**ADVANCED Lesson on a Korean Christmas Miracle & Refugees: Warm-up (Pair Work)**

1. During the holiday season, do you try to help others? If so, how?
2. What’s the most uncomfortable voyage you’ve been on?
3. How would you define a ‘miracle’?

**Reading** (Read as a group)

In 1950, American Leonard LaRue was the captain of the Meredith Victory, a small ship designed to carry 47 crewmen and a maximum of 12 passengers. LaRue was ordered to the port of Hungnam, in present-day North Korea to help in an **evacuation**. LaRue described the scene upon nearing the shore on December 22nd: “Korean refugees **thronged** the docks. With them was everything they could wheel, carry or drag. Beside them, like frightened chicks, were their children.”

LaRue and his crew loaded the women, babies, and elderly into the ship’s cargo holds. On top, men stood side by side in the harsh cold. Luggage was abandoned; the ship’s only non-human cargo was 300 tons of highly flammable jet fuel.

Thirteen hours later with Chinese forces about 4,000 yards away, the ship sailed south, **navigating** the 30-mile **minefield** around the port without mine detection equipment. There was no food, heating, or toilets. Although there were demands for food and water and attempts to light fires atop the fuel canisters (which were quickly **extinguished** by the crew), the passengers generally remained calm. The ship arrived in Pusan on Christmas eve but was unable to dock because the city was **overwhelmed** with refugees. LaRue later remarked, “I was reminded of the first Christmas Eve when there was no room…”

The ship sailed one more **frigid** night to the island of Koje Do, where the passengers were finally taken ashore. In the end, 14,000 refugees were saved. Not only did not a single passenger die, but the ship arrived with five extra people—babies that had been born in the cargo hold. On his voyage, LaRue reflected, “I think of how such a small vessel was able to hold so many persons and **surmount** endless **perils** without harm to a soul…The clear, unmistakable message comes to me that on that Christmastide, in the **bleak** and bitter waters off the shores of Korea, God’s own hand was at the **helm** of my ship.”



Leonard LaRue would later become a Benedictine monk.

[Sources: <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2001-oct-22-me-60282-story.html>,

<https://www.franciscanmedia.org/st-anthony-messenger/march-2019/brother-marinus-war-hero-and-selfless-monk>]

**Lesson on a Christmas Miracle in Korea: Follow-Up Questions & Discussion**

1. Why did LaRue go to the port of Hungnam and why was it dangerous at the time?
2. What did the events in Pusan remind LaRue of?
3. What’s your opinion of the story?
4. Do you agree with LaRue that the story proves the existence of God?

**Lesson on a Korean Christmas Miracle: Vocabulary**

Match the word, as it is used in the article, to its definition.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. evacuation (n)
2. throng (v)
3. navigate (v)
4. minefield (n)
5. (be) overwhelmed (v)
6. frigid (adj)
7. surmount (v)
8. peril (n)
9. bleak (adj)
10. helm (n)
 | 1. very cold; bitterly cold
2. serious and immediate danger
3. (of a crowd) to fill or be present in a place
4. the act of removing people from a dangerous place
5. to be overloaded, submerged, flooded
6. cold and miserable
7. an area planted with explosive mines
8. to overcome a difficulty/obstacle
9. the wheel used to steer a boat or ship
10. to plan and direct the route of a ship, aircraft, etc.
 |

**Homework:** Circle the words that are new to you. Make sentences with them for homework.

**EFL Lesson Plan on Refugees: Lifeboat Ethics** (Small Groups)

Situation #1: Your ship is sinking. You are 300 kilometers off the coast of Korea. Thankfully, you have a lifeboat but it can only hold **six** passengers. Below is a list of people from the ship’s manifest (list of passengers). Whom will you save from peril and why?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Ship’s captain (yourself)
* Dae-Hyun Park, banker and 52-year-old husband of Yu-Jun Park
* Yu-Jun Park, 28-year-old wife of Dae-Hyun Park
* Glenda Hill, 38-year-old lawyer and mother of three
* Elena, a pregnant woman and lawyer
 | * Alan, your 50-year-old uncle
* Candy, a 22-year-old waitress who suffers from depression and has tried to commit suicide twice this year.
* Jackie Chan, a 68-year-old movie star
* Ho, a 16-year-old teenager who was caught stealing from a passenger yesterday
 |

Situation #2: In 1842, thirty people were crowded on a lifeboat after their ship struck an iceberg.[[1]](#endnote-1) The lifeboat was designed to hold seven. As a storm approached, it became obvious that the ship would need to be lightened so at least some people could survive. No one, however, volunteered to jump into the frigid water. The captain decided that he would have to force some people into the ocean. If he didn’t, they would die anyway.

* Assuming it’s true that the boat is too heavy for everyone, do you agree with the captain?
* If the captain does nothing and they all die, is he responsible?
* How could you decide who to force over?

The captain felt that if they rowed with great effort, they could be saved. Therefore, he sacrificed the weakest people. After three days of rowing, they were rescued. The captain was later tried in court.

* If you were the judge, what decision would you make about his actions?

**EFL Lesson Plan on Christmas: Family Holiday Plans (Pair-work)**

Situation: Christmas is approaching. Your family has two children, aged 12 and 14. You and your partner need to talk about your family’s Christmas plans. Pick a role below and read your position.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Parent-A | This year your family has some extra money, so you want to do something special as a family. Think of a plan to suggest to your partner. Also, your children have been asking for cellphones for several years (all their friends have them), and you feel they are finally old enough to have one. Share your thoughts with your partner. You will go first. |
| Parent-B | You spoke to a man this morning who was a Benedictine monk. He made you realize the meaning of Christmas is to help others. This year, you don’t want your family to spend money on gifts for each other. Instead, you want your family to volunteer to help the poor in your community. Convince your partner to agree with your plan. |

**EFL Lesson Plan on Christmas: Refugee Debate (One-on-one or Group-on-Group)**

Situation: A natural disaster has struck the (fictional) developing island nation of Loli. As a result, millions of refugees need to be resettled in other countries. You and your partner are politicians. You are holding a meeting to decide how your country will respond.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Politician-A(Pro-Refugee) | You believe your country should accept a large number (think of a number) of refugees. Spend a few minutes thinking of reasons why your country ought to do this. When ready, present your case to the other politician. |
| Politician-B(Undecided) | You aren’t sure that accepting a large number of refugees is a great idea for your country. Spent a few minutes thinking of issues that could arise. Your partner will present first. Present your views afterward and have a discussion. |

**Lesson Plan on Christmas & Refugees: Other Discussion Questions**

1. What is the meaning of Christmas?
2. **Being Good**: Have you been good this year? Do you become a better person every year?
3. LaRue acted benevolently to help others, not himself. How common is it that people commit acts that don’t benefit themselves somehow?
4. If you had to suddenly leave your life behind, what three things would you take with you?
5. Does your home country accept many refugees? Why or why not?

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*Suggested comprehension question answers*

1. *He went to the port to save refugees of war in Korea. It was dangerous because the Chinese were arriving soon, the waterway around the port contained explosive mines, and it was winter (cold).*
2. *It reminded him of the story of Mary being turned away at the inn from the Bible.*
3. *…*
4. *…*

*Vocabulary Answers: 1-d, 2-c, 3-j, 4-g, 5-e, 6-a, 7-h, 8-b, 9-f, 10-i*

*Endnotes*

1. Adapted from https://www.friesian.com/valley/dilemmas.htm [↑](#endnote-ref-1)