

Defining Genocide

Objectives—Students will:

- Examine the definition of genocide as defined in the Genocide Convention.
- Explore the possibilities for misinterpretation of the definition.
- Discuss the implications of the Convention for the crisis in Sudan.

Required Reading:

“Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide”

Handouts:

“Defining Genocide”

Online News Sources:

- <http://www.un.org/apps/news/infocusRel.asp?infocusID=88&Body=Sudan&Body1=> (“UN news on Sudan”)
- <http://www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/sudan/relationships.html> (“PBS on Sudan”)
- <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/af-rica/3641820.stm> (“Powell declares genocide in Sudan”)

In the Classroom:

1. “The Wall”—Begin the class by writing the word “genocide” in the center of the blackboard or on a large piece of paper. Give students 5-10 minutes to approach the board and write whatever comes to mind when they think of genocide—statements, words, questions, countries, etc. Instruct the class to do the exercise in silence. Encourage students to add to each other’s postings as well as write their own independent postings.

2. Defining Genocide—Distribute the Genocide Convention and Defining Genocide handouts. Divide students into small groups and have them read the articles out loud within their groups, paying special attention to Article II. Have one member of each group record their group’s responses to the questions.

3. Sharing Conclusions—After the groups have completed the worksheet, invite groups to share their conclusions. Are there points of agreement? Disagreement? How might the disagreements in the classroom mirror those policy-makers might have? What difficulties would those disagreements present for policy-makers? A challenging question for students might be to consider whether various other historical events might be defined as genocide. Was the institution of slavery in the U.S. a genocide? The treatment of Native Americans? What about the events at the Branch Davidian complex in Waco, Texas? China’s relationship with Tibet? Urge students to look carefully at the definition in the convention as they consider whether these events would meet the definition. You may find it useful with provide students with background reading on these events.

4. Considering Darfur—Have students consider the days lessons in light of the current crisis in Sudan. Offer students access to recent articles or online sources that will inform them about the situation in Sudan as well as about the world’s response. You may wish to provide students with particular articles in preparation for this lesson, or ask them to look for their own sources.

“**Defining Genocide**” is a Teaching with the News online resource. Copyright - Choices Program, Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University All rights reserved. Online resources are updated frequently. Permission is granted to photocopy for classroom use with appropriate credit given. Extension activities and additional web links are available from the Resources section of the Choices Program web site—www.choices.edu/resources

This material is a supplement to *Confronting Genocide: Never Again?*, a one-week curriculum unit developed by the Choices Program. A full description of *Confronting Genocide: Never Again?* is available online from Resources on the Choices Program web site.