

Lesson Plan: The History of Refugee Resettlement

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Featured resource

[KQED's The Lowdown: History of Refugee Resettlement since World War II \[Interactive Timeline\]](#)

[Graphic organizer: Refugee Timeline Scavenger Hunt](#)



Takver/Flickr

Opening quick write prompt:

What is the difference between an immigrant and a refugee? If you're not sure, think about recent debates about whether refugees from certain countries should be allowed in the United States and make your best prediction about the difference between the two terms?

A quick write allows students to write down their thoughts before discussing the opening question in order to increase participation and make the discussion more accessible to English Language Learners.

Objective

- Students will analyze the history and the ongoing debate surrounding the resettlement of refugees in the United States.
- Students will reflect on the plight of refugees both past and present and evaluate how the U.S. government's treatment of refugees has changed over time.

Essential Question and Lesson Context

How have refugees historically been treated in the United States? How does the current debate about refugees relate to past refugee policies?

Since World War II, U.S. policy toward refugees has changed from decade to decade, often motivated by shifting international priorities and domestic concerns. Today, as the worst refugee crisis in recent history unfolds as a result of conflicts in the Middle East, President Trump has significantly reduced the number of refugees the U.S. will admit this year from 110,000 to 50,000. The administration has voiced fears that terrorists from war-torn nations would pose as refugees. Refugee advocates counter that refugees are so well-vetted that it is extremely unlikely a terrorist would be granted asylum.

Key vocabulary

Pre-teach key vocabulary before students do the reading, especially if you have English Language Learners. After going over the simple definition, consider providing a visual aid or having students draw one. More ideas for how to pre-teach vocabulary can be found [here](#).

Word	Simple definition
Fluctuate (v.)	To change, to shift back and forth uncertainly
Immigrant (n.)	A person who comes to another country to live there, often motivated by economic opportunity
Refugee (n.)	A person who flees their own country to escape danger, war or oppression
Vet (v.)	To check something or someone carefully to make sure they are acceptable

Direct instruction and guided practice

- Discuss the quick-write prompt to discover what students already know about refugees and the legal difference between refugees and other immigrants.
- Using the cartoon found in [The Lowdown post](#), review the difference between refugees and immigrants. Remind students that both groups are often motivated by forces beyond their control. This could be a war (refugees) or lack of economic opportunity (immigrants).
- As a class or in small groups, students read [The Lowdown post](#) introduction (but before the interactive timeline). Remind students that most countries in the Middle East are in Asia (ex: Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan).
- **Check for understanding:** How many refugees has the United States accepted since 1975? (Answer: More than 3 million) Why are refugees in the spotlight again right now? (Students should use the Lowdown post as well as their prior knowledge.)

Independent practice

- **Transition to independent practice:** Individually or in small groups, students explore the interactive timeline found in [The Lowdown post](#) in search of answers to the questions on the handout: [Refugee Timeline Scavenger Hunt](#)
 - Model this process with the first question, if needed.

Assessment/reflection

- As a class, discuss and/or reflect in writing on the following questions:
 - What do all refugees have in common, regardless of where they come from?
 - What's an example of when the United States has welcomed refugees? When, besides right now, has the U.S. more strictly controlled the flow of refugees?
 - Do you think the United States should let in more or fewer refugees? Why? Explain your answer using evidence from the timeline or article.

Circle chats, small-group discussions and [think-pair-share](#) provide a safer space for students to practice speaking and listening, and also boost participation during whole-class discussions.

Extension/homework

Follow your issue through the first 100 days. [Using these resources and others](#), ask students to make a plan for how they can follow their issue through the first 100 days (the end of April).

First 100 Days: Art in the Age of Trump: KQED Arts is accepting submission from artists of all ages for this series. Art of all types (visual, music, dance, poetry) are welcome, and ideally submissions should focus on a specific issue, rather than the appearance or personality of a politician. Find the online submission form [here](#).

Common Core standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1	Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7	Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.1	Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.