

Iraq: War and Peace Activities

Activity 2: News Board

Aims

- To look at the effect the conflict is having in this country in terms of increased racism, and encourage pupils to think that they can do something to change this
- To involve pupils in collecting items of news from newspapers and other sources
- To promote critical thinking skills

What to do

Talk to the class about the fact that one of the effects of the war, as well as a result of the events of 11th September 2001 has been a rise in racism towards Muslims and an increasing fear of 'foreigners' (xenophobia). If you don't have any actual examples of this, you could use the clipping below:

Refugee helpline reports rise in attacks

Last Saturday three Iraqi asylum seekers found that they were not safe even in daylight in Plymouth town centre. A gang of up to 12 white males chased them and shouted death threats as part of an attack that left two of the refugees with head injuries.

Police say the attack was unprovoked and they are treating it as racially motivated. One of the asylum seekers said it had revived the 'painful memories' of the trauma he suffered in Iraq. Darius Bahiraey, of the Plymouth-based group, Refugee First, said: 'I saw his face. It was all black and swollen. They are terrorised by the attack.'

The weekend attack is far from an isolated incident, according to an independent racial harassment helpline. The Monitoring Group reports more than 1,700 complaints last year. Between January and December the Monitoring Group received no fewer than 130 calls every month from asylum seekers complaining of abuse, harassment or violence, according to figures seen by the Guardian.

Vikram Dodd, The Guardian, 24 January 2003

Ask the pupils to talk about this. Discuss whether this is fair, and ask the pupils what we as individuals and as a school could do about this.

Ideas could include:

- Not generalising or making assumptions about groups or nations of people
- Realising the links and similarities between what is happening in our schools and what is happening worldwide
- Making sure we say people's names correctly, even if we are unfamiliar with them
- Not making unfair comparisons about people or places
- Encouraging positive images of different cultures and countries
- Understanding that some people come to the UK as asylum seekers and refugees and need our support

Then introduce the idea of an on-going News Board for the class to contribute to. (Or this could be done as a whole-school activity.) Encourage the pupils to bring in press cuttings and/or to print out short articles or quotes from the web to do with Iraq.

Appoint a team of editors (these could change weekly) to look after the board and pin the clippings under various headings, which could remain the same from week to week or change according to new developments.