

# Energy of a Nation: Immigrants in America -Resources for Learning about Immigration

*Name of organisation:*  
The Advocates for Human Rights

## Lesson 5: Refugees and Asylum Seekers

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**Goal:** To learn about refugees and asylum seekers

**Objectives:**

- Students will gain an understanding of refugees and asylum seekers, including information about refugees' personal journeys
- Students will examine the number of refugees and asylum seekers in the U.S. and examine the personal stories of two asylum seekers
- Students will explore possible causes of immigration of refugees to the U.S. and the impact on society
- Students will study where refugees and asylum seekers come from, why they flee their homes, and how they journey to the United States

**Materials:** Student notebooks/journals

**Time Frame:** Four to five class periods

**Age Level:** Middle school to adult Vocabulary: Refugee, Asylum, Asylum seeker

**Relevant Subject Areas and Connection to Minnesota State High School Standards:**

- Inquiry and Research: *World History and Cultures*
- Write and Speak: *Academic Writing, Interpersonal Communication*
- French language class
- Spanish Language class

### **Activity #2: Understanding the Journeys (1-2 class periods)**

#### **Fleeing For Your Life**

(lesson 5 handout #5)

#### **Refugee Role-Play Activity**

##### **PART ONE**

1. Give each participant an identity and family group number (see identities below). Students could select the paper with their identity from a bag at the beginning of the activity.
2. Set up the role-play scenario (see description below).

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3. Have the students write down the ten items that they would bring with them, based on who their identity is. They have two minutes to decide. They should write it in large letters so that they can share their list with others.
4. For five to ten minutes, convene the family groups (of 3-6 people each). These small family units must now decide together what they can take with them. Each person can only carry three things. All the items recommended from individual lists must be considered, but with the interest of the family in mind. Each person should construct a list of the three items he or she should carry. The group must take into consideration any elderly, sick, or very young people in the group who cannot carry items.
5. Once the time limit has passed, tell the families they now have to decide whether they will flee by foot or escape by boat. They need to think about where they will sleep, find food, etc. There are refugee camps in the surrounding states where they can stay.
6. Come back together and have each group make a presentation on where they decided to go, how they would get there, and what they decided to take.

Discussion questions:

- Why did you choose the items you did? Why did you eliminate other items?
- Did you choose items based on what you thought you would need and/or what would help you remember your life back at home?
- Do you think you could carry all of them?
- Where did you decide to flee and why? How long should it take to get there?
- Who had the most say in the decision-making process? Why was that?
- How do you feel about what is happening?

## **PART TWO**

The families have now made it into refugee camps. Explain to the students that in the camps, the refugees themselves do a great deal of the work, handling a great many of the day-to-day responsibilities.

1. Have each participant make two lists: a. What they think they can offer to others in the camp based on their identity b. In what ways they need help from relief workers in camp
2. Discuss with the participants what they can offer. Then discuss what their needs are, and whether they think relief workers can help them.

## **PART THREE**

Now the year is 2004. After spending four years in the refugee camp, the families have been safely resettled in a “third country”—in this case, the United States in Chicago, Illinois

Reassign Family #1 and Family #2. They will now play the role of a family living in Chicago. The children of the family attend a small, diverse public school. New refugee families (the other families in the role play) have just been resettled in their neighborhood.

1. Families #1 and #2 will play the role of host community. They should outline what they would do to welcome the new families. (They should be encouraged to include ideas at the individual, school and community levels).
2. The other families continue to play the role of the refugee. These students should list what they would do to work with the school and community and what their school and community could do to welcome them and to make their acclimation to Chicago easier.
3. Compare the lists and discuss. Is there anything that might be missing from the lists? How difficult or easy would it be for some of their suggestions to happen?

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## **Fleeing For Your Life: Role Play Scenario**

Citizens of the state of Wisconsin, wanting more land for their people, have invaded Minnesota. Entering the state through Stillwater, the Wisconsinites have taken control of the Capitol Building in St. Paul and the police and National Guard throughout the state. There are snipers in the skyways and the Mall of America has been blown up. I-94 and I-35 have been closed. The Wisconsinites have taken over the Metrodome and are using it as a staging ground for their troops. You have heard rumors that the invaders are going to be going door to door, and unless you can prove that you were born in Wisconsin, you will be arrested and taken to an undisclosed location. Fighting has begun in the Twin Cities and is spreading into the suburbs and rural towns across the state. You can hear the fighting around your house. Mobs of Wisconsinites are roaming the streets and have set fire to your neighbor's house. You realize that you must flee Minnesota tonight. You have two hours to pack your belongings. Because all of the roads are blocked, you must head toward a refugee camp in North Dakota or Iowa.

**Refugee Identities (These can be added to and adapted as necessary)** *Copy and cut identities into individual strips. Have one for each student in the class.*

Family #1 Mother, stays at home with children, has skill in sewing and child care

Family #1 Father, works as an electrical engineer

Family #1 Daughter, 18 years old, looking forward to going to college, has a boyfriend

Family #1 Son, 14 years old, likes to play soccer

Family #1 Son, 9 years old, has had health problems and needs constant medication

Family #2 Mother, works as a doctor, specializes in family medicine

Family #2 Father, works for "The Star Tribune" as a reporter on business issues, loves to cook

Family #2 Daughter, 12 years old, very studious, loves to read, in a wheelchair

Family #2 Daughter, 16 years old, wants to be an actress

Family #2 Daughter, 18 years old, computer whiz

Family #2 Grandmother, 75 years old, not able to walk easily, loves to tell stories

Family #3 Mother, divorced, works as a city bus driver

Family #3 Cousin (male), 21 years old, college student staying with the family while in school

Family #3 Son, 10 years old, loves to play basketball and play computer games

Family #3 Son, 6 years old, likes animals

Family #3 Daughter, 9 months old, cries a lot Family

#4 Grandmother, 60 years old, teaches grade 5

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Family #4 Grandfather, 65 years old, retired farmer Family

#4 Grandson, 12 years old, parents have died, likes to help his grandfather in the garden

Family #5 Father, dentist, likes to jog

Family #5 Mother, English professor, also a runner

Family #5 Daughter, 13 years old (twin), good swimmer

Family #5 Daughter, 13 years old (twin), very athletic

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