

Politics and the media

What role can/does the media play in portraying refugee issues?

Why are refugee issues also political issues?

Activity	Thinking skill
Ask students to make a list of examples they have seen in the newspaper or on TV, relating to refugees. They should then work in cooperative groups to share their lists and explain the examples. Next to each of the examples the group should come up with one adjective to describe the way the refugees were portrayed. Some examples of this could be: <i>sympathetic, persecuted, strong, unfortunate</i> . These lists can then be sorted into three groups – positive , negative and neutral according to connotation. Groups can then try to come to some kind of consensus about the role of the media in influencing public opinion on refugee issues.	Fluency
Ask students to think of all the possible terms which could be used to describe people who arrive in countries as refugees. They may create their own. Reflect on the terms which are used by politicians and by the media and the effect of that particular term on the general public's understanding of refugees and refugee issues. The article <i>The discourse excluding asylum seekers – Have we been brainwashed?</i> Australian Language Matters, Jan/Feb/Mar 2002 contains relevant discussion and examples of terms.	Flexibility Originality
Ask students to create an advertisement for any form of print media which portrays refugees in a positive light or which highlights the experiences of refugees. One example could be emphasising the living conditions in a refugee camp through a real estate advertisement. LMERC holds a collection of refugee posters including 'Most people travel for fun' and 'Einstein was a refugee'.	Originality
Ask students to work in groups to create bumper stickers which promote a positive view of refugee issues (McGrath and Edwards p 35).	Originality
Find images or newspaper articles which present refugees in a particular light. This may be positive or negative. Ask students to examine the presentation and – using the BAR acronym, make one aspect bigger or smaller (B), add or subtract one aspect (A) and rearrange one aspect (R) to present a view which they think is more appropriate. Ask them to explain their changes (McGrath and Edwards p 34).	Elaboration
Students debate: <i>That refugees are exactly the kind of people we want in Australia.</i>	Risk taking
Why are refugee issues also political issues? Explain the role of the immigration policy, mandatory detention and illegal immigrants in Australian politics (Healey).	Complexity
Students make a list of questions they would ask a political leader.	Curiosity
Ask students to imagine that all political, economic and environmental problems which have caused people to become refugees in the past have ceased. What do they imagine would be the consequences of this? In groups they discuss the consequences over the short, medium and long term (Klippel p 98).	Imagination
Compare the platforms of the major Australian political parties in relation to refugees. This could include the immigration policy, mandatory detention, health and multicultural affairs.	Elaboration