

A Refugee Simulation Experience

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This simulation invites students to follow a refugee family on their journey to safety. The session will take about 50 minutes, including the debrief and reflection activity. The participants are grouped into refugee families. Each group simulates the journey of a family escaping from the dangers of war. A picture map can be used to chart the progress of the hazardous journey. Alternatively, you could create nine stations around the room to represent the journey. The teacher leads students through the nine stages of the story which will involve them making choices. These choices represent some of the real-life dilemmas which many refugees face. Afterwards, the participants reflect on what they have done. This activity encourages the participants to co-operate, negotiate and share. It helps them to understand refugees and to better empathies with their situation.

Preparing the activity

Arrange the group into family groups of six. Students can discuss and decide which family members they will play (e.g. parents, grandparents, children) and they can choose a family name.

Each participant should have the following:

1. A photocopy of the picture map and a felt tip or stickers to record the progress of their journey (*optional*)
2. A photocopy of the list of belongings from which they choose what to bring on their journey (*this could be written on the board*)
3. Six small cards on which to draw their possessions – one item per card
4. A plastic wallet or envelope representing their bag to carry their cards

The activity may be carried out while sitting at tables or acted out, in which case plenty of space is needed.

Introducing the activity

- A. Ask the participants to think about and discuss the question: Why do people move? Explore the difference between moving out of choice and forced migration. Discuss what is meant by the terms ‘migrant’ and ‘refugee’, and the difference between the two. Refugees often have to move because of war, but sometimes there are other reasons such as drought, hunger, ecological disasters or religious persecution.
- B. Ask participants:
 1. How would you feel if you were told that you were in great danger and had to quickly leave behind your friends, home, your belongings and maybe even some of your family?

2. How would it feel not to know where you were going?
3. Who would you take with you?
4. What would you take with you?
5. What do you think you would need for a really long journey?
6. What would you have to leave behind?

Running the activity

1. You are about to go on a journey into the unknown. You don't know if you will ever be able to return to your home.

War has broken out in your country. You can hear the sound of gunfire and you know that fighting must be very close by. You have to escape quickly. You have been told that trucks will be arriving soon to take you, your family and neighbors to the coast, where you hope you can find a boat to take you to safety. There is no time to waste. You have to be quick.

The first thing each of you must do is pack a bag for your journey. In your bag you may carry no more than six items. Look at the *belongings list* and choose your items. Think carefully about what you really need to take. Discuss this with the rest of your family. Don't forget: your items might be heavy to carry or difficult to look after. You have ten minutes to draw, on your cards, the six things that you want to take.

(Allow ten minutes)

Your time is up!

2. The truck has arrived. You can't take anything else. Bring your bag with you and climb on the old wooden truck. You are on your way. Take a last look at your home. You are very unhappy because you have to leave your dog behind but there is nothing that you can do.

You start to cry as you think about all the happy times that you spent with him and wonder what will happen to him now.

The seats in the truck are hard and narrow and, whichever way you sit, you cannot get comfortable. The driver is in a hurry to get you to safety. He speeds along the road and almost loses control as the truck screeches around the corner. One member of your family (*choose who this is*) is thrown from their seat and their bag flies out of the back of the truck.

The driver cannot hear you calling to stop, so the bag is left far behind. This person (*use their name*) has lost everything.

Help them make up for this loss by giving them something from your bag.

They can take one thing from each person in the family. You have two minutes to do this. What have you been left with?

(Allow two minutes)

Your time is up!

3. The truck has to climb up a steep mountain. It gets slower and slower and a strange choking noise comes from the engine. You wonder if this truck will ever get you to the coast.

You hear a mighty bang and the truck grinds to a halt.

Something is very wrong with the truck's engine and it cannot be fixed. You must continue the journey on foot, but you find that your bag is too heavy to carry.

Make it lighter by taking out the heaviest item. You have two minutes to decide what this is and to leave it behind.

What have you been left with?

(Allow two minutes)

Your time is up!

4. You struggle on but you find it harder and harder to keep going. It is a hot day and the sun is beating down.

There has been no rain for more than a year so the roads are hard, full of holes and difficult to walk on.

One member of your family falls and hurts their leg (*choose somebody for this*). They cannot go on without help. Two of you will have to carry them (*choose these*).

These three people can no longer carry their bags. The rest of the family will have to help carry their belongings, but remember that no one may carry more than six items, so some things will have to be left behind. Talk about this. You have three minutes to sort this out. What have you been left with now?

(Allow three minutes)

Your time is up!

5. You continue on and enter into a thick green forest. You are all very tired, especially the oldest people in your family, but you have to keep on going. You need to slash and cut your way through the trees. What will you use to do this?

At last you can see the sea and you know you have reached the coast.

The injured person and their helpers are able to carry what is left of their own belongings. Return their belongings to them. You have two minutes to sort these out. What have you got left now?

(Allow two minutes)

Your time is up!

6. You are overjoyed to see the fishing boats waiting in the bay. But unfortunately the boats are very small and none can take more than four people.

Your family must split up into groups of four. This is very hard to do and you may become very upset. You want to stay together and are frightened of what might happen if you separate but you have no choice. You have two minutes to sort out your groups – who will you go with?

(Allow two minutes)

Your time is up!

7. The fisherman will not let you get on his boat without payment. You have no money but he agrees to let you on board in exchange for the most valuable thing in your bag. The boat is leaving in two minutes and you must decide what you will give him.

The boat is very small and the fisherman now says that you have too much luggage.

No one may carry more than two things. Talk with the others in your family and decide what can be shared and what must be left behind.

You have four minutes. What have you got left?

(Allow four minutes)

Your time is up!

The boat sets sail. The sea is rough and stormy. The boat starts to leak and sea water floods in. You manage to save your bag but it is soaking wet and anything which could be affected by water is ruined. You have two minutes to check the belongings in your bag and throw away anything that is spoilt.

(Allow two minutes)

Your time is up!

8. At last you can see land. It has been a terrible journey! You are anxious to find out what has happened to the others in your family and hope they have arrived safely too. What will happen now?

You don't know but you hope for peace and safety.

This is the end of the activity.

Debrief after the activity.

Discuss the activity with the class. Ask them:

- a. *How would you feel if you were told that you were in great danger and had to quickly leave behind your friends, home, the things that belong to you and maybe even some of your family?*
 - b. *What did you bring at the beginning of the journey?*
 - c. *Did you bring the right things?*
 - d. *Did you think about food and water?*
 - e. *How did you feel when you had to give up your belongings?*
 - f. *What was the most difficult part of the journey?*
 - g. *How did you feel about what was happening to you?*
 - h. *How did you feel when your family had to separate?*
 - i. *How did you feel at the end of the journey?*
 - j. *How might it feel to be a real refugee?*
2. Following this you may wish to ask students to complete a reflective activity. This could be:
- a. *A story about their journey and what might happen when they arrived at their destinations*
 - b. *A poem to express feelings and experiences that the people in the families may have experienced*
 - c. *A piece of writing about their journey exploring any emotions and questions they have*
 - d. *A prayer for people facing this sort of journey today*
 - e. *Write five words that best describe your thoughts and feelings about this experience.*
3. When you feel that students have had sufficient time to reflect on their own feelings, ask:
- a. Do you know any places in the world where people have become refugees?
 - b. Do you know why they have become refugees?
 - c. What stops us from welcoming refugees?
 - d. How can we welcome new people in our community?
 - e. How can I play my part in welcoming new people into our community?

This could be an opportunity to introduce some real-life refugee experiences through news stories, personal testimonies or from the CAFOD blog.

Adapted from a game by Pat Baker (The Joint Board of Christian Education).

List of belongings

You may pick six items to take with you. You may consider strategic planning with your family. Circle the six items you wish to take and write items on your cards. Put your cards into your envelope.

A spare set of clothes

A favorite doll

A thick blanket

A favorite action figure

Quilt

Teddy bear

Wellington boots

Family Photograph

An Umbrella

Wedding photo

A raincoat

Baby bottle and baby food

A change of shoes

Nappies

Your pet

A putty

iPod

Sewing/knitting box

Money

Plastic sheet

Your jewelry

Your favorite book

Camping stove

Cooking pot

First aid kit

A chair

Kettle

A mattress

A tent

A set of cutlery

Pet food

DVDs

A camera

iPad

A washbag

Mountain bike

A sharp knife

A laptop

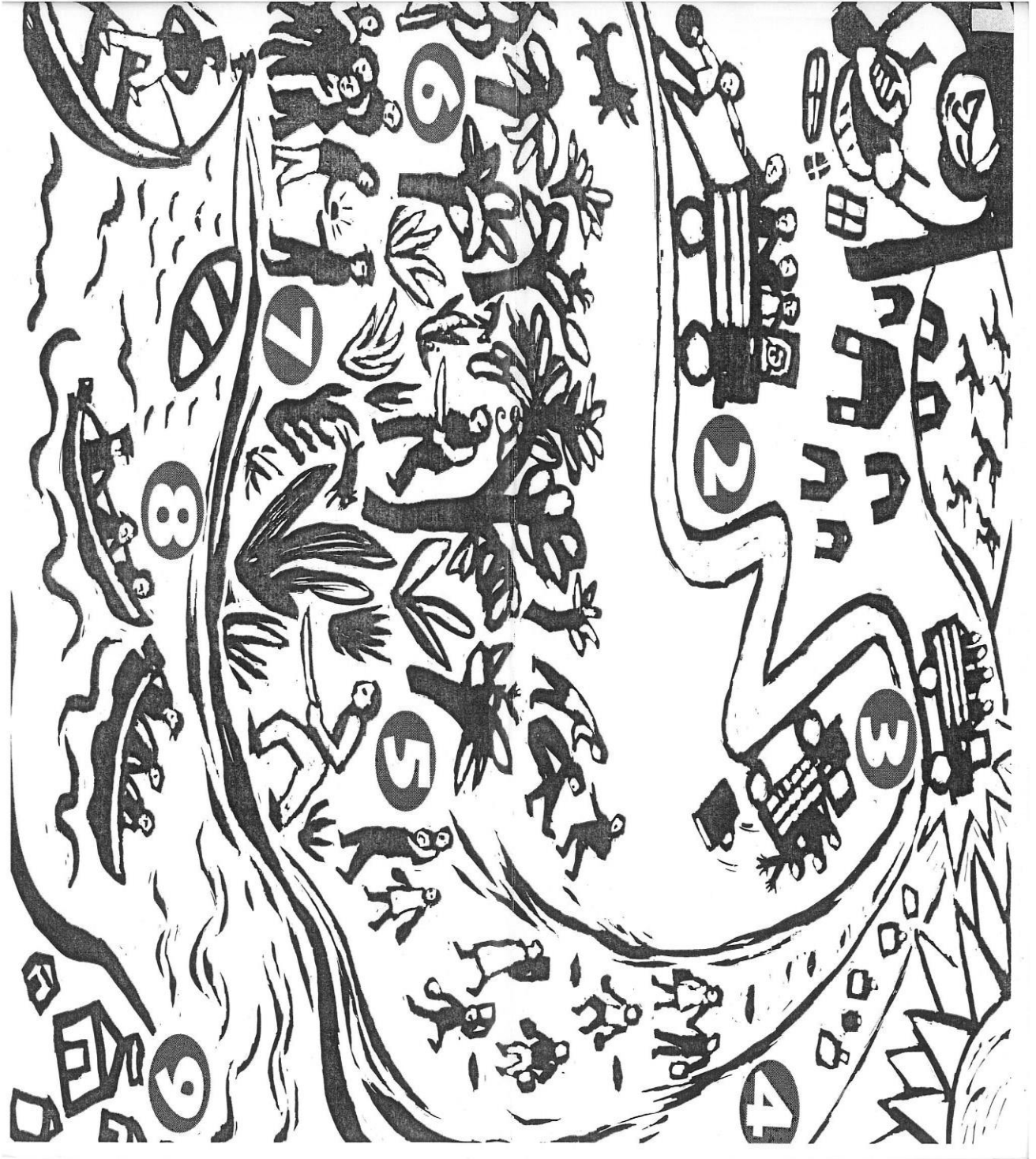
A basket of food

A portable TV

A container of water

Mobile phone

Rope



Make notes in your journal for each stage of the journey

Stage 1 _____

Stage 2 _____

Stage 3 _____

Stage 4 _____

Stage 5 _____

Stage 6 _____

Stage 7 _____

Stage 8 _____

Debriefing of the Refugee Simulation

- What did you bring at the beginning of the journey? Did you bring the right things? Did you think about food and water?
- What was the most difficult part of the journey? How did you feel about what was happening to you?

Watch:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGCs59_k9_A

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4NBJq8c1T4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CYkFd9efk2Y>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WARQID-U-Jg>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubGhzVdnhQw>

How are their stories like the simulation?

We learn from those videos about the next step after the simulation. How is life better than in Syria? How is it worse? (Give specific examples.)

What would you want to do if you were the parent in this simulation? What would you want if you were the child?

A Sociological Examination of the Plight of Refugees

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32057601>

Syria Journey Simulation

The Syrian conflict has torn the country apart, leaving thousands dead and driving millions to flee their homes. Many seek refuge in neighboring countries but others pay traffickers to take them to Europe - risking death, capture and deportation.

If you were fleeing Syria for Europe, what choices would you make for you and your family?

Take our journey to understand the real dilemmas the refugees face.

- 1) Select your character.
- 2) Where do you decide to go? _____
- 3) What happens to you in the first scenario?
- 4) Then what happens?
- 5) What happens next?
- 6) How does it end for you?
- 7) Where did the web designers get the ideas from the scenario?

Go to the following sites to learn more about the people who lived the simulation.

<http://www.euronews.com/2015/09/11/new-life-new-challenges-helping-refugees-adjust-to-unfamiliar-surroundings/>

- 1) In Burkino Faso, why is it important for the refugees from Mali to share their cultural heritage? (2:15)
- 2) Why does dance “make a lot of sense” to the Tuaregs? (3:30)
- 3) Describe some of the factors that have prevented refugee children in the Gaza Strip from succeeding on standardized tests in Arabic and math? (5:55)

4) Give at least 2 reasons why is the 4 week summer school so important to the refugee children.
(6:38)

5) In Italy, in what ways does the Open House help refugees? (8:20)

6) Why is the class that Open House offers so important to the refugees? How does it help them integrate and find their place in Sicily? (10:00)

<https://challenges.openideo.com/challenge/refugee-education/research/how-refugees-adapt-to-new-cultures>

7) Why is it especially difficult for refugees to integrate in the state of Vermont?

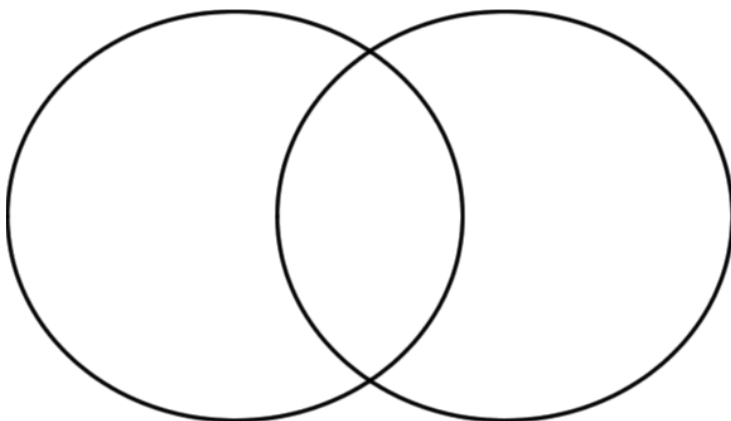
8) Explain 7 challenges that refugees have in adjusting to life in Vermont?

<https://www.eurekaalert.org/news-releases/817279>

**Experiences and Circumstances Unique to Immigrants who are NOT refugees
Similar**

Experiences and Circumstances Unique to Refugees

Similar Experiences and Circumstances for Both Kinds of Immigrants



Go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lu0KqLKr7-M&feature=youtu.be&app=desktop>

1) What unique needs might Syrian refugees have when they arrive in the US?

2) What are the challenges that the US has to meet their needs?

Use the simulation we did together in class, the online simulation, or any of the three articles to make connections and use specific examples of the following sociological terms:

Assimilation

Cultural Relativity

Ethnocentrism

Cultural Discontinuity

Assorted Video Clips to Use When Teaching Culture

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-F58U2ZSPNs>

Joy Luck Club

Chinese table manners – 1:45.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YMyoFREc5Jk>

cross cultural communication

TED Talk – 20 minutes – Great draw with examples of how different lines look in different cultures.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GwEFzzArqhM>

American Cultural Norms (2:44)

African TV show that is educating the viewer to deal with American's ideas of personal space.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGVSIkEi3mM>

Seinfeld – Close Talker (2 minutes)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6-R5YNZxj2E>

CBS News – Lost Boys – Part One(12:33)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Qoct_fDjiQE

CBS News – Lost Boys – Part Two (10:27)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Giwujxh2No>

Segment of *God Grew Tired of US* – (4:58)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=51cU1wIUAoM>

Kai's Story Emmanuel House – (3:30) giving a help up, not a hand out....

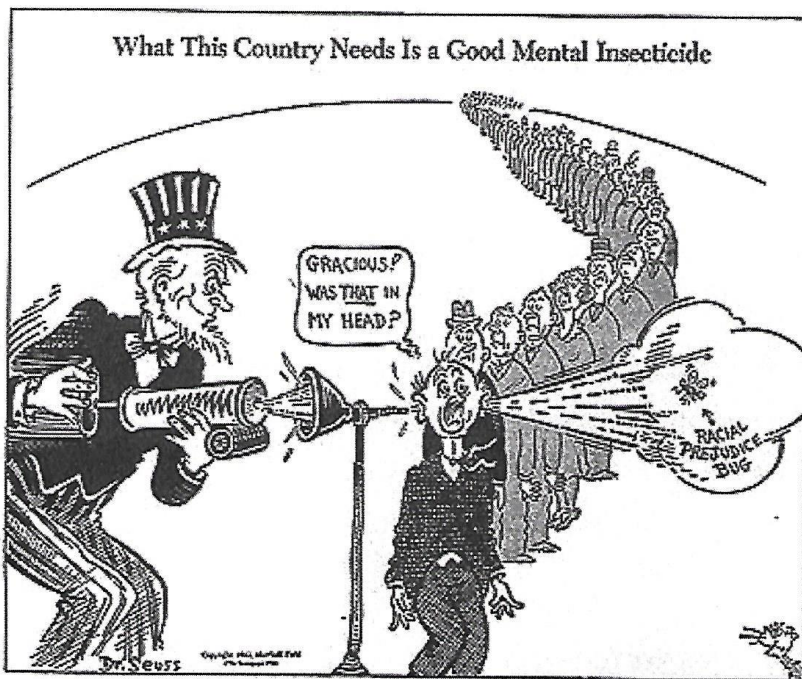
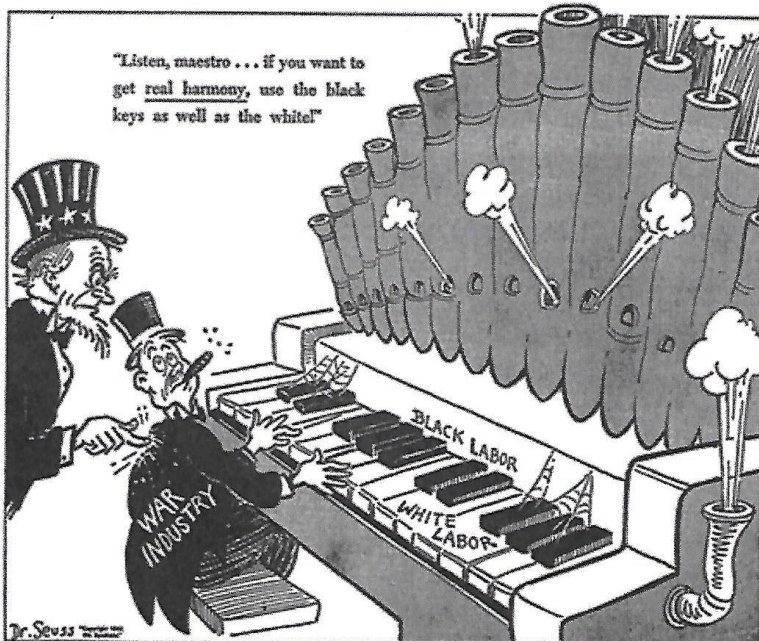
Ingroup bias - To demonstrate how easily and quickly we form in groups and out groups, I divide my class into those wearing sneakers (or boots or flip-flops) that day and those not wearing sneakers (or boots or flip-flops). Then I have each group sit in a circle with its members. The "sneaker" group is assigned to list as many reasons as it can think of as to why the members of the other group did **not** wear sneakers that day. The non-sneaker group is assigned to list as many reasons as it can as to why the other group members **are** wearing sneakers. The listing starts out neutral, but it is not long before each group's list becomes more and more derogatory, particularly when it overhears the list the other group is generating.

Theodore Geisel (Dr. Seuss) understood these phenomena and used it in full effect in a series of political cartoons created for the US Government to support the war effort....

After the war, he was shocked that the country that had together defeated the enemy, was still divided along racial lines. He wrote a series of scathing political cartoons to that effect.

I next show them the "Sneetches" and we debrief with a discussion of how the cartoon both demonstrates in group/out group behavior and was a way for Dr. Seuss to teach children the ignorance of racial prejudice.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qPhOZzsi_6Q (about 12 minutes)



References

Lotspeich, H. (2016). NCSS Conference. American Sociological Association Symposium.

http://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/hayley_handout_domain_2.pdf

<http://cafod.org.uk/content/download/32682/383880/version/1/file/On%20the%20move%20refugee%20game%20for%20children.pdf>

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