

Student Activity: Israel & The Palestinians: The “Right of Return”

Time needed:

1 class period (45 min.–1 hour) should be sufficient to complete the reading and T-Chart or writing prompt activities. The writing prompt may be done in class or assigned as homework. (Although the T-Chart and writing prompt activities complement each other, it is not necessary—and may be redundant—to assign both to your students.)

Supplies for this activity:

- Map of the world (not included)
- Reading: *Israel & The Palestinians: The “Right of Return”* (p. 37)
- The *T-Chart: Israel/Palestinians* worksheet (p. 38) or the *Writing Prompt: Israel/Palestinians* worksheet (p. 39)
- Chalkboard or dry-erase board

Preparation:

Have students identify Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza Strip on a map of the world. You may also wish to use the map on page 90 to identify the location of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the Palestinian refugee camps in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. Have students compare the size of Israel and the Palestinian Territories.

You may wish to go over the following term with your students:

- **Refugee:** a person who seeks shelter from war, disaster, or persecution by leaving their home.

Class activities:

Distribute the *Israel & The Palestinians: “The Right of Return”* reading to all students. Have them read quietly.

Variation 1:

Distribute the *T-Chart: Israel/Palestinians* worksheet and have students complete the chart individually or in small groups. When finished, draw a T-Chart on the board and have each student or group offer one point and write it in the appropriate place on the board. Continue until all of the unique points offered by students are included. Discuss the results with the class. Ask students to compare the answers they gave with the answers that others gave. Are there any similarities? Are there any differences? Why? Or why not? Ask for a show of hands to determine which side the students feel has a stronger argument. Ask one or two students to explain their reasons.

Variation 2:

After students have finished reading, replicate the T-Chart on the *T-Chart: Israel/Palestinians* worksheet on the board. Complete the T-Chart by having students suggest points in favor of and opposition to the right of return and write them in the appropriate column. As a follow-up to this activity, you may wish to assign the *Writing Prompt: Israel/Palestinians* worksheet as homework or an in-class activity.

Variation 3:

Assign both the *Israel & The Palestinians: “The Right of Return”* reading and the *Writing Prompt: Israel/Palestinians* worksheet as homework. In class the next day, replicate the T-Chart on the *T-Chart: Israel/Palestinians* worksheet on the board. Complete the T-Chart by having students suggest points in favor of and opposition to the right of return and write them in the appropriate column. Continue until all of the unique points offered by students are included. Discuss the results with the class. Ask students to compare the answers they gave with the answers that others gave. Are there any similarities? Are there any differences? Why? Or why not? Ask for a show of hands to determine which side students supported in their writing, and have some of the students read the conclusion from their writing prompt out loud to the class.

Israel & The Palestinians: The “Right of Return”

One of the most difficult issues that Israelis and Palestinians must solve in order to work out a peace agreement is the issue of the “Palestinian right of return.” When the state of Israel was established in 1947, a war broke out between Israel and its Arab neighbors. Many of the Arab residents who lived in what became Israel fled their homes during the war. Many more fled during the 1967 war. Now, many Palestinians want the right to return to their homes in Israel. This is an issue that is very emotional for people on both sides. Read the following passages, and then discuss the reasons why the Palestinians should and should not be allowed the right of return.

I am Israeli and I am 15 years old. My grandparents came to Israel from Europe, where they were both in concentration camps during World War II. My parents were born here, just like me, my older sister, and my younger brother. For us, Israel is the homeland of the Jewish people, and it is the place where we belong.

I know that the Palestinians say they want to come back. But I don’t understand why. They have lived in other countries for many years. Palestinians my age were born in other countries, just like their parents and their grandparents. I feel like an Israeli. Why doesn’t a Palestinian born in Jordan feel like a Jordanian?

Jews come to Israel from all over the world, and we treat them like they belong here from the moment they arrive. When the Palestinians fled to other countries, they were forced to live in refugee camps and treated like second-class citizens. If the Palestinians are mad at anyone, they should be mad at the Arabs who made them stay in refugee camps instead of letting them get on with their lives.

There are a lot of people in Israel. I don’t know where all the Palestinians would go if they did decide to come back. There aren’t enough houses to go around. And what about work? Lots of people who live here already have trouble finding jobs—what are the Palestinians supposed to do if they come back?

I think the Palestinians should get on with their lives. I don’t understand why anyone would spend their entire life trying to get the right to move to a country they’ve never even been to. I know that being forced to leave your home is hard, but my grandparents did it, and they lived long happy lives. Why can’t the Palestinians?

I am Palestinian and I am 14 years old. I live with my family in a refugee camp in southern Lebanon. My grandparents were born in a village near the city of Haifa in what is now Israel. They had a farm there. Then the Jews came from Europe and the war happened and my grandparents had to flee to Lebanon.

Life is hard here. We can’t leave the country because we’re not citizens of Lebanon, and we don’t have passports. It’s hard to get jobs, and it’s hard for us to go to college or university. For us, our best hope is that we can go home to my grandparents’ farm. Then we’d be full citizens with all the rights other people have.

This is about what’s right. No one invited the Jews to come to Palestine. They just showed up. Our land was taken away from us. Since then, we’ve been living in terrible conditions in Lebanon. I don’t blame the Lebanese. They didn’t ask for all of us to come here, but we didn’t have anywhere else to go. The Lebanese government shouldn’t have to take responsibility for a bunch of outsiders.

The Israelis say that there’s no room for us. They say that there wouldn’t be any jobs for us. But Jews come to Israel all the time. Since the early 1990s, nearly 750,000 Jews have come to Israel from Russia, and the Israelis never said, “No, you can’t come, there’s no space or jobs for you.” But that’s what they say to us. I think the Israelis are just trying to keep us out. They want Israel to be only for the Jews.

I just want the same chance for a normal life as anyone else. But I can’t have that chance when I’m living in a refugee camp. The Israelis should admit that they did something wrong and give us back what is rightfully ours.

Refugee: a person who seeks shelter from war, disaster, or persecution by leaving their home.

T-CHART: ISRAEL/PALESTINIANS

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

Assignment: Read the passages on *Israel & The Palestinians: The “Right of Return.”* Then complete the chart below, listing reasons why the Palestinians should be granted the right of return in the left column, and reasons why the Palestinians should not be granted the right of return in the right column.

Make as many points as you need for each side. The first three are already labeled for you.

Reasons why the Palestinians should be given the right of return	Reasons why the Palestinians should not be given the right of return
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

Which side do you agree with? Cite examples from the text to support your answer:

WRITING PROMPT: ISRAEL/PALESTINIANS

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

Examining both sides of the issue: The Palestinian “Right of Return”

Imagine that you are a member of a United Nations team who has been sent to Israel and the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon to talk to people about their feelings toward the Palestinian right of return issue.

Upon your return home, you must write a letter to the United Nations Secretary-General in which you identify points both in favor of the right of return and against it. Your letter should include at least two points in favor of and two points against the right of return.

At the end of the letter, you must make a recommendation to the Secretary-General about whether or not the right of return for Palestinian refugees should be part of a peace settlement between Israel and the Palestinians. Back up your recommendation with evidence from the text.

Mr. Secretary-General:

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.