



LESSON PLAN

Far from Home



RELATED PHOTO ESSAY

Crossing Borders

BY CIRIL JAZBEC



Key Idea

Civil war in Syria has contributed to an unprecedented global refugee crisis. The response from varying countries has been inconsistent, calling into question how our world community responds to the most basic human needs for safety, shelter, and security.

Background

According to The Washington Post, roughly 10.5 million people worldwide are being forced to flee their homes due to persecution, war, and other safety issues in their own countries, and children make up a large share—46% in 2012.* But in 2015, the refugee crisis hit extreme proportions, with a million refugees and migrants arriving in the European Union that year alone.

Refugees and migrants are fleeing conflicts in numerous Middle Eastern and African countries, yet it's the civil war in Syria, as well as the ongoing conflicts and instability in Iraq, that are causing the world's current crisis. Without Syrians, the number of refugees would match previous years.**

Individuals and families are traveling across land and sea hoping to reach Northern Europe, but it has been those trying to cross the Mediterranean who have received the most international attention from the media. News channels highlight the increase of tiny boats overladen with desperate passengers and images of children washing ashore. The number of deaths at sea (over 3,329 in 2015*** and 244 in the first month of 2016****) has demanded the world's attention to this humanitarian crisis.

In September 2015, photographer Ciril Jazbec documented the flow of migrants moving from Serbia into Croatia. While he was there, Hungary closed its borders and migrants were forced to travel across Croatia into his home country of Slovenia in order to proceed to various destinations in Northern Europe. Jazbec's documentation is captured in the photo essay, "Crossing Borders," which reflects the intensity, hardship, and the sheer enormity of this displaced population. It shows individuals and families who have fled the devastations of war and hope for a better future.



Class: 60 minutes

SUBJECT AREAS

HIGH SCHOOL

- English Language Arts
- Geography
- History
- Modern World Studies
- Psychology
- Sociology

COLLEGE

- English
- Geography
- History
- Psychology
- Sociology

THEMES

- Bearing witness
- Connection to home
- Cultural displacement

MATERIALS

- World map
- Access to the photo essay online (or printed copies of it)

PREPARATION

- (Optional) Make copies of the photo essay



* Janell Ross, "[The politics of the Syrian refugee crisis, explained.](#)" *The Washington Post*, September 11, 2015.

** Liz Sly, "[8 reasons Europe's refugee crisis is happening now.](#)" *The Washington Post*, September 18, 2015.

*** "[Mediterranean Update – Migrant Deaths Rise to 3,329 in 2015.](#)" International Organization for Migration, October 30, 2015.

**** "[Migrant Arrivals in Europe in 2016 top 55,000, Over 200 deaths.](#)" International Organization for Migration, January, 29, 2016.

Connections to National Standards

Common Core English Language Arts. SL.9-10.1 and SL.11-12.1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 [or 11-12] topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Common Core English Language Arts. SL.11-12.1.c. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

Common Core English Language Arts. W.9-10.3 and W.11-12.3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards. D2.Geo.2.9-12. Use maps, satellite images, photographs, and other representations to explain relationships between the locations of places and regions and their political, cultural, and economic dynamics.

College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards. D2.Geo.6.9-12. Evaluate the impact of human settlement activities on the environmental and cultural characteristics of specific places and regions.



Lesson

SETTING THE STAGE

The United States is considered to be a country that has, historically, welcomed refugees. Between 1975 and 2007, the U.S. took in approximately 2.5 million refugees.* Compare that number to the more than one million migrants and refugees who sought entry into Europe in 2015 *alone*.

Ask students if they know the difference between a refugee and a migrant. Explain that a migrant is an individual who chooses to leave his or her home country for any number of reasons, such as for a job or other opportunities. A refugee is someone who is fleeing armed conflict—like the civil war in Syria—or persecution, such as the Jewish people who fled Germany during the Holocaust.

Ask students if they have heard about the migrant/refugee crisis. If so, what stories have they come across in the media? Explain that refugees usually travel light and take one bag with them as they flee their homes. Ask students: if you had to pack one bag with 5 items, what would you bring? Why?

*Audrey Singer and Jill H. Wilson, "[Refugee Resettlement in Metropolitan Areas.](#)" Migration Policy Institute, March 1, 2007.

ENGAGING WITH THE STORY

Introduce the story by telling students that they will view a photo essay that captures refugees and migrants as they cross the borders of Serbia-Croatia and Croatia-Slovenia. The photo essay is documented from a Slovenian photographer's point of view.

Explain that a majority of refugees and migrants are coming from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and other countries in the Middle East. They are hoping to find a safe way to travel to Northern Europe. Show students a map of the Middle East and Europe, identifying the proximity of Syria and Croatia. Explain to students that the number of refugees leaving the Middle East is higher than it's ever been, primarily due to the civil war in Syria and ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Ask students to think about the impact of these photographs. Which specific photographs, do they think, are the most effective at connecting the viewer to the refugee experience? Why?



Delving Deeper

After viewing the photo essay, lead a discussion with such questions as:

- What activities and/or actions take place in the refugee camps, as depicted in this photo essay?
- Describe the environment in the photographs. How do the environmental conditions appear for the refugees in the photos? How are they described in the captions?
- Photographer Ciril Jazbec writes, “It’s difficult to understand the refugee crisis from the safety of one’s home—the images seem so foreign and distant.” The refugee crisis can be a difficult situation to understand, especially if you live on the other side of the world. Do you think this photo essay aids in illuminating the reality of the situation? If so, how?
- Photographer Ciril Jazbec says, “One night I was travelling with a group of about 3,000–4,000 migrants, a great deal of whom were whole families. They were tired and trying to cope with the cold. In such moments, it’s hard to come up with words.” Select a photograph that includes a family and describe what you see. What qualities might a photograph communicate to a viewer that a written piece may not convey?
- If you were to use one word or phrase to summarize the feelings of the refugees/migrants, as depicted in this essay, what would it be? Why?
- Which photo had the biggest impact on you as a viewer? Why?

Reflecting and Projecting

Give students one of the following reflective writing prompts to demonstrate their understanding of the story. (Note for teachers: Just as quotes from a book or text are used to prove an analytical thought, students use the photo essay to justify their reasoning.)

1. Photographer Ciril Jazbec writes, “I can’t imagine what it must be like to pack your life in a suitcase or backpack and leave on such a long and arduous journey.” Review the following article, [“What’s In My Bag.”](#) It describes items found in the bags of refugees crossing the Aegean



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Sea to Greece. The images and descriptions identify the possessions of a mother, child, teenager, pharmacist, artist, and a family. Write a paragraph describing what life as a refugee could be like, as deduced through the items in their travel bags. If you were one of these refugees, which bag would be most like your own? (C3.D2.Geo.2.9-12)

2. Photo no. 14 shows Marija, a resident of the small Slovenia town, Rigonce, looking out her window at refugees/migrants passing by. Write a narrative essay from Marija's point of view. In a paragraph, describe the details Marija sees. What might she be thinking? How many people does she see? What are they doing? How do they appear—tired? Happy? Sad? Eager? Energetic? Use the photo to support your narrative. (CCSS.ELA.W.9-10.3 and W.11-12.3)
3. The organization [Global Citizen](#) requested individuals to call-in and share their thoughts on the refugee crisis. One citizen in Great Britain who supports helping the refugees urged her government to take in refugees, saying: "If the shoe was on the other foot I would like to think that the world would help me if I was fleeing, so please do the right thing." Do you agree with her? Why or why not? Do you think she makes a good argument to help the refugees? Why or why not? (D2.Geo.6.9-12)
4. What was the most perceptive comment you heard today during the discussion? What value does it have for you? (CCSS.ELA.SL.11-12.1.c)

Resources

["Migrant crisis: Migration to Europe explained in graphics."](#) BBC News, January 28, 2016.

["Slovenia - 2015 UNHCR subregional operations profile - Northern, Western, Central and Southern Europe: Overview."](#) UNHCR – The UN Refugee Agency.

Nicholas Kristof, ["Refugees Who Could Be Us."](#) *The New York Times*: Op-Ed, September 4, 2015.

Liz Sly, ["8 reasons Europe's refugee crisis is happening now."](#) *The Washington Post*, September 18, 2015.