

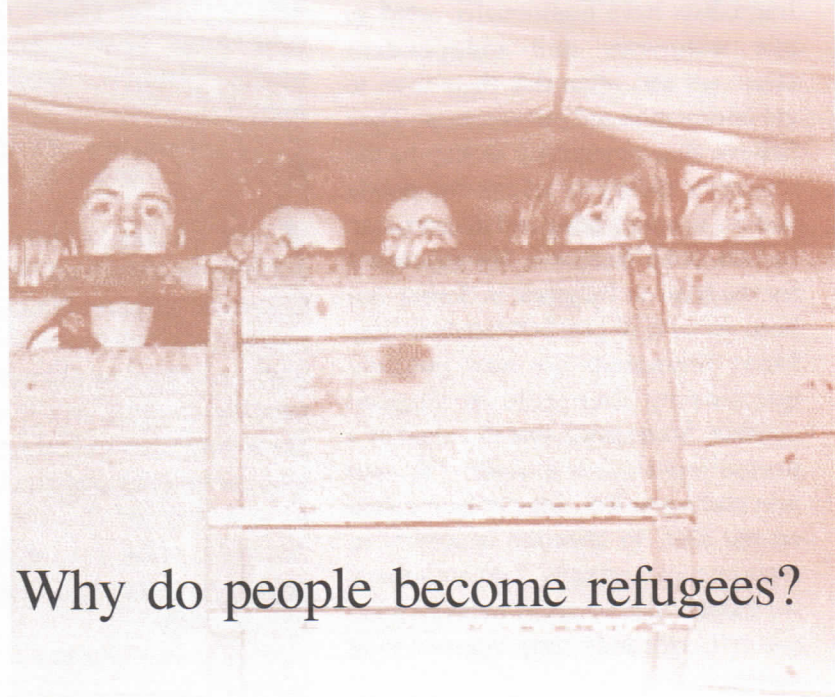
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Global express

The rapid response information series for schools
on world events in the news

Kosovo



Why do people become refugees?



How is the media reporting the war?

THE BOMBING OF SERBIA is still making headlines and refugees continue to relate horrific stories of violence in Kosovo. What messages are young people getting and how is the media affecting their views?

This issue of **Global express** will help you look at the war and its consequences.

What is **Global express**?

Global express helps you teach about topical global issues and events.

Contains

Instant photocopiable classroom activities for 8 to 14 year olds.

Primary

- Mental map
- What are people feeling?
- War in the headlines

Secondary

- What does it all mean? Significant words
- Kosovo in the media and on the Internet
- Roleplay - working at a solution

Curriculum

- Literacy Hour
- English
- History
- Information Technology
- RE and Citizenship

Images of war

The conflict in Kosovo has led so far to over 600,000 people becoming refugees with a further 270,000 people being displaced within Kosovo. Our newspapers and televisions are full of pictures of tired and frightened people fleeing for their lives. Some of them have told their stories of the terrible things that have happened to them. Many are old or women and children on their own. Seeing the plight of these refugees in Europe - in jeans and trainers 'just like us' - challenges our assumptions and attitudes and forces us to re-examine our reactions to the 22.3 million refugees or displaced people world-wide. That is one out of every 264 people.

People flee their homes because of war or civil conflict, economic pressure, political, ethnic or religious oppression or natural disaster - frequently these causes overlap. Refugees are of every race and religion and can be found in every part of the world. Forced to flee out of fear for their lives and liberty, they give up everything - home, belongings, family and country - for an uncertain future often in a strange land.

Getting the full picture

The images of the refugees are powerful and moving and have formed a major part of the media coverage of the crisis in Kosovo. And for most people the media is their only source of information. The importance and influence of the media is shown in part by the fact that the Serbian government has asked the majority of international journalists to leave and insists that it must approve all reports sent outside the country. On the other hand NATO has bombed Serbia's TV station which is under strict Serbian government control. NATO is also putting considerable effort into daily and very 'media friendly' briefings for journalists.

News coverage of war does not necessarily engender pro-war attitudes.

During the Vietnam war in the 1960s, television coverage had a reverse effect to what the US government wanted. People saw explicit pictures of the horrors of modern warfare for the first time and public opinion moved to become critical of America's involvement in the war. Yet a former BBC war correspondent has said, "In my view programmes are more interested in explosions than the consequences of explosions."

Neutral or not?

Journalists have traditionally acted as eye witnesses and independent observers and often risk their lives to get information and pictures to us. They believe that objectivity is key to the reporter's ability to inform the public and act as a watchdog and investigator. Indeed, John Simpson, correspondent for the BBC in Belgrade in Serbia, has been accused of pro-Serbian reporting. Many journalists are now publicly questioning their role in shaping conflict. Some think that the ideal of a neutral journalist is a myth. Former war correspondent, Martin Bell called on the BBC to abandon neutrality in reporting war and said, "I do not believe we should stand neutrally between good and evil, right and wrong, aggressor and victim."

Media coverage in Europe of the Kosovo crisis has reflected arguments both for and against military action and raised debate about the type of action needed and the decision making processes behind the action. Compared with coverage of past wars this level of debate in the media is remarkable.

"A new language was brought into being to soften the reality of war. Bombing military targets in the heart of cities was called 'denying the enemy an infrastructure'. People were 'soft targets'. Saturation bombing was 'laying down a carpet'."

Philip Knightley, writing about the 1991 Gulf War

Quotes

"I object to violence because when it appears to do good the good is only temporary: the evil it does is permanent."

Mahatma Gandhi, 1869-1948

"It is not power that corrupts, but fear. Fear of losing power corrupts those who wield it."

Aung San Suu Kyi, pro-democracy leader in Myanmar/Burma, Nobel Peace Prizewinner, 1991

"World, do you know that we are almost day and night in bomb shelters... World, where are children and civil rights? I'm 18, do you know how I feel? I can hear alarm for air attack right now. World, can't you hear it?"

E-mail received by the BBC from an 18 year old girl from Belgrade

"Even as we speak there are continuing atrocities perpetrated by Milosevic against his civilians. The massacres we are witnessing now were planned by Milosevic over the past two months. It is now clear Serb participation in the French talks was a cover for preparations for war. For every act of barbarity, every slaughter of the innocents, Milosevic should be made to pay a higher and higher price."

Tony Blair, British Prime Minister

"Raw force is no solution to the crisis but I will not let this country be drawn into a military conflict. I'm doing everything to stop military action as soon as possible."

Boris Yeltsin, Russian President

"We were very afraid because all the police were near our school. Our family's possessions were destroyed completely. When we had to stay out in the hills we were very frightened. We heard the grenades and the shelling."

Mirlinda, 11,
a young refugee from Kosovo



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