

Refuge(e)

Lesson Plan for Middle and High School Students

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

This is an online-learning lesson. The main activities revolve around thinking about the experiences of refugees and immigrants in private, for-profit prisons and the connections to the current world pandemic of COVID19.

As always, teachers may choose to teach this in its entirety or pick the pieces that are useful for their students and community.

OBJECTIVES

1. Watch a film on the experience of refugees in private, for-profit prison systems in the United States.
2. Reflect on those experiences through writing and discussion.
3. Connect to the COVID19 global pandemic.

MATERIALS

1. Refuge(e) Film by Sylvia Johnson (15 minutes long)
2. Discussion Questions
3. Online learning platform your district is using like Canvas or Google Classroom

LESSON STEP-BY-STEP

1. Optional for teachers as they craft their lesson: Warm up - Free Write.
 - a. Students, read the following prompt called: [Two Minutes to Run](#)
 - b. Set a timer for 5 minutes and answer the prompt on a Google Doc
 - c. Differentiation options:
 - i. [Shortened Prompt](#)
 - ii. Use a piece of paper to complete your free-write, take a picture and upload to the assignment

- d. Other options of free writes, as you may have students who have experienced similar trauma to the prompt above. And if a variety of questions and prompts are provided we can get into what the students know- or their funds of knowledge:
 - i. What happens at borders?
 - ii. ¿Cómo son las fronteras? ¿Qué sucede en las fronteras?
 - iii. Write about someone who has left everything to start a new life.
 - iv. ¿Por qué hay personas que deben dejar todo para comenzar una nueva vida?

2. Introduce Film in writing through Google Classroom or Canvas and share the link for students to watch Refuge(e)
 - a. Introduction wording options: This film features the stories of two refugees, Alpha and Zeferino. They each fled violent threats to their lives in their home countries and presented themselves at the US border asking for political asylum. They were then detained here in New Mexico, in a private, for-profit prison for months on end without having committed any crime.

3. Engage in two or three discussion questions pre-selected by the teacher using the discussion questions on the page 4. Also, as teachers think about the discussion questions they would like to use, they might want to consider their students' ages and backgrounds so that everyone feels safe during the discussion and no student ends up being singled out or “the example” for the discussion.
 - a. The discussion can take place in many different ways. Here are some ideas.
 - i. Students write their answers and post on a discussion panel in Google Classroom, this [2 minute video](#) shows you how to set that up.
 - ii. You may also have a discussion through the video conferencing chat that your school is using like Google Meets or Zoom.

4. Connect to COVID19.
 - a. New Jersey has taken the step of [releasing 1,000 people from its jails](#) in an effort to flatten the COVID-19 curve. A [jail in Massachusetts](#) is doing the same. This same level of concern for public health safety must be extended

to other prisoners. [ICE reported its first infection](#) earlier this week, and as we have seen the numbers are only likely to grow. The [ACLU has sued ICE](#) for the release of its most vulnerable populations.

- b. Potential activities:
 - i. Class discussion: Is it our responsibility to / how can we protect ALL people during COVID19?
 - ii. Write a response regarding the release of people from prisons, detention centers and jails (pro/con).
 - iii. Explore the hashtags #FreeThemAll and #Stopthespread on social media like Twitter / Instagram. What were some of the posts that caught your attention? Why?



Discussion Questions for *Refuge(e)*

1. What are your initial reactions to the film? Did Alpha and Zeferino's stories surprise you or challenge your perception of the U.S. immigration system?

2. Do you think asylum seekers can prepare a strong legal case while they are detained in a facility like Cibola? Why do you think having access to a lawyer and legal assistance could be essential to a successful asylum case?

3. How should the U.S. treat asylum seekers? Do you think the U.S. immigration system is fair Compassionate? What do you think the U.S. immigration system/asylum system should look like?

4. Do you think asylum seekers should be detained when they arrive at a U.S. port of entry? How does it make you feel to see that people who are fleeing for their lives are being incarcerated/detained under our current immigration system?

5. Alpha and Zeferino talk about coming to the United States in search of the American dream of democracy and freedom from persecution. What does the American dream or American democracy mean to you? Do Alpha and Zeferino's experiences in the U.S. immigration system challenge those beliefs or conceptions?

6. Alpha and Zeferino both express that they felt they were being treated like criminals when they were detained at Cibola despite having committed no crimes. What do you think people who have committed a crime deserve in our society? Do you think it's fair to incarcerate people in often dangerous, inhumane facilities because they committed a crime or crossed a border?

7. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there's been a great deal of discussion about whether it's safe or fair to continue detaining people in prisons given the increased risk of contracting the virus while incarcerated. Is it our responsibility to protect ALL people during COVID-19? Do you think people who are incarcerated deserve to be protected from public health emergencies just like people who aren't in prison? Are incarcerated people's lives worth less than others?

8. What do you think are the consequences of a detention facility being privately run vs. being run publicly by the state?

9. Do you think it is appropriate for corporations, businesses, or retirement funds to invest in private detention services? Do you think their customers are aware that they invest in these businesses?

10. How do you want to start talking about prison divestment in your community?