




# Can I come in?

*Refugee go home! He would if he could.*


**THEMES**

 HUMAN SECURITY


 DISCRIMINATION

 PEACE AND VIOLENCE


**COMPLEXITY**

 LEVEL 3

**GROUP SIZE**

 6-20

**TIME**

 60 MINUTES

- Themes** Human Security, Discrimination and Xenophobia, Peace and Violence
- Complexity** Level 3
- Group size** 6 - 20
- Time** 60 minutes
- Overview** This is a role-play about a group of refugees trying to escape to another country. It addresses:
- The plight of refugees
  - The social and economic arguments for giving and denying asylum
- Related rights**
- The right to seek and enjoy, in other countries, asylum from persecution
  - The right of non-refoulement (the right of refugees not to be returned to their country where they can risk persecution or death)
  - The right not to be discriminated against
- Objectives**
- To develop knowledge and understanding about refugees and their rights
  - To understand the arguments for giving and denying refugees entry into a country
  - To promote solidarity with people who are suddenly forced to flee their homes.
- Materials**
- Role cards
  - Chalk and or furniture to create the border crossing post
  - Pens
  - Paper
- Preparation**
- Copy one information sheet per participant
  - Copy the role cards, one for each immigration officer, refugee and observer
  - Set the scene for the role-play. For example, draw a line on the floor to represent a border or arrange furniture to make a physical frontier with a gap for the check post. Use a table to serve as a counter in the immigration office and make signs for the immigration office about entry and customs regulations, etc.

## Instructions

1. Explain that this is a role-play about a group of refugees fleeing their homeland who wish to enter another country in search of safety.
2. Start with a brainstorm to find out what people know about refugees. Write the points on a large sheet of paper or flipchart paper to refer to in the discussion later.
3. Show people the set-up in the room and read out the following text. "It is a dark, cold and wet night on the border between X and Y. A large number of refugees

have arrived, fleeing from the war in X. They want to cross into Y. They are hungry, tired and cold. They have little money, and no documents except their passports. The immigration officials from country Y have different points of view - some want to allow the refugees to cross, but others don't. The refugees are desperate, and use several arguments to try to persuade the immigration officials."

4. Divide the participants into equal groups. One group to represent the refugees from country X, the second group to represent the immigration officers in country Y and the third group to be observers.
5. Tell the "refugees" and the "immigration officers" to work out a role for each person and what their arguments will be. Distribute the handouts and give them fifteen minutes to prepare.
6. Start the role-play. Use your own judgement about when to stop, but about ten minutes should be long enough.
7. Give the observers five minutes to prepare their feedback.

### Debriefing and Evaluation

Start by asking the observers to give general feedback on the role-play. Then get comments from the players about how it felt to be a refugee or an immigration officer and then move on to a general discussion about the issues and what people learnt.

- How fair was the treatment of the refugees?
- Refugees have a right to protection under Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. Were the refugees given their right to protection? Why/why not?
- Should a country have the right to turn refugees away?
- Would you do this yourself if you were an immigration officer? What if you knew they faced death in their own country?
- What sorts of problems do refugees face once inside your country?
- What should be done to solve some of the problems of acceptance faced by refugees?
- Are there any Internally Displaced Persons in your country? Or in a neighbouring country?
- What can and should be done to stop people becoming refugees in the first place?

### Tips for the facilitator

Use the brainstorm to ascertain how much people already know about why there are refugees, what causes people to flee their homeland, and where they come from and the countries that they go to. This will help you decide how to guide the debriefing and evaluation, and what additional information you may need to provide at that stage.

Think about what to do if someone in the group is a refugee. Perhaps, they should not be in the group role-playing the refugees in case they have painful memories of the experience.

The three groups do not have to be equal. You may, for instance, choose to have only three or four observers and let the rest of the group be active role-players.

You may wish to give the observers copies of the further information so that they can inform themselves of the rights of refugees while the rest are preparing for the role-play.

The scene is set on a dark, cold and wet night. So why not turn off the lights and open the windows when you do the role-play? To add to the refugees' confusion, you could make the

signs at the border in a foreign (or invented) language. Remember to brief the immigration officials in group 2 about what the signs say!

Note: This activity was adapted from *First Steps: A Manual for starting human rights education*, Amnesty International, London, 1997. The quote, “Refugee go home! He would if he could” was a slogan used in an UNHCR campaign.

### Variations

Run the role-play again, but let immigration officers and the refugees swap parts. The observers should now have the additional task of noting any differences between the first and the second role-plays, especially those that resulted in a higher protection of the refugees’ rights.

Do a follow-on role-play involving an official team sent by UNHCR to help the refugees from country X.

A school class may like to carry on with the topic by researching information about the role of UNHCR ([www.unhcr.ch](http://www.unhcr.ch)) and then writing an “official report” including the following points:

- Those arguments which persuaded the immigration officers to let the refugees in
- Any inappropriate behaviour by the immigration officers
- Recommendations for what country Y should do to protect the rights of the refugees.

### Suggestions for follow-up

Find out more about refugees in your country, especially about the realities of their daily lives. Participants could contact a local refugee association and interview workers and refugees.

If you want to try an activity that follows the events after refugees have crossed the borders and are applying for asylum, you can run the activity “The language barrier”, on page 228.

### Ideas for action

Make contact with a local or national organisation that works for refugees who are sheltering in your country and see what you can do to support them. For example, they may need people to help gather essential items and deliver them to refugees.

### Further Information

Every year millions of people have to leave their homes, and often their countries, because of persecution or war. These people become refugees. They nearly always have to move suddenly and leave most of their possessions behind. In the move families often get separated. Many refugees are never able to return to their homes.

Most refugees seek safety in a neighbouring country, arriving in large numbers at a time (called a mass influx). Other refugees have to travel great distances to find safety and arrive at airports and seaports far from their native land.

In 1951, the United Nations adopted the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees to which more than half of the countries in the world have now signed up. There is a United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), which oversees the implementation of the convention and assists refugees, mainly with humanitarian aid.

According to the Convention, a refugee is someone who has left their country and is unable to return because of a real fear of being persecuted because of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion. The main protection that a refugee must have is the right not to be returned to their country where they can risk persecution or death (right of non-refoulement). This also applies if a government wants to send a refugee to a third country from which the refugee might be sent home.

Governments have the duty to hear the claim of a refugee who wants to find safety (seek asylum) in their country. This principle applies to all states, whether or not they are party to the 1951 Convention. The 1951 Convention also says that refugees should be free from discrimination and should receive their full rights in the country where they go to be safe.

However, countries disagree about who a “genuine” refugee is; rich countries often say that refugees are not victims of oppression, but that they only want a better standard of living. They call them “economic migrants”. Governments often argue that refugees’ fears are exaggerated or untrue.

## Key date

**20 June**

World Refugee Day

## Numbers of Refugees Worldwide

Region (at 1 <sup>st</sup> January 2000)	Refugees
Africa	3 523 250
Asia	4 781 750
Europe	2 608 308
Latin America & the Caribbean	61 200
North America	636 300
Oceania	64 500
Total	11 675 380

Source:

*Refugees by numbers, 2000 Edition, UNHCR Publications.*

## Origin of Major Refugee Populations in 1999

Country of Origin <i>Where do they come from?</i>	Main Countries of Asylum <i>Where do they go?</i>	Refugees
Afghanistan	Iran/Pakistan/India	2 562 000
Iraq	Iran/Saudi Arabia/Syria	572 500
Burundi	Tanzania/D. R. Congo	525 700
Sierra Leone	Guinea/Liberia/Gambia	487 200
Somalia	Ethiopia/Kenya/Yemen/Djibouti	451 600
Bosnia - Herzegovina	Yugoslavia/ Croatia/Slovenia	448 700
Angola	Zambia/ D. R. Congo/ Congo	350 600
Croatia	Yugoslavia/Bosnia-Herzegovina	340 400

Source:

*Refugees by numbers, 2000 Edition, UNHCR Publications.*

## Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Not every person who has been forced to flee his/her home moves to another country; these are called internally displaced persons (IDPs). The IDPs are the fastest growing group of displaced persons in the world. In Europe the number of IDPs (3 252 300) is higher than the number of refugees (2 608 380), with major concentrations in Bosnia-Herzegovina and countries of the former Soviet Union. Unlike refugees, they are not protected by international law nor are they eligible to receive many types of aid. A widespread international debate has been launched on how best to help all IDPs and who should be responsible for their well-being. The UNHCR provides assistance to some groups of IDPs upon request of the Secretary General of the United Nations.

**HANDOUTS**
**Refugees' role card**
**Refugees' arguments and options**

You should prepare your arguments and tactics; it is up to you to decide whether to put your argument as a group or whether each member, individually, takes responsibility for putting individual arguments.

You can use these arguments and any others you can think of:

- It is our right to receive asylum.
- Our children are hungry; you have a moral responsibility to help us.
- We will be killed if we go back.
- We have no money.
- We can't go anywhere else.
- I was a doctor in my hometown.
- We only want shelter until it is safe to return.
- Other refugees have been allowed into your country.

Before the role-play, think about the following options:

- Will you split up if the immigration officers ask you to?
- Will you go home if they try to send you back?

You are to role-play a mixed group of refugees, so in your preparations each person should decide their identity: their age, gender, family relationships, profession, wealth, religion and any possessions they have with them.

**Immigration officers' role card**
**Immigration officers' arguments and options**

You should prepare your arguments and tactics; it is up to you to decide whether to put your argument as a group or whether each member, individually, takes responsibility for putting individual arguments.

You can use these arguments and any others you can think of:

- They are desperate: we can't send them back.
- If we send them back we will be responsible if they are arrested, tortured or killed.
- We have legal obligations to accept refugees.
- They have no money, and will need state support. Our country cannot afford that.
- Can they prove that they are genuine refugees? Maybe they are just here to look for a better standard of living?
- Our country is a military and business partner of their country. We can't be seen to be protecting them.
- Maybe they have skills that we need?
- There are enough refugees in our country. We need to take care of our own people. They should go to the richer countries.
- If we let them in, others will also demand entry.
- They don't speak our language, they have a different religion and they eat different food. They won't integrate.
- They will bring political trouble.
- There may be terrorists or war criminals hiding among them

Before the role-play, think about the following options:

- Will you let all of the refugees across the border?
- Will you let some across the border?
- Will you split them up by age, profession, wealth...?
- Will you do something else instead?

**Observers' role card**

Your job is to observe the role-play. At the end of the role-play you will be asked to give general feedback. Choose a member to be your representative.

As you watch you should, amongst other things, be aware of:

- The different roles played by both the refugees and immigration officers
- The arguments they use and how they present them.
- Look out for any infringements of human and refugees' rights

You have to decide how you are going to take note of everything. For example, you may consider dividing into two sub-groups so one group observes the immigration officers and the other the refugees.