

## Lied Discovery Children's Museum



### 6<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Lesson Plan: “Rights, Responsibilities, and Refugees”

#### Introduction

##### **What does it mean to be a refugee?**

A visit to ***Torn From Home: My Life as a Refugee*** helps to answer this question for students as they consider how it would feel to leave everything behind when forced to flee one's home. Using the perspectives of refugee children, the exhibition guides visitors through various interactive components which facilitate an understanding of refugee experiences: losing home, living in a camp, securing food and water on a daily basis, going to school, and resettling.

*Torn From Home: My Life as a Refugee* provides 8 to 12-year-old students with an introduction to the plight of refugees and the importance of human rights. Students explore the human side of today's refugee crisis and gain an understanding of the hardship and hope experienced by nearly 30 million refugees worldwide. The exhibition was developed in collaboration with international and local refugee aid organizations.

This lesson plan is designed to support student learning both in the classroom and in conjunction with an in-depth visit to the interactive exhibit, *Torn From Home: My Life as a Refugee*. Developed for 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders, this lesson has several aims: to help students understand that people become refugees because their basic human rights have been violated in their own countries; to familiarize students with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; to understand why such a declaration was drawn up at the time and its continued relevance. While working through this unit, students will also learn that it is the responsibility of the international community to recognize and ensure that refugees are able to enjoy their basic human rights.

#### Educational Objectives

As a result of participating in this lesson plan, students will consider and discuss the following questions:

- What is a refugee?
- What conditions cause refugees to flee their homelands?
- What are basic human rights?

- What is the nature of human rights and responsibilities? (Focus is on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as a document which sets forth the basic civic, economic, political, and social rights and freedoms of every person.)
- What is purpose of the United Nations?
- What can individuals and governments do to ensure respect of human rights?

## Learners

This lesson plan is designed for 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade students, although it can be adapted to support or suit individual student needs and interests.

## The Importance of the Topic

Intolerance can be learned from a very early age and adult attitudes can be difficult to change. It is therefore very important to support & implement multicultural human rights education as early as possible. It is only through exposure, familiarity, and safe and open discussions that students can feel sameness and appreciate differences of the many cultures our society needs to embrace in an effort to promote unity and aid in conflict resolution. By giving students the background they need, we can expect our students to be tolerant and responsible citizens. They will be more willing to choose constructive problem solving over conflict and violence and be more empathetic and motivated to help those in need.<sup>1</sup>

## Materials

- Computer(s) with internet access (for viewing “God Grew Tired of Us” video clips) is ideal. Computer labs could be used.
- Books (See information below.)
- Globe or world map

## Resources

**Vocabulary:** For a list of pertinent vocabulary words, see the **Glossary of Terms** provided on the Education page at [www.TornFromHome.org](http://www.TornFromHome.org) or in educator materials available through host museums.

**"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 of a particular social group. A refugee either cannot return home, or is afraid to do so."<sup>2</sup>

**Books:** A **Recommended Reading** list is provided on the Education page at [www.TornFromHome.org](http://www.TornFromHome.org) or in educator materials available through host museums.

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpted and adapted from Amnesty International Lesson “We are One Family”:  
<http://www.amnestyusa.org/lesson-plans/we-are-one-family-my-family--your-family--our-families/page.do?id=1051076&n1=4&n2=79&n3=225>

<sup>2</sup> Definition of refugee from the 1951 Refugee Convention:  
[http://www.unhcr.org.ua/main.php?article\\_id=8&view=full](http://www.unhcr.org.ua/main.php?article_id=8&view=full)

## Teaching Resources:

The **UNHCR** (The UN Refugee Agency) website is a rich resource for teachers preparing lessons for students about refugees.

<http://www.unhcr.org/help/4072c8174.html>

UNHCR Educational Kits, Teaching Guides and Videos are available, free of charge, upon request. To view selection, go to:

<http://www.unhcr.org/help/4083cb6c4.html>

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### USA for UNHCR Teacher's Corner

<http://www.usaforunhcr.org/educationalresources.cfm>

### BEYOND THE FIRE

BEYOND THE FIRE introduces the real-life stories of 15 teenagers, now living in the U.S., who have survived war in seven war zones. These stories tell of loss, hope, fear, strength and despair—and most of all, resilience. Educator resources include: an interactive world map, teen refugee stories (using audio and Flash-animated movies), conflict timelines, information about countries from which refugees fled, lesson plans and additional resources. See website for educators:

<http://www.itvs.org/beyondthefire/education.html>

### National Geographic Expeditions

General Lesson Plan Search Results using “refugee” “lessons” “all grades” “geography”

[http://thinkfinity.org/PartnerSearch.aspx?Search=True&orgn\\_id=4&subject=geography&partner=all&resource\\_type=lessons&q=refugee&grade=all](http://thinkfinity.org/PartnerSearch.aspx?Search=True&orgn_id=4&subject=geography&partner=all&resource_type=lessons&q=refugee&grade=all)

### Amnesty International

Human Rights Education Lesson Plans

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/educate/lesson-plans/page.do?id=1102163&n1=4&n2=79&n3=225>

Lesson plans are targeted to elementary through high school students.

## Approximate Time Needed

This lesson will take four to five 45-minute class periods.

## Preparation

- If using this lesson plan as preparation to see *Torn From Home: My Life as a Refugee*, teachers are encouraged to review background material provided at [www.TornFromHome.org](http://www.TornFromHome.org) to become familiar with refugee issues and the content of the exhibition.
- In transitioning between Activities 1 & 2, teachers may wish to introduce portions of other lessons available on UNHCR's website, in the Teaching About Refugees section. For example, teachers can use the Geography units for ages 9-11: "Refugees - Who, Where and Why?": <http://www.unhcr.org/help/HELP/465164ae2.html>

With many examples, these lessons will make the concept of a refugee clearer to the students. Review these lessons beforehand and see if there are any portions you want to use to set the stage (especially if using this lesson prior to a museum visit).

- Make copies for students of the Student Resource Sheet: Universal Declaration of Human Rights (abbreviated) (<http://www.unhcr.org/help/HELP/4693806f2.html>), or have it prepared on an overhead transparency.
- Make a few copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in its full form: <http://www.unhchr.ch/udhr/lang/eng.htm>
- Set up a computer(s) with internet access to watch the "God Grew Tired of Us" clips at: <http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/player/places/countries-places/sudan/from-sudan-ggtu.html> (Clips tell the story of the "Lost Boys" of Sudan.) **Teachers should preview available clips and decide which ones to use in class.**

Or, obtain a DVD/VHS copy of the movie to watch. (See: [http://www.amazon.com/God-Grew-Tired-John-Bul/dp/B000R8YC22/ref=pd\\_bbs\\_sr\\_1?ie=UTF8&s=dvd&qid=1221254290&sr=8-1](http://www.amazon.com/God-Grew-Tired-John-Bul/dp/B000R8YC22/ref=pd_bbs_sr_1?ie=UTF8&s=dvd&qid=1221254290&sr=8-1))

**Teachers should preview this 90-minute documentary prior to using with class as some content is graphic and may not be suitable for all students.**

## **Procedure**

Activity 1: "Rights and Responsibilities: The Two Sides of a Coin"

(Approximately 1 to 2 class periods)

### **Introduction**

Teachers can begin by asking the students how they would feel if everyone in the class did what he or she liked all the time. For example, everyone can talk when they want to, even at the same time; everyone can say what they like; everyone can use whatever they like, even if the object does not belong to them; everyone can lose their temper and even hit others if they want to. Try to involve as many students as possible in this discussion.

Encourage the students to think about the consequences of anarchy in the classroom, and to think about the desirability of class rules that allow each student to feel secure and valued in class.

### Group Discussion

Break class into small groups to discuss what should be done to maintain a friendly and working environment in the classroom. This exercise will help students to think in terms of rights and responsibilities.

First, the students need to decide what their basic rights are in the classroom. An example to start them off could be: Every student, and even the teacher, should feel safe in this classroom. Have the students identify at least five classroom rights.

When the students get back together again, a representative from each group can write on the blackboard what basic rights were agreed upon in their groups. If the combined list is long, the students need to agree which rights are the most basic and important. The students should give reasons for their choices.

Then, ask the students to decide collectively how each of these rights can be realized. In other words, how should everyone in the classroom behave to ensure that these rights are respected? For instance, if everyone has the right to feel safe in the classroom, then no one should physically or emotionally hurt anyone else. The students should draw up a set of rules to ensure that everyone's rights are respected. Stress that each member of the classroom is responsible for obeying these rules to maintain a friendly and working environment in the classroom. Discuss the problems that would be encountered if no one accepted these responsibilities.

### Optional Transition to Next Activity

Teachers may wish to introduce portions of other lessons available on UNHCR's website, in the Teaching About Refugees section, to facilitate a transition to the next activity. For example, teachers can use the Geography units for ages 9-11: Refugees - Who, Where and Why?: <http://www.unhcr.org/help/HELP/465164ae2.html>. With many examples, these lessons will make the concept of a refugee clearer to the students.

Ask students to define "refugee." Share this definition:

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

Go through the definition carefully, to ensure that the concepts are clearly understood.

Activity 2: "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights"

(Approximately 1 class period)

### Preparation

- Make copies for students of the Student Resource Sheet: Universal Declaration of Human Rights (abbreviated) (<http://www.unhcr.org/help/HELP/4693806f2.html>), or have it prepared on an overhead transparency.
- Have available copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in its full form: <http://www.unhchr.ch/udhr/lang/eng.htm>

### Introduction

Making reference to the previous activity, ask students to give definitions and interpretations of the words "rights" and "responsibilities." Create a list of defining phrases. Discuss list.

Note that while every person in the world has basic rights, these rights need to be guaranteed through the maintenance of a framework of rules.

**The Universal Declaration of Human Rights** is such a framework of rules.

### Content & Discussion

Individual copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (abbreviated) can be handed out, or displayed on an overhead transparency. If possible, copies of the Declaration in its full form should be made available to the students.

Convey the following information to the students:

Human rights could be generally defined as those rights that are inherent in our nature and without which we cannot live as human beings.

Human rights and fundamental freedoms allow us to develop fully and use our human qualities, our intelligence, our talents and our conscience to satisfy our needs. They are based on humankind's increasing demand for a life in which the inherent dignity and worth of each human being will receive respect and protection.

The denial of human rights and fundamental freedoms is not only an individual and personal tragedy, but it also creates conditions of social and political unrest, sowing the seeds of violence and conflict within and between societies and nations. As the first sentence of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, respect for human rights and human dignity "is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world".

In 1945, after the horrors of World War II, an international organization was established, known as the United Nations, dedicated to maintaining peace and security and to seek co-

operation in solving economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian problems. In 1948, a code of conduct for the protection of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms, to which all men and women, everywhere in the world, are entitled without any discrimination, was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. This was called the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Declaration is not legally binding, but its content has been incorporated into many national constitutions, and it has become a standard measure of human rights.

Break the students into groups and assign each group a set of the most important articles of the Declaration (articles 1-5, 13-14, 17-21, 25-26). Tell students that their assignment will be to explain their article to the rest of the class, and as part of that, to give examples of how the article would be interpreted.

After a brief discussion period, ask each group to explain their articles to the rest of the class. (Some are reasonably straightforward; others will require some interpretation by the teacher).

Discuss any areas of confusion or uncertainty.

Restate that The Declaration is not legally binding, but its content has been incorporated into many national constitutions, and it has become a standard measure of human rights. It is an important document with which to be familiar when studying refugee issues.

### Activity 3: “God Grew Tired of Us”

(Approximately 1 to 2 class periods)

1. Show students a selection of the video clips from the documentary film, “God Grew Tired of Us,” see: <http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/player/places/countries-places/sudan/from-sudan-ggtu.html>. (Clips tell the story of the “Lost Boys” of Sudan.) (If using full-length film, teacher may want to edit and/or stop & start for discussion purposes.)
2. Use the video clips as the basis for a summary discussion about the refugee experience and refugee rights. Teachers can use the following questions can be used to guide discussion with students:
  - *When they were forced to flee Sudan and live in refugee camps, what are some of the basic rights the boys lost?*
  - *What questions and fears do the Lost Boys have about life in the U.S.? What questions and fears would you have if you were moving to a new place?*
  - *What are some of the challenges the Lost Boys encounter?*
  - *How do they adapt to life in the United States (think in terms of both assimilation and acculturation)? How do you think you would adapt to life in a new country?*
  - *What responsibilities do you think refugees might have in their host countries?*
  - *What sense of responsibility do the Lost Boys feel toward each other and toward their families and friends still in Africa? In what ways are they trying to improve their own lives and those of their families and friends?*

- What can governments do to protect the rights of refugees?
- What can you do to make a difference in your own community?

### **Extensions: Suggested Pre- and Post-Visit Activities**

Teachers are encouraged to alter the activities described above as needed. Units can be streamlined or extended according to educational goals and time available.

This lesson is most appropriate as preparation for a visit to the *Torn From Home: My Life as a Refugee* exhibit, but it could be used to reflect on students' thoughts and experiences following a visit.

Connect the lesson plan to Geography curriculum by assigning students, or groups of students, countries to study. (As preparation to visit *Torn From Home: My Life as a Refugee*, groups can focus on some of the countries featured, including: Afghanistan, Chechnya, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Myanmar, and Sudan.) Have students prepare presentations about recent events which have caused people to flee. Encourage them to include information about the numbers of people affected, and if possible, their current status.

The Doctors without Borders Refugee Camp online interactive exhibit provides photos and information about life inside the camps: <http://www.refugeecamp.org/home/refugeecamp.htm>

Connect the lesson plan to the Health curriculum by assigning students, or groups of students, medical and health-related issues in refugee camps. Visit the Doctors Without Borders site above. Topics could include: contaminated water, water-borne diseases that cause diarrhea (such as dysentery & cholera), emotional trauma, weakened immune systems, malnutrition, malaria, or measles. Have students prepare presentations to share with the class. Encourage them to include information about the numbers of people affected by these health-related issues, and what is being done by organizations like Doctors Without Borders.

The National Geographic Lesson Plan, "God Grew Tired of Us: Migration and Cultural Interaction" (<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/lessons/09/g68/index.html>) has more activities pertaining to the film, involving mapping migration journeys, cultural difference, and interaction.

Find out if there are any refugees from Sudan in your community or region. (Search the Internet or a newspaper index to find articles about Lost Boys in your area). If there are refugees in your area, ask if any would be willing to visit your school and talk with students. If not, contact one of the Lost Boys groups with active Web sites and try to establish a pen-pal correspondence between them and your students. For links to local, national, and international Lost Boys organization visit God Grew Tired of Us: <http://www.godgrewtiredofus.com/>.

Search for organizations in the area that serve war refugees, and inquire about having a guest speaker come to the class. Some organizations working with refugees may also have volunteer

opportunities for students to extend the lesson outside of the classroom. (Check with the museum hosting the exhibition, as they may have already developed connections and will be able to assist.)

### **Credits**

The activities in this lesson plan are adapted and/or excerpted from units developed by the United Nations Refugee Agency and National Geographic:

UNHCR “Rights, Responsibilities, and Refugees” Unit Plan for 12-14 in Human Rights and Refugees: <http://www.unhcr.org/help/HELP/4693769e2.html>

National Geographic Lesson Plan, “God Grew Tired of Us: Migration and Cultural Interaction”:  
<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/lessons/09/g68/index.html>