



Theme: Borders and bridges - Migration

Section 3: Media reporting on migrants and migration

What immediately comes to mind when you think of the words migrants and migration? Often your thinking might already be influenced by what you have seen on TV, the internet, newspapers and radio in relation to the issue. Media sources both today and in the past have played a large part in defining what it might mean to be a migrant and how other people react to them – in both positive and negative ways.

Warning: Note that this unit contains links to websites such as YouTube. Content on external sites is subject to change and should be monitored to ensure suitability for students.

Learning outcomes of this section

Your students will be able to:

- Reflect on how media sources do not always provide context or ‘the bigger picture’
- Understand that reporting is sometimes biased, it is not always neutral
- Recognise that reporting has the power to influence people’s attitudes and opinions

Resources provided

Resource 12 Media article excerpts

Resource 13 Caricatures

Class Activity 1: Assessing the impact of words

The use of language in media sources has the power to influence opinions in both positive and negative ways meaning that media sources must always be read with diligence. Journalists and other commentators are putting across points of view that may be their own or the attitudes of others. The type of wording they use is often intended to persuade or engage the reader in what they are saying. As consumers of media we always need to be alert to what we are being told and what the standpoint is of the person or organisation providing the message.

Break your class into 3-4 groups of roughly equal size. Appoint a note taker in each group to record the group’s opinions and to give feedback at the end of the exercise. Distribute Resource 12 to your students. These excerpts from a variety of contemporary European daily newspapers or online news outlets all discuss migrants or issues around migration. Get your students to consider:

- What are the dominant attitudes to migrants and migration in these articles?
- What words or phrases do the writers use to heighten emotional impact? Circle them.
- What impressions might these articles have on public opinion?



Class Activity 2: What the media does not tell us

Often media reporting about migrants does not give us the full story. Only a small percentage of migrants can afford to book a plane/boat ticket, find a job and make a smooth start in their new place of residence. The majority have suffered war or persecution, are subjected to paying high costs for a dangerous and difficult journey and have no possibility to plan ahead to rebuild their lives in a new country. For many seeking refugee or asylum status, reaching their destination is just the start of another equally difficult process as they are often kept in detention centres in terrible conditions waiting for months, sometimes years for a decision to be made about their particular case. The physical and emotional toll of these realities is rarely fully explored in media reporting.

- Draw your student's attention to Amnesty International's online game and ask them to play it to discover aspects of a migrant's journey that may not be covered in the news.
<http://www.playagainstallodds.ca/>
- Following this, ask your students to imagine they are journalists. Get them to write a short article (1 page) about the experiences of a migrant they have just interviewed who has arrived in the country. Get them to consider issues such as – reasons for leaving, saying goodbye to family, the journey itself, arriving in a new place etc. If technology allows in your classroom, get students to record each other's stories on screen for playback to the rest of the class. Once finished, have a group discussion about how the content of what they have written/recorded might affect the attitudes of people who see it.

Class Activity 3: Caricature and stereotype – the dangers of media representation

Caricatures are often used in media sources to comment upon and sometimes mock people, situations or incidents. They are eye-catching, supposed to be humorous and communicate their message in a direct way. However, they can and have been used over the centuries to demean and attack certain groups of people. Caricatures often contribute to the creation of or lend support to stereotypes of people or groups.

Distribute Resource 13 to your students and have them consider the following questions:

- What do they think the intended messages of these images were at the time?
- What impact might these images have had on the public who saw them?
- How might the distribution of such images have affected people who were migrants?

For the final section of this activity get your students to design an anti-discrimination poster that could be displayed in public areas to assist the general public understand the plight of migrants better and see such people in a more positive manner.