

CHASING ASYLUM



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CHASING ASYLUM

Directed by Eva Orner

2016 | Australia | 96 min

TEACHER'S GUIDE

This guide has been designed to help teachers and students enrich their experience of *Chasing Asylum* by providing support in the form of questions and activities. There are a range of questions that will help teachers frame discussions with their class, activities for before, during and after viewing the film, and some weblinks that provide starting points for further research or discussion.

The Film

Asylum-seekers from around the world continue to risk their lives by embarking on dangerous boat crossings in search of safe harbour. But what happens when the destination is as unwelcoming as the dangers left behind? Australia has implemented some of the harshest immigration laws in the world, and Eva Orner's unflinching new film exposes the impact of these policies, which see asylum-seekers detained in isolated island facilities and left in stateless limbo, sometimes for years. Shocking never-before-seen footage from inside the facilities, obtained by anonymous sources using hidden cameras, reveals the desperation and despair of the detainees, along with the feelings of powerlessness from those hired to oversee them. As reports of sexual and physical abuse surface, greater questions arise about a country whose leaders choose detention over compassion, and who deprive the desperate of their basic human rights. Shane Smith

Source: <http://www.hotdocs.ca>

The Filmmaker

Academy- and Emmy Award-winner Eva Orner is an Australian filmmaker based in Los Angeles. Her credits include *Chasing Asylum*, which she directed and produced. The film tackles Australia's treatment of refugees and asylum seekers over the past 15 years, focusing on offshore detention. Eva has also written a book, *Chasing Asylum*, about the making of the film, published by Harper Collins. The film was shot in Australia, Indonesia, Cambodia, Lebanon, Iran and Afghanistan. Other credits include *Out of Iraq*, co-directed and produced by Eva with L.A.-based production company World of Wonder. The film follows a gay Iraqi couple over a decade as they try to stay alive and together and seek asylum in the US. Prior to *Chasing Asylum*, Eva directed and produced the feature documentary *The Network*, set behind the scenes at the largest and most successful television network in one of the most unstable and dangerous places on earth, Afghanistan. Eva wrote, directed and produced *The Network*. Eva's US producing credits include the feature documentaries *Taxi to the Dark Side*, *Gonzo: The Life and Work of Dr. Hunter S. Thompson*, *The Human Behavior Experiments* and *Herbie Hancock: Possibilities*. Her work has screened at festivals including Cannes, Sundance, Tribeca and Sydney, has been released theatrically and sold to VOD and television across the globe. In Australia, Eva has won an AFI, Logie and Human Rights Award for her work. Eva Orner

Source: <http://www.imdb.com>

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VIEWING THE FILM WITH STUDENTS

The following three sub-sections are intended to provide you with a range of Pre-Viewing, Viewing and Post-Viewing activities. They are followed by a set of questions based upon the film's larger thematic domains, some follow-up questions and quotations, sample curricular outcomes and a page of weblinks for further investigation.

Pre-Viewing Activities

Watch the trailer for *Chasing Asylum* (<http://www.chasingasylum.com.au/trailer>). Based on the trailer, have the class make a list of all the themes students predict may emerge in the film. Discuss how effective/affective the trailer is as a media text. What emotions does it elicit in the viewer? What aspects of the trailer make you want to watch the film?

Divide students into pairs or small groups to discuss the tone of the film established by the trailer. Ask them to determine which specific features in the trailer convey this tone.

As a class, look up the definition of the term "asylum." Based on the definition, ask students how the designation of "asylum-seeker" suggests people seeking asylum ought to be treated.

Have a class discussion to gauge student feelings around immigration and refugees. Use questions like, "Do countries have an obligation to accept and resettle refugees?", "When a country accepts refugees, how should these people expect to be treated?" and "What kinds of help and services should be provided to refugees in their new country?"

Viewing Activities

Have students complete the PBS viewing guide on documentaries (<http://www.pbs.org/pov/docs/Copies%20of%20Viewing%20Guide.pdf>). Students can revisit their completed documents as a Post-Viewing Activity.

Have students jot down three to five ideas for discussion, or questions that the film raises in their minds. As an Extension and/or Post-Viewing Activity, students can enter their questions into an online response or polling system and can vote on the questions or issues they would like to explore in further detail. Encourage students to use multiple levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.

Have students write a list of descriptions documenting what they see in the detention centres in Nauru and Manus Island.

Have students record, without judgment, how their feelings evolve during the film. When a new feeling arises, have them take note of what aspect of the film generated this new feeling.

Post-Viewing Activities

Discuss with students their initial reactions to the film, the conditions in the detention centres, the political policies behind having the detention centres and the people interviewed in the documentary. Did the students' feelings evolve over the course of the film? Did the film live up to their expectations from viewing the trailer?

Have students discuss the filming techniques used in the documentary, including filming in secret and how the identity of some interviewees is protected. What specific techniques were used? What impressions did the use of these techniques convey to the viewer? What message does the use of these techniques convey about the topic of the film?

Have students do a free-writing exercise based on a still image from the film. Find images by going to the *Chasing Asylum* website (<http://www.chasingasylum.com.au/> Click on Gallery). Use the following free-writing prompt: Look at the image and write whatever comes to mind based on what you see. You might describe the image in great detail, write about how it makes you feel, imagine a story behind the image, etc. Rules for free-writing: write for a set amount of time (between two and five minutes); do not stop writing; do not rush but also do not go too slowly; do not cross anything out or fix your writing; ignore grammar and spelling rules and just allow your ideas to flow freely; if you do not know what to write, write "I don't know what to write" until another idea comes to mind.

Have students participate in a Socratic discussion on the film. Guidelines for Socratic discussions can be found here: <http://www.authenticeducation.org/documents/WhatSeminar04.pdf>

Have students imagine that they are an asylum-seeker in one of the detention centres. From this perspective, have them write a letter to a family member living elsewhere who is hoping one day to be reunited.

Have students work in pairs using their cellphones to interview each other trying to replicate the interview style used in the film for anonymous interviewees.

Have students complete an exit note. The note should contain one idea that demonstrates what they learned from the film, as well as one question that they still have about the topic.

Hold a class debate with one side taking the perspective of asylum seekers and their advocates and the other taking the side of the Australian government.

Based on the information they have learned in the film, have students write a news report about the conditions in the detention centres.

Have students research online to find current news stories about the detention centres in Nauru or Manus Island and Australian refugee and asylum-seeker policies. Have them determine whether the situation for those seeking asylum in Australia has changed or whether there have been any changes to Australian policy since the film was made.

At the end of the documentary, the film thanks Indiegogo and Indiegogo supporters. Introduce the concept of crowdfunding to students, and explore how this method of fundraising works. What kinds of projects use this type of fundraising? In addition to Indiegogo, what other venues for crowdfunding are available?

WEBSITES AND ONLINE RESOURCES

About the Film

<http://www.chasingasylum.com.au>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/chasingasylum>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ChasingAsylum>

Additional Resources

Australian Government: Students can use the Australian government's Department of Immigration and Border Protection website to explore policies relating to what the government calls Illegal Maritime Arrivals (IMAs). On this site, they can also view a series of videos aimed at IMAs.

<http://www.ima.border.gov.au>

National Post: Peter O'Neil's article "Australia Wants Canada to Take in Refugees Held in Detention Centres on South Pacific Islands" presents a Canadian connection to the Australian refugee policies that could spark interesting discussion.

<http://www.nationalpost.com/> Type the title of the article into the search function of the website.

News.com.au: In the report "The Federal Government Uses a Comic Book to Stop the Boats," Daniel Piotrowski shares images from a graphic novel produced by the Australian government to deter refugees relying on smugglers to reach Australia by boat.

<http://www.news.com.au/> Type the title of the article into the search function of the website.

Refugee Action Committee: This Canberra-based refugee advocacy organization offers a large number of resources on the topic of asylum-seekers to Australia and the Manus Island and Nauru detention centres, including personal stories from refugees, testimonials from support workers inside the centres and numerous links to other relevant websites.

<http://refugeeaction.org>

Refugee Council of Australia: Students can explore this website to gain insight into the Australian advocacy work that is being done on behalf of refugees. The organization offers a number of useful resources including facts, statistics and up-to-date news about Australia's treatment of refugees.

<http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au>

TED Talk: Barat Ali Batoor is a photojournalist originally from Afghanistan and now based in Australia. His TED talk "My Desperate Journey with a Human Smuggler," along with the photo gallery of his images titled "My Desperate Journey to Find Asylum in Australia," provide insight into one refugee's journey to Australia by boat.

<http://www.ted.com/> Type Barat Ali Batoor's name into the search function of the website.

The Guardian: The article "Eva Orner on *Chasing Asylum*: 'Every Whistleblower that I Interviewed Wept'" offers background information on Orner's motivations for making the documentary as well as a behind-the-scenes look at what was involved in filming.

<https://www.theguardian.com/> Type the title of the article into the search function of the website.

The Guardian: *The Guardian* offers an entire section of its website titled "The Nauru Files" containing leaked documents, reports, videos and images relating to the history of Nauru and the treatment of refugees originally destined for Australia who are now housed in Nauru's detention centre.

<https://www.theguardian.com/> Type "The Nauru Files" into the search function of the website.

Toronto Film Scene: Andrew Parker's interview "Hot Docs 2016 Q&A: *Chasing Asylum* Filmmaker Eva Orner" expresses her intentions for the film.

<http://thetfs.ca/> Type the title of the interview into the search function of the website.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): Use the UNHCR's website to explore the history of the 1951 Refugee Convention. There is also a link to the convention in its entirety.

<http://www.unhcr.org/1951-refugee-convention.html>

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Questions for Pre-Viewing or Post-Viewing Activities

Before viewing the film: What do you think happens to asylum-seekers and refugees when they arrive in a country like Australia? Do you think it would be similar or different from how these people might be treated in Canada?

After viewing the film: How did the film fit with or differ from your expectations?

Discuss the significance of the film's title. While the "asylum" part is quite logical, why do you think the director added "chasing"?

According to the film, what are the consequences for people seeking asylum as a result of Australia's asylum-seeker and refugee policies?

Throughout the film, there are numerous images of graffiti written on the tents and walls. What does the graffiti convey about the feelings of the detainees?

Since it is not permitted to film within the detention centres, and keeping the identity of many of the interviewees was necessary for their protection, the filmmaker was obligated to film some interviewees in particular ways. How do these constraints influence your reaction to the documentary?

Dr. Peter Young, director of mental health services in Nauru and Manus detention centres, describes the children in the centres with the medical term "failing to thrive." What are the reasons that the children are failing to thrive?

The film mentions legislation implemented in 2015 that threatens whistleblowers on Nauru and Manus Island with jail time if they report abuses in the treatment of detainees. Doctors, nurses and social workers are also subject to this legislation. How might this create an ethical conflict for these support workers on the islands?

In 2015, Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull stated that the Australian border protection policy was the only way to stop the deaths at sea that result from asylum seekers trying to enter Australia by boat. Do you agree? What are other possible solutions that could stop these deaths?

Many Australian politicians featured in the film discussed stopping the boats as their objective in implementing and maintaining Australia's refugee policy. Why do they see stopping the boats as so important? After viewing the film, do you agree that this should be Australia's main objective?

When filming the anonymous interviewees in the documentary, the filmmaker often focuses the camera on the speaker's hands. Why did she make this choice? What might be the significance of the hands?

Eva Orner's objective in making *Chasing Asylum* is to hopefully affect changes in the Australian government's asylum-seeker policy and bring more global awareness to the situation of detainees. In what ways might this film be helpful in achieving this goal?

QUOTATIONS FROM THE FILM TO EXPLORE

1. *"I can't stress enough the remoteness of the location of Nauru. It's in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. It's an island of 10,000 people. It takes 20 minutes to drive around the island. It's extremely hot. You immediately notice how poor the island is. When the Australian government comes to the Nauruan government and says, 'We're going to offer you several billion dollars over the next however many years to house a few thousand asylum seekers,' for a failing economy like Nauru, I can imagine it would seem like a very good option."* Mark Isaacs, support worker, Nauru detention centre
2. *"One of my most vivid memories was a sign being on the wall that said, 'Staff would have to be trained how to use a Hoffman's knife.' When I asked what a Hoffman's knife was, it was the knife used to cut people down when they're found hanging."* Nicole Judge, support worker, Nauru and Manus detention centres
3. *"Initially, it was about looking after people in detention and it shifted to a policy of deterrence. So you go from looking after people to saying, 'If you come here, we're going to make it worse for you than if you'd stayed where you came from.'"* Greg Lake, director, Nauru detention centre
4. *"My sister and my brother, they are living in Australia. We were separated from 2008. We never sit together. When I was in Pakistan, they were in Iran.... Life is hard so I would like to sit with my family, go outside and have a lunch or have a dinner together."* Khadim, Hazara refugee in Indonesia
5. *"Manus looked like a jail to me. The men were padlocked in behind gates. There was open feces on the ground. Men didn't have enough clothes. Men didn't have shoes. They didn't have enough drinking water. There was malaria. There was sickness, disease, infection."* Nicole Judge, support worker, Nauru and Manus detention centres
6. *"Some of the guys were very happy to see new staff arrive. It had struck me that they were happy to see new faces because of the boredom that they were living. Once we'd been there for a number of weeks, then they started to slip back into what I now know is there old lifestyle, which is just slouched shoulders, just broken men. Those guys had no future, and that's what their faces showed to me."* Martin Appleby, security, G4S, Manus detention centre
7. *"The refugee convention is one of the most humane international understandings on the planet. It's the world's apology for what was done to the Jewish people in the 1930s, for the doors closed in the faces of the Jewish people trying to flee the Holocaust. It was an understanding between countries that when people were seeking protection from persecution that they could cross a border, they could seek protection, and Australia signed up to it. Australia said, 'Look, yes, we decide who comes into this country, and we decide by signing this convention that we'll let refugees come here, and we'll let them come as they come everywhere else in the world. We'll let them come by sea.'" David Marr, journalist and author*
8. *"[The refugees and asylum-seekers] are incredibly traumatized from where they are coming from, what they're seeking asylum from and they're being retraumatized by their current situation."* Unnamed social worker, Nauru detention centre
9. *"The use of boat IDs as names is rampant. Children will sign artworks that they've drawn with their boat ID. Children will refer to their friends by their boat ID. It's like they've forgotten their own names, like they've forgot who they were, that they're actually human beings."* Unnamed social worker, Nauru detention centre
10. *"The deterrence measures of the sort that the government is applying do nothing to address the desperate circumstances which are leading to people taking these desperate measures to get to safety. And really, all they are doing is sweeping people from our doorstep so they don't die on our doorstep but may well die elsewhere."* David Manne, executive director, Refugee and Immigration Legal Centre
11. *"When I came to my senses I saw Reza Barati above me. He was dying. I saw that clearly with my own eyes... Reza Barati died. I didn't know him. I wouldn't care who he was. What was important was that he was a human being."* Anonymous Manus Island detainee
12. *"I said enough's enough.... If I didn't speak out, who was going to? I've got a conscience. And I was brought up the right way. And I don't understand how we can do this to each other. So I felt that it was my turn, my time. But it was the right thing to do. People need to talk up. We need to tell each other what's going on."* Martin Appleby, security, G4S, Manus detention centre

CULMINATING ACTIVITY: ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE

After watching *Chasing Asylum*, you have learned some information about the Australian government's policy on asylum-seekers and refugees and their use of detention centres on Nauru and Manus Island.

After doing additional research online to learn more about this situation, write a letter to the Australian Prime Minister expressing your opinions on this topic and advocating for any changes that ought to be made.

Your letter should have a clearly expressed opinion and integrate facts and specific details to make a convincing point. Be sure to format your letter as a proper business letter.

ACTIVITY RUBRIC: ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE

Knowledge/Understanding

	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0	
Knowledge and understanding of the issue	Student demonstrates limited knowledge about and understanding of the issue	Student demonstrates some knowledge about and understanding of the issue	Student demonstrates a good level of knowledge about and understanding of the issue	Student demonstrates a high level of knowledge about and understanding of the issue	/5

Thinking/Inquiry

	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0	
Additional research conducted on the issue	Student has done little additional research to enrich the opinion expressed in the letter	Student has done a satisfactory amount of additional research to enrich the opinion expressed in the letter	Student has done a good amount of additional research to enrich the opinion expressed in the letter	Student has done a significant amount of additional research to enrich the opinion expressed in the letter	/5

Application

	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0	
Applying proper letter formatting	Student has some difficulty applying a business-letter format	Student does a moderate job applying a business-letter format	Student does a good job applying a business-letter format	Student does an excellent job applying a business-letter format	/5

Communication

	2.5 2.9	3.0 3.4	3.5 3.9	4.0 5.0	
Quality of communication	Student's writing is not polished and lacks clarity	Student's writing is moderately polished but lacks some clarity	Student's writing is quite polished and clear	Student's writing is extremely polished and clear	/5

Comments:

Total: _____/20

EXAMPLES OF CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

COURSE	OVERALL EXPECTATIONS
Grade 7 & 8 Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listen in order to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes. • generate, gather and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience. • draft and revise their writing, using a variety of informational, literary and graphic forms and stylistic elements appropriate for the purpose and audience. • use editing, proofreading and publishing skills and strategies, and knowledge of language conventions, to correct errors, refine expression and present their work effectively. • demonstrate an understanding of a variety of media texts. • identify some media forms and explain how the conventions and techniques associated with them are used to create meaning.
Grade 9-12 English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • generate, gather and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience. • demonstrate an understanding of a variety of media texts. • identify some media forms and explain how the conventions and techniques associated with them are used to create meaning. • create a variety of media texts for different purposes and audiences, using appropriate forms, conventions and techniques.
Grade 10-12 Media Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate an understanding of the critical analysis process by examining, interpreting, assessing and reflecting on media art works. • demonstrate an understanding of how media art works reflect personal and cultural identity, and affect personal, cultural and community values and their awareness of those values.
Grade 12 Canadian and World Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyze the causes and effects of economic disparities around the world. • compare the cultural, economic and political aspirations of selected groups and the effects of their actions on local, national and global geographic issues. • analyze the impact of selected global trends on people and environments at the local, national and global level. • analyze instances of international cooperation and conflict and explain the factors that contributed to each.
Grade 12 World Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain the influence of social, political, cultural, economic and environmental factors on human environments and activities. • explain the causes and effects of human migrations.
Grade 12 Canadian and International Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain the major concepts, principles and purposes of international law. • evaluate the effectiveness of international laws, treaties and agreements in resolving conflicts of a global nature. • explain the factors that make framing, interpreting and enforcing law on a global scale a complex and difficult process.
Grade 12 Canadian and World Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain the rights and responsibilities of individual citizens, groups and states in the international community. • describe the main ways in which sovereign states and non-state participants cooperate and deal with international conflicts. • describe the structure and function of international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. • evaluate the role and operation of the international human rights protection system. • analyze how social and cultural beliefs and political ideologies influence national and international politics.

Grade 11 Equity, Diversity and Social Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore topics related to equity, diversity and/or social justice, and formulate questions to guide their research. • demonstrate an understanding of the dynamics of power relations in various social contexts. • demonstrate an understanding of the impact individual action can have on equity, social justice and environmental issues, and of how the media can create awareness of these issues. • demonstrate an understanding of how social activism can be used to support equity and social-justice objectives.
Grade 12 Equity and Social Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate an understanding of a range of perspectives on and approaches to equity and social-justice issues, and of factors that affect inequity and social injustice. • analyze, in historical and contemporary contexts, the dynamics of power relations and privilege as well as various factors that contribute to power or marginalization. • assess the impact of media and popular culture on equity and social-justice issues.
Grade 12 World Cultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyze how cultural identities are socially constructed, preserved, transmitted and transformed. • demonstrate an understanding of the dynamics of power relations within specific cultural groups and between minority and majority cultures. • demonstrate an understanding of past and present policies and issues affecting cultural diversity in Canada, and compare approaches to such policy in Canada with those in other countries.
Grade 12 Human Development Throughout the Lifespan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate an understanding of threats to healthy development throughout the lifespan and of a variety of protective factors that can increase an individual's resilience and reduce the impact of these threats. • demonstrate an understanding of social-emotional development throughout the lifespan and of ways of influencing such development. • demonstrate an understanding of various influences on personality development and identity formation throughout the lifespan. • demonstrate an understanding of how factors affect social-emotional development, with an emphasis on the process of socialization.
Grade 12 Challenge and Change in Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore topics related to the analysis of social change, and formulate questions to guide their research. • demonstrate an understanding of the causes and effects of social change. • demonstrate an understanding of how forces influence and shape social patterns and trends. • demonstrate an understanding of how various social structures and conditions support or limit global inequalities.
Grade 12 Philosophy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate an understanding of connections between ethics and other areas of philosophy, other subject areas, and various aspects of society, including everyday life. • use philosophical reasoning skills to develop, communicate and defend their own responses to philosophical questions in ethics. • demonstrate an understanding of connections between social and political philosophy and other areas of philosophy, other subject areas and various aspects of society, including everyday life. • use philosophical reasoning skills to develop, communicate and defend their own responses to questions in social and political philosophy.

The Overall Expectations listed above are from the *Ontario Curriculum*. Complete course descriptions, including all Overall and Specific Expectations can be found at: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/curriculum.html>