does It Feel?* Allow the students a few minutes to take in the picture and to read the text.

Comprehension and discussion questions

Use these questions as the basis of a discussion:

Thinking about the three situations we discussed last lesson, what similar *feelings* might the lonely Lego person have?

What similarities and differences are there between the *situation* of the lonely Lego figure and the three cases we considered last lesson?

What do you think the people who designed this poster are trying to suggest through the way the Lego figures have been arranged?

Who do you think is the intended audience of this poster?

What attitudes towards refugees is UNHCR encouraging people to adopt in this poster?

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Office of the Representative for the United Kingdom

21st Floor, Millbank Tower, 21-24 Millbank, London SW1P 4QP

Tel: 020 7828 9191, Fax: 020 7630 5349,

E-mail: gbrlo@unhcr.ch, Website: <http://www.unhcr.ch>