

CANADIAN PERCEPTIONS

Duration : 30 minutes

Main activity : Reading and discussion

Main topic : Canada, Immigration, Refugee protection

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this activity is to understand how the general public perceived the Indochinese refugee crisis and encouraged others to share their views. Before 1979, Canada only welcomed a few hundred refugees. Letters to the editor in the Globe and Mail show that Canadians did not unanimously agree about welcoming Indochinese refugees. Some, for example, did not understand why Vietnamese, Laotians and Cambodians should draw more attention than Chilean refugees. Yet a few letters advocated for a more proactive protection of Indochinese refugees because they were victims of persecution.



INSTRUCTIONS

You will be assigned one newspaper item : “Redemption” or “The Ultimate Humanity”.

Remember that a refugee is a person who seeks protection outside of their country of origin, due to a well-founded fear of persecution. Read the text and try to answer the following questions :

- What kind of writing is it (article, book review, letter to the editor, advert)?
- Who are the victims? What are the words used to emphasize that they are victims?
- Do you think that the victims depicted are representative of the entire refugee population?
- What is the source of persecution ? What are the words used to describe the danger, the chaos, or the persecution?
- Why is the refugees’ fear well-founded according to the text?
- Does that representation give an accurate depiction of the refugee crisis?

FURTHER READINGS

Canadian Immigration Historical Society. “Indochina Project.” <http://cihs-shic.ca/indochina/>.

Molloy, Michael J., Pere Duchinsky, Kurt F. Jensen, and Robert Shalka. Running on Empty, Canada and the Indochinese Refugees, 1975–1980. Montreal: McGill University Press, 2017.

The Canadian Encyclopedia. “Canadian Response to the “Boat People” Refugee Crisis.” <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/canadian-response-to-boat-people-refugee-crisis>.