

The UNHCR 2005 High School Writing Competition

UNHCR invites High School students from around Australia to write and submit a short article about refugees. The aim of the competition is to help generate knowledge and understanding of refugee issues through the sharing and telling of personal stories. This year's writing competition consists of three categories:

- 1 An article or story based on an interview with a former refugee**
- 2 An article or essay on the 2005 theme for World Refugee Day *It takes courage to be a refugee* based on publicly available material, such as the UNHCR website.**
- 3 A personal story by a refugee**

The Three Categories

1 A story based on an interview with a former refugee

Listening with compassion, writing with respect

In this category, students are asked to find someone in their community who is a former refugee, interview them, and write their story. This person could be a neighbour, relative, family friend, or someone you find through a refugee support or resource organization. (See suggestions below).

In the interview, ask the person about their experiences including, for example, when and why they left their home country, their journey and how they came to find refuge in Australia, and their experiences once they arrived. Your article could also include your own reflections on the story.

Things to remember

This is a sensitive subject and refugees have often been through traumatic experiences. In the interview, never push questions. Allow the refugee to tell what they wish to tell you, nothing more. Ask the refugee if they would like to see your story and check direct quotes before you submit your entry. Treat the person you interview with respect, and ensure the process is a positive experience for all involved.

Permission and use of names

All entries in this category must include a signed permission form from the refugee who has been interviewed, confirming that they are happy to have their story

published by UNHCR in both a hard copy publication and on the website. (See relevant section of entry form). Students should also explain to the refugee that published stories may lead to media coverage, and that they may wish to discuss this with their family or advisor.

For protection and for legal reasons, some people may wish to change their names and other identifying details prior to publication. UNHCR will be happy to discuss this further before we publish the winning and highly commended entries. Please indicate on your own cover sheet whether we should follow this up if your story is selected for publication. If you have any questions about this please feel free to contact UNHCR.

A photo:

We encourage students to send a picture of themselves and the refugee they interviewed. (*Electronic photos in jpg or gif files are preferred*).

A note to teachers

Where possible, we ask that you encourage students to interview refugees at a non-threatening location such as the school premises or at a convenient local community centre. If the interview takes place on the school premises, a teacher may wish to be nearby to offer help if required. We also ask that you encourage students to be tactful and sensitive to the issues involved.

Telling their Stories

REFUGEE STORIES

The UNHCR 2005 High School Writing Competition

How can I contact a refugee?

MIGRANT RESOURCE CENTRES (MRCs) are located throughout Australia. Through these centers, students may be able to meet and interview refugees. You can ask to speak with Community Development Officer or a Multicultural Youth worker/Co-coordinator or you might choose to put up a flyer at the local MRC. If there are no MRCs close by, an MRC located in the same State or Territory may be able to put you in contact with a local refugee group. Migrant Resource Centre contact

details will be found at:
http://www.immi.gov.au/grants/mrc_msa_b.htm

THE REFUGEE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA has links to refugee advocacy groups across Australia. Any of these groups may be able to help.
http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/html/helping_out/helping_out.htm

Rural Students

For students in rural areas, you may want to visit the website of Rural Australians for Refugees.
<http://www.ruralaustraliansforrefugees.org>

2 An essay on the theme *It takes courage to be a refugee*

In this category, students are asked to research publicly available material including the personal stories of refugees and write an essay on the 2005 World Refugee Day theme *It takes courage to be a refugee*.

A good place to start is the local UNHCR website where there are many personal

stories of courage from around the world (www.unhcr.org.au/storiesofcourage). Students may also wish to read the previous entries to the UNHCR writing competition www.unhcr.org.au/writingcomp or look further afield to previously published stories in newspapers, books, films or television programs.

There is a wealth of background material on refugee issues at the websites given below.

Suggested Resources:

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Regional Office Website – see especially the pages on Publications and Resources, World Refugee Day, and Public Information.
www.unhcr.org.au

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Global website
The website for UNHCR contains lots of facts and figures on refugees, and information on the international refugee framework. <http://www.unhcr.ch>

The Department of Immigration, Multicultural & Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA)

The DIMIA website offers a variety of information on refugees and refugee policy in Australia.
<http://www.immi.gov.au>

The Age Newspaper

The Age has a special feature section dedicated to refugee and immigration stories. You can find many useful and interesting articles on refugees in Australia and New Zealand.
<http://www.theage.com.au/issues/immigration/index.html>

Streetwize Communications

Streetwize communications offers some information on refugee issues for

young people including a comic called 'The Other Side'.
www.streetwize.com.au/publications_race.htm

Rural Australians for Refugees (RAR)

Rural Australians for Refugees is an Informal group of concerned citizens for refugee rights. This site includes fact sheets, activist information and notice board.
www.ruralaustraliansforrefugees.org/

Parliament House Library – Refugee Unit

Refugees and asylum seekers: a guide to key resources and recent. There are guides and explanations of what processes there are for refugees to seek asylum.
www.aph.gov.au/library/intguide/SP/Refugees.htm

Refugee Council of Australia

The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) is a non-profit peak organisation. It provides information on and advocacy for refugees and humanitarian entrants in Australia on behalf of its 90 organisational members and many individual members. The site contains stories of famous refugees and data on refugees in Australia.
www.refugeecouncil.org.au/

3 A Refugee's Personal Story (Open to former refugees only)

A refugee's own reflection of his or her experience

In this category, high school students who are also former refugees are invited to write an article on their own story. You may wish to include why you left your home country, your journey and how you came to find refuge in Australia (whether for example, you came through the resettlement, humanitarian or asylum channels), and your experiences once you arrived.

For protection and legal reasons, you may wish to change the names of family

members or other identifying details before publication of your story. Please indicate on your cover sheet whether we should follow this up if your story is selected for publication. You may even wish to discuss the issue with your family and/or your advisor. If you have any questions about this please feel free to contact UNHCR.

A photo:

We encourage you to send a picture of yourself either by yourself or with your family or perhaps a photo from your homeland. *(Electronic photos in jpg or gif files are preferred but we can also work from hard copies, and can return originals if required).*

General Requirements and Conditions

- The competition is open to all Australian high school students (years 7 – 12) enrolled for the 2005 school year.
- Articles should be around 750 to 1000 words in length. Entries which stray 250 words above or below these targets will be deemed ineligible.
- Please submit entries in electronic format (Microsoft Word is preferred) by email (aulcapi@unhcr.ch) or on disc to UNHCR Public Information, 15 Hunter Street, Yarralumla, ACT 2605
- All entries should include a completed entry form (attached or downloaded from www.unhcr.org/writingcomp)
- All entries should be original pieces by the students and based on true stories. Entries should not have been previously published or awarded prizes in other competitions in their exact form.
- Category 1 entries must include a permission form from the refugee who has been interviewed. (See further guidelines for category 1)
- Copyright remains with the author but UNHCR reserves the right to publish entries in its competition publication and on its website.
- The judges will award at least one place in each category and the judges decisions will be final.
- All entries are due by 5pm, Friday 11th November 2005.
- **Note to teachers:** UNHCR has decided to leave the competition open to all high school students from years 7 – 12. We understand that schools and teachers will need to determine if the competition is relevant to their class' level and learning objectives and incorporate the activity accordingly.

The Judging

Entries will be initially read by UNHCR Public Information staff and a selection of the top entries from each category will be forwarded to the judging panel. Entries will be assessed for their descriptive, explanative and persuasive style of writing and capacity to present a compelling story.

The judges will include Time Magazine's Editor-At-Large in the South Pacific, Tom Dusevic, former Australian cricket captain and Australia for UNHCR Special Representative, Ian Chappell, and a UNHCR staff member.

The Winning Entries

At least one place will be awarded in each category. Winners, finalists and highly commended articles will be published in a magazine by the UNHCR and published on our website www.unhcr.org.au All place-winners will also receive prizes such as books and/or book vouchers.

Submission Date

The article is due no later than 5pm Friday 11th November 2005. Where possible please direct your articles through the teacher responsible for administering the competition at your high school. If no teacher can administer the competition at your school please send your entry directly to: aulcapi@unhcr.ch or on a labeled disk or CD to: 15 Hunter St, Yarralumla, ACT, 2600

**For further information contact
UNHCR Public Information
02 6120 1108 or aulcapi@unhcr.ch**



Telling their Stories

Please detach this form and send it completed with your entry.

The UNHCR 2005 High School Writing Competition

ENTRY FORM

Student Name: _____

Student Age: _____

School Year: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

High School: _____

Town/City: _____ State: _____ Postcode: _____

Teacher Contact Details: _____

Category Entry: 1: Interview 2: Essay 3: Personal Story

Title/Topic of Essay: _____

Refugee's Permission

(Only complete if entering category 1)

Do you consent to this story being published, if selected as a winning or highly commended entry?

Yes No

Would you like UNHCR to contact you prior to publication to discuss any issues such as the need to change names, place names or other identifying details?

Yes No

If yes, please provide your contact (address and phone number) details:

Refugee's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Declaration

I declare this entry to be my own work and to the best of my knowledge, based on a true story.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

(Please send a signed copy of this form to **UNHCR Australian High School Writing Competition 2005, 15 Hunter St. Yarralumla ACT 2600**, either with your entry or separately if you emailed your story.)

REFUGEE S
Telling their Stories

