

Fireside Note

Between the Devil the Deep Blue Sea (Abridged)

Film by Jessie Taylor, David Schmidt

Notes by Anna Corney, Senior English teacher



When she was 9, Zainab's parents made the heartbreaking decision to leave their home in northern Afghanistan. They set out on a journey across the globe, putting the fate of their family in the hands of strangers. Across borders, behind bars and onto a smuggler's boat the family chased freedom. *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea* tells Zainab's story, and the story of many others who have trodden the same path. Meet the human faces behind the most controversial issue of our time.

Curriculum links

English issues, Geography, Politics/Civics and Citizenship, RE/Pastoral Care, Health & Wellbeing programs

Key issues

Refugees, asylum seekers, persecution, people movement around the world, intercultural understandings, identity, fear, compassion

Questions

1. How are our values shaped by what we are told by the media?
2. Where are most of the asylum seekers in this short film from? What is the political situation in this place and why are they feeling?
3. Why is the pathway offered by the UNHCR not always an option for refugees?
4. What kinds of myths are perpetuated in society about the asylum seeker issue?
5. What terms are used to refer to people seeking asylum? How can the misuse of terminology skew our understanding of the issue?
6. The statistics quoted in this film are alarming yet it is the personal voices and stories of refugees that really speak to us. Reflect on the power that personal stories can have on understanding complex issues such as that of asylum seekers.
7. What can ordinary Australians do to better understand this issue?
8. How much does ignorance play in politicians being able to persuade voters on their position in the issue?
9. What is the danger in perpetuating mantras such as 'stop the boats'? How do such statements impersonalise the human side of the issue?
10. How is this 11 minute snapshot different to other video footage you may have seen about the issue of asylum seekers?
11. How is the issue of asylum seekers different to what is usually presented by the media?
12. What do you learn from this short video that you did not know before?
13. What emotions do you feel by the end of the film?

Teaching ideas

1. Use the documentary as a springboard into the issue of asylum seekers - investigate how the Australian government policies have changed in the last 3 - 5 years
2. Write a letter to the Australian government expressing your response to the issue of asylum seekers
3. Create a map which indicates the typical journey of a Hazara refugee. Indicate the distance and time this journey typically takes
4. Write a dialogue between yourself and a character featured in the film – what questions do you think you might want to ask them? Or that they may ask you?

5. Write from the perspective of a character featured in the video who seeks asylum
6. Investigate the political situation which compels people such as those to flee their countries
7. Play Dana's website game to investigate the myth about refugees' real 'options' and the notion of 'queues' (when up and running)
8. Create a table which compares and contrasts your life with that of one of the characters featured in the film
9. Construct a glossary of terms for the following: asylum seeker, refugee, UNHCR, UN, persecution – what other commonly misunderstood or little understood terms could you add to this list?
10. Australia currently detains asylum seekers upon arrival (now off-shore) – investigate the process other developed countries adopt to process their asylum seekers and compare this to that of Australia

Additional Fact Sheets and information for schools

From the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre

For teachers – www.asrc.org.au/resources/for-teachers

For students – www.asrc.org.au/resources/for-students

Asylum seekers stories – www.asrc.org.au/resources/stories-from-asylum-seekers

Quick stats – www.asrc.org.au/resources/statistics

One page fact sheet – www.asrc.org.au/media/documents/asrc-mythbuster-one-page.pdf

Two page fact sheet – www.asrc.org.au/media/documents/myth-busters-summary-Aug2012.pdf

Comprehensive fact book – http://www.asrc.org.au/media/documents/myths-facts-solutions-info_.pdf

Special showcase and viewing at Campfire

<http://campfire.org.au/festival/human-rights-focus-asylum-seekers>