



MEDIA FRENZY AND THE FORGOTTEN REFUGEES

LEARNING GOAL:

How do we compare two humanitarian stories in the news: one from the United States and one international? How do we analyze media coverage and the way decisions about reporting are made? How can we construct our own news report?

GRADES: 6-8 SUBJECTS: Language Arts

TIME REQUIRED: 5 class periods [1 hour each] with extension; 1 class period without

MATERIALS: GLOWE Curriculum DVD, TV/DVD Player, access to computer lab for research, copies of handout and glossary

Overview: This 5 minute video clip (2007) from Link TV's Global Pulse series compares news reports about people displaced by the California wildfires of October 2007 and Iraqis displaced by war in their country. During the same week as the wildfires, the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) released a report that 4.5 million Iraqis were displaced by war. While many international news outlets covered the story of the Iraqi refugees, many American news outlets focused only on the wildfires.

Prerequisite Knowledge: NONE

THIS CURRICULUM UNIT IS A PARTNERSHIP OF LINK TV AND WORLD SAVVY

SEE, THINK AND WONDER: MEDIA FRENZY AND FORGOTTEN REFUGEES **LEARNING PROCESS | SESSION ONE**

1. THINK, WRITE NOW PROMPT [10 minutes] *Students 'free write' on the following*
Instruct students to free-write, in response to the following questions:

“What do you know about the ways people in Iraq have been affected by the war?
Where did you learn this information?”

2. MEDIA EXPERIENCE [5 minutes] *Show the [Media Frenzy and Forgotten Refugees](#) clip.*

Before showing the video, give students the handout provided, and ask them to record information in the chart provided as they watch the video clip. Explain the areas of the handout, as needed, and answer any clarifying questions from the class. Show the clip.

3. SEE, THINK, WONDER [10 minutes] *Facilitate a classroom discussion.*

Facilitate the following classroom dialogue, using questions like the ones below, as soon as they finish watching the video clip.

- What did you see in this clip about the two stories discussed?
- Why do you think the coverage of both stories was different?
- What do you wonder about how the media decides which stories to cover on the news?

Students can also discuss their own reactions and opinions to this topic as well.

4. ANALYZING THE MEDIA [30 minutes] *Facilitate a classroom inquiry discussion.*

Once students have had a chance to process and respond to the video, discuss some of the specific information covered in the video.

Verify that students understand the concepts and terms covered in the video (a sample glossary is provided).

Ask students to then consider why the California wildfires got so much coverage in the American news, while the reports about Iraqi refugees did not.

Additional questions for the discussion can include:

- Why did each news outlet cover the story the way they did?
- How do news outlets decide which stories to cover?
- What factors might influence what stories are reported?
- Who is the audience for each of these media outlets? How could this influence which stories a media outlet chooses to cover?

EXTENSION

MAKE YOUR OWN NEWS: MEDIA FRENZY AND FORGOTTEN REFUGEES

LEARNING PROCESS | SESSIONS TWO THROUGH FIVE

CREATE YOUR OWN NEWS REPORT [Time will vary]

After this discussion, students will have a chance to step into the shoes of the people who make decisions about what news stories to cover and how to cover them.

Students will take recent/relevant events and will create a 60 second TV news report. They will do so from the perspective of a particular news outlet, to encourage them to think about how the news is created for particular audiences in particular places.

1. CHOOSE A TOPIC

Before the lesson commences, choose several recent current events topics. Try to choose a combination of national and global stories. Then choose several news outlets that show a variety of perspectives, such as those profiled in the video: ABC, CBS, or NBC News, BBC News, Al Jazeera, and Fox News.

If students are unfamiliar with these news outlets, provide online clips from these news agencies to find out more about the types of stories they report, who their audience is, and where stories are produced.

2. BREAK INTO TWO GROUPS

Divide students into two groups and ask each group to choose one of the pre-selected stories to cover. Then ask the group to randomly select one of the news outlets from a hat. Instruct students to keep their news outlet secret from other groups.

After student groups present their news reports, the class will try to guess which news outlet was represented.

3. RESEARCH THE STORIES

Give students 1-2 days to do research and find background materials on the story.

Then given them one class period to prepare a 60 second news report about their topic and write a script for the report, from the point of view of the particular news outlet they were assigned. Each of their 60 second news reports should include:

- Students identify their name and title as a reporter;
- Students present facts and background information about the issue they are reporting;
- Students present quotes or a short interview with one or more people affected by this issue.

4. PRESENT THE STORIES

The following day, have all the student groups present their 60 second news report to the class.

5. REFLECT ON THE PROCESS OF CREATING THE STORIES

After students perform their reports for the class, have them reflect on the activity by answering the following three questions in writing:

- How did you decide what information to include in your news report?
- If you had reported this story from a different news outlet, how would your reporting of the story change?
- Was it difficult to present all that you wanted to say about the story in just 60 seconds?

Have students share their responses and discuss with the class. What did students learn from this process? Can they identify any strengths and weaknesses about television news as a medium?

ALTERNATE EXTENSION

MAKE YOUR OWN NEWS: MEDIA FRENZY AND FORGOTTEN REFUGEES

LEARNING PROCESS | SESSION TWO THROUGH FIVE

This alternate extension activity has students track other important stories that might not be reported often in major news outlets, and has them create a news report about one of these stories to share with others.

1. THINK ABOUT THE STORIES

Ask students if they think there are other important issues or stories that are happening in the world today that are not getting much airtime in major news outlets.

Can they name any of these stories?

Why do you think these stories are underreported?

2. TALK ABOUT SOME STORIES

Every year, Doctors Without Borders releases a report about the Top Ten Most Underreported Humanitarian Stories. Check the publications page of their website (<http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/publications/reports/>) to download the most recent report and share it with students.

Discuss the story with students.

Below are some possible discussion questions:

- Have you heard about any of these stories before? If so, where?
- All these stories relate to humanitarian issues. Beside this, do you see any other patterns in these stories?
- Who is affected by the situations in these stories?
- Do you agree that these stories have been underreported? Why or why not? If you do agree, what can be done to increase the coverage of these stories?

3. RESEARCH A STORY

After the discussion, have students choose a story they believe has been underreported. It could be a story from the Doctors Without Borders report, or it could be another national or global story, or it could be a local story that affects them in their community and they believe is being overlooked by local news media. Tell students this is their chance to share this story with others. Have students gather information about the story, and then prepare a 60 second news report to inform the class about this issue.

4. PRESENT THE STORIES

In their 60 second report, they should include:

- Information and facts about the issue
- Who is being affected by this issue
- Why this issue is important and should be seen in the news

RESOURCES FOR STUDENT RESEARCH

Check these websites to find out more about what is happening to people affected by the war in Iraq, and to take action.

- UNHCR - <http://www.unhcr.org/iraq.html>
- Human Rights First - <http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/asylum/lifeline/>
- The International Rescue Committee - <http://www.theirc.org/special-report/iraqi-refugee-crisis.html>
- American Friends Service Committee (help refugees who have resettled in your area) - <http://www.afsc.org/iraq/refugees/resettlement.htm>

GLOBAL PULSE CURRICULUM UNIT: “MEDIA FRENZY & FORGOTTEN REFUGEES” STANDARDS COVERED: NATIONAL McREL AND CALIFORNIA CONTENT

NATIONAL STANDARDS FROM McREL

The National Standards were taken from McREL (Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning). For full list of McREL standards, go to: <http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>.

Language Arts – Grades 6-8

Reading Standard 7: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts

3. Summarizes and paraphrases information in texts (e.g., arranges information in chronological, logical, or sequential order; conveys main ideas, critical details, and underlying meaning; uses own words or quoted materials; preserves author’s perspective and voice)

Listening and Speaking Standard 8: Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes

6. Makes oral presentations to the class (e.g., uses notes and outlines; uses organizational pattern that includes preview, introduction, body, transitions, conclusion; uses a clear point of view; uses evidence and arguments to support opinions; uses visual media)

10. Understands elements of persuasion and appeal in spoken texts (e.g., purpose and impact of pace, volume, tone, stress, music; images and ideas conveyed by vocabulary)

Media Standard 9: Understands the characteristics and components of the media

3. Understands how the type of media affects coverage of events or issues (e.g., how the same event is covered by the radio, television, and newspapers; how each medium shapes facts into a particular point of view; how limitations and advantages of various media affect coverage of events)

5. Understands aspects of media production and distribution (e.g., different steps and choices involved in planning and producing various media; various professionals who produce media, such as news writers, photographers, camera operators, film directors, graphic artists, political cartoonists)

CALIFORNIA LANGUAGE ARTS CONTENT STANDARDS

Listening and Speaking – 6th grade

Organization and Delivery of Oral Communication

1.4 Select a focus, an organizational structure, and a point of view, matching the purpose, message, occasion, and vocal modulation to the audience.

1.5 Emphasize salient points to assist the listener in following the main ideas and concepts.

1.6 Support opinions with detailed evidence and with visual or media displays that use appropriate technology.

Speaking Applications 2.2 Deliver informative presentations.

a. Pose relevant questions sufficiently limited in scope to be completely and thoroughly answered.

b. Develop the topic with facts, details, examples, and explanations from multiple authoritative sources (e.g., speakers, periodicals, online information).

Listening and Speaking – 7th grade

Organization and Delivery of Oral Communication: 1.4 Organize information to achieve particular purposes and to appeal to the background and interests of the audience.

Organization and Delivery of Oral Communication: 1.5 Arrange supporting details, reasons, descriptions, and examples effectively and persuasively in relation to the audience.

Analysis and Evaluation of Oral and Media Communications: 1.8 Analyze the effect on the viewer of images, text, and sound in electronic journalism; identify the techniques used to achieve the effects in each instance studied.

Listening and Speaking – 8th grade

Analysis and Evaluation of Oral and Media Communications: 1.8 Evaluate the credibility of a speaker (e.g. hidden agendas, slanted or biased material).

MEDIA FRENZY & FORGOTTEN REFUGEES CLASSROOM HANDOUT

Instructions: As you watch this short clip, record notes and statistics from the video in the chart below. You will use this information in the discussion after the video.

During the video clip:

# of people in California evacuated by wildfires in 2007	
# of people in Iraq displaced by the current war	
# of Iraqi refugees who have been allowed to resettle in the United States in 2007	

1. Which news outlets in this clip reported on the California wildfires?
2. Which news outlets in this clip reported on the Iraqi refugee crisis?

After the video clip:

What did you see in this clip about the two stories discussed?

Why do you think the coverage of both stories was different?

What do you wonder about how the media decides which stories to cover on the news? Are there any other things you wonder about after watching this clip?

MEDIA FRENZY & FORGOTTEN REFUGEES CLASSROOM HANDOUT
SAMPLE ANSWER KEY

Instructions: As you watch this short clip, record notes and statistics from the video in the chart below. You will use this information in the discussion after the video.

During the video clip:

# of people in California evacuated by wildfires in 2007	1 million
# of people in Iraq displaced by the current war	4.5 million
# of Iraqi refugees who have been allowed to resettle in the United States in 2007	1608

1. Which news outlets in this clip reported on the California wildfires?

ABC News, Fox News, NBC News (special report on animals)

2. Which news outlets in this clip reported on the Iraqi refugee crisis?

China's CCTV, Iran's Press TV

After the video clip:

3. What did you see in this clip about the two stories discussed?

4. Why do you think the coverage of both stories was different?

5. What do you wonder about how the media decides which stories to cover on the news? Are there any other things you wonder about after watching this clip?

MEDIA FRENZY & FORGOTTEN REFUGEES CLASSROOM HANDOUT GLOSSARY

Below is a glossary of terms that were described in the Link TV clip, “Media Frenzy and the Forgotten Refugees”.

Refugee – A person who is forced to flee their country because of danger or persecution (being harassed or harmed because of one’s race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or beliefs). People who are forced to flee across the border of their own country into another country have specific rights under international law, and are usually protected by agencies of the United Nations or other countries.

Displaced – A person who has been forced to leave their home, whether due to violence, persecution, natural disasters, or some other force affecting their safety.

Resettlement – This refers to the process where refugees who are not able to return to their home country (perhaps because of war or continuing persecution) are able to move permanently to another country, such as the United States. When refugees are forced to flee from their own country, they often end up in camps or shelters set up by international agencies, but these arrangements are only intended to be temporary. If a refugee cannot return home, they can apply to be resettled, and leave the temporary camps for a new life in a new country.

UNHCR – United Nations High Commission for Refugees

This agency, part of the United Nations, works to protect the rights of refugees around the world and help them return to their home country or resettle in another country. UNHCR works to help people who are displaced within their own country, or refugees who have been forced to flee across the border into other countries.

For additional information about refugees and UNHCR, go to their website at:
<http://www.unhcr.org/basics.html>