



Global Voices Elementary Information Sheet

Rwandan Genocide: 15 Years Later

Timeline of Events

April 6, 1994: A plane carrying Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana and Burundian President Cyprien Ntaryamira is shot down outside Kigali airport. Hutu extremists opposed to peace accords with the Tutsi rebel army to end civil war are believed to be behind the attack.

April 7, 1994: The Rwandan army and the Interahamwe, a militia of Hutu extremists, begin the systematic killing of Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

April 8, 1994: The Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front launch an offensive attack.

April 11, 1994: The International Red Cross estimates tens of thousands have already been slaughtered.

April 14, 1994: Belgium withdraws its troops from the UN Peacekeeping Force in the country.

April 21, 1994: The UN cuts the peacekeeping force by 90 per cent, down to 270 troops.

May 14, 1994: The UN Security Council issues a resolution saying that “acts of genocide may have been committed.”

June 22, 1994: The UN authorizes an emergency force of 2,500 French troops. It is called Operation Turquoise and is supposed to create a “safe” area in government-controlled Rwanda. The killing of Tutsis continues in the safe zone.

July 13-14, 1994: Refugees fleeing the RPF migrate into Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) at a rate of 10,000-12,000 people per hour. This creates a severe humanitarian crisis in refugee camps. Many extremist leaders escape in the refugee camps.

July 18, 1994: The RPF announces the war is over. In the aftermath, it is revealed that 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus had been murdered in the killing.

Key Terms

genocide – the deliberate and systematic extermination of a national, racial, political or cultural group.

moratorium – a suspension of activity.

Global Voices Secondary Educator Resources

Note to Educators:

The following activities are designed to stimulate a current events discussion. Generative in nature, these questions can be a launching point for additional assignments or research projects. Teachers are encouraged to adapt these activities to meet the contextual needs of their classroom.

In some cases, reading the article with students may be appropriate, coupled with reviewing the information sheet to further explore the concepts and contexts being discussed. From here, teachers can select from the questions provided below. Activities are structured to introduce students to the issues, then allow them to explore and apply their learnings. Extension and conclusion activities are included to challenge students and finally, encourage them to reflect on the issues at hand.

Since these activities are designed as discussions rather than formal lessons, assessment strategies are not included.

Pre-Reading Questions:

- In small groups, ask students to make a list of natural disasters that they were too young to understand at the time (i.e., 2004 Tsunami in South Asia, Hurricane Katrina in the United States, earthquakes in Asia). Beside each, ask students to indicate what information was given to them at the time and how they received it.
 - How was the experience of learning about the event in school different than experiencing it as a young child (e.g., How does time change our ability to learn and understand)?
- In small groups, make a second list of historic world tragedies orchestrated by humans that you have learned about in history class (i.e., World Wars, treatment of Native Americans particularly in the United States, etc.).
- Why do you think wars (particularly World War I and II) are studied to such great extents in school history and social studies courses?

Post Reading Questions:

- What, if anything, did you find surprising in the column?
- Review the basic facts of the Rwandan genocide from the information sheet.
- What is meant by the term genocide?
- Why is Rwanda referred to as a “young country?”
- Why can the children’s lack of memory be considered a “blessing?”
- What is meant by the term, “retributive justice?” (i.e. First, consider what is meant by the word retribution.)

7. Are there risks to Rwandan children learning about the genocide from movies?
8. Think back to a time where life lessons were taught to children through characters in picture books (i.e., honesty or bullying explained by fictional characters like Arthur the Aardvark or Franklin the Turtle). What made listening to a book different than an adult's lecture?
9. What was meant by the column quotation, "Instead of focusing on what happened to or what was perpetrated by the children's parents, the resources connect them to the greater humanity?" How does this connect with our own childhood experiences with picture books discussed in question #8?

Challenge Questions:

In small groups, consider the following questions and discuss (from more than one point of view).
(**Teacher Note:** This can also be done as part of a research assignment with a written reflection.)

- Consider the widely held belief that it is important to learn from the mistakes of the past in order to ensure we don't repeat them. Why didn't the lessons learned from the World War II Holocaust (over 50 years ago) prevent the Rwandan genocide (15 years ago) or the current genocide occurring in Darfur?
- Why is it easier to look at examples of genocide in other countries than atrocities occurring in own backyard (i.e., human rights violations against Aboriginal groups in Canada)?
- Why is there guilt associated with genocides like Rwanda (i.e., think of all the countries, including Canada, that knew what was happening)? Is there a way that this generation of youth can make a difference?
- Think about the current crisis in Darfur. If we have access to information, why is it so difficult to stop?

Extensions:

- In small groups, imagine that you have been put in charge of teaching the youth of Rwanda about the genocide.
 - a.) At what age would you start teaching the subject? Explain your choice.
 - b.) What would you need to consider (**Hint:** Encourage students to think about bias, multiple point of view, perspective, emotions and helping children move forward)?
 - c.) What types of learning activities would you choose to help children understand the subject before them (i.e., Think about how children learn differently and tools/techniques like story-telling, drama, art, role-playing, use of technology etc.)?