

Using NewsHour Extra Feature Stories

STORY

2008 Olympic Games in China Draw Criticism Over Darfur, 02/28/08

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/world/jan-june08/olympics_2-27.html

Estimated Time: One 45-minute class period with possible extension

Student Worksheet (reading comprehension and discussion questions without answers)

PROCEDURE

1. WARM UP

Use initiating questions to introduce the topic and find out how much your students know.

2. MAIN ACTIVITY

Have students read NewsHour Extra's feature story and answer the reading comprehension and discussion questions on the student handout.

3. DISCUSSION

Use discussion questions to encourage students to think about how the issues outlined in the story affect their lives and express and debate different opinions.

INITIATING QUESTIONS

1. What do the Olympic Games symbolize?

2. Does it matter where the Olympic Games take place? What does it mean for a city to host the Games?

3. Where are the 2008 summer Olympic Games being held?

4. What do you know about China?

READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS – **Student Worksheet**

1. What is the relationship between celebrities, advocates, China and the Olympics?

ANSWER

Celebrities and advocates are using the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing as an opportunity to force the Chinese government to confront its allies in the African nation of Sudan about the violence in war-torn Darfur.

2. Who is Ai Weiwei and what is his opinion of the upcoming Olympic Games?

ANSWER

Ai Weiwei, the Chinese architect who designed the \$440 million Olympic stadium, will not attend the opening ceremony in protest of the lack of democracy in China.

"There isn't anything to celebrate. The political system is incapable of handling economic and social change," Ai Weiwei told Spiegel Magazine. "The games are a propaganda show, a giant masked ball."

3. Why did movie director Steven Spielberg withdraw from his role as the artistic director to the Olympics?

ANSWER

In an open letter, Spielberg admonished China's lack of intervention in the Darfur genocide. China, as Sudan's largest oil investor and weapons supplier, has a considerable amount of influence with the Sudanese government, he said.

Spielberg had already sent two letters to Chinese President Hu Jintao, and although China appointed a special envoy to Sudan, Spielberg, who created the Shoah Foundation dedicated to remembering the Holocaust, said it was not enough. "Conscience will not allow me to continue with business as usual."

4. How is China an indirect player in the military conflict in Sudan's Darfur region?

ANSWER

As the consumer of two-thirds of Sudan's oil and Sudan's main weapons supplier, China is an indirect major player in a military conflict largely centered on oil and resources.

5. Summarize the conflict in Darfur. Who are the key players? What have they done? What is the result of these actions?

ANSWER

In 2003, two groups of ethnic Africans from the oil-rich Darfur region rebelled against the Arab-led central Sudanese government, demanding inclusion in new power-sharing arrangements and some of the money made by the sale of oil.

To suppress the rebellion, the Sudanese government trained and armed militias of Arab nomads, called the Janjaweed, according to human rights groups. The Sudanese government denies it has trained, armed or helped these militia members.

The Janjaweed went on killing, raping and pillaging rampages against particular ethnic groups, attacking civilians who were not directly involved in the fighting. The United States officially called their actions genocide in 2004.

More than 200,000 Sudanese have died and around 2.5 million forced from their homes since the start of the conflict five years ago. Fighting continues in the region, often preventing the delivery of much needed humanitarian aid for civilians.

6. What is China's position in the United Nations? How has this position impacted the situation in Sudan?

ANSWER

The Chinese government has used its position as a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council to veto measures calling for intervention in Sudan or for imposing economic sanctions on Sudan's oil exports. China agreed to the deployment of U.N. peacekeeping troops after the other countries agreed that all forces would have to abide by conditions set by the Sudanese government.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (more research might be needed)

1. According to the news story, the majority of international officials and leaders seem to agree with China's argument that the Olympics are about rising above politics through the celebration of sports. What do you think? Can you or should you separate politics from sports at events like the Olympics? Why or why not?

2. The actor Don Cheadle, a co-founder of Not On Our Watch, a Darfur advocacy group, said he hoped that Spielberg's actions would force China to rethink its position. "One guy like Steven in a position like that is like 100 other guys," he said. "Those are the kinds of moves, that if they catch fire, and other people think of boycotting, or refraining, the cumulative effect could be something that potentially could change the calculation of that government." What do you think? Do you agree or disagree with Cheadle's assessment of the situation. Why or why not?

3. Look back to past Olympic Games. When have world political events impacted the games in a significant way? Look at times of war and conflict. [suggestions: 1936 Berlin Games, 1976 Montreal Games, 1980 Moscow Games, 1984 Los Angeles Games] How are these events similar or different to what's going on today?

Extension Activity

Have students write a 300-500 word essay on this topic providing clear examples. Send your completed editorial to NewsHour Extra (extra@newshour.org). Exceptional essays might be published on our Web site.