

# *Understanding Terrorism*

DVD and VHS - Teacher's Guide



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### **Introduction**

This programme is aimed at students aged 12 to 18. They will have a wide range of knowledge about this subject. It is important to tease this out before viewing. This guide helps with that. It also contains the programme summary and vocabulary.

**Before Viewing:** Research in learning suggests that it is important for the teacher to discover what the students know — or think they know — about a topic, at the start of a new unit, so that their accurate conceptions can be validated and reinforced, and their misconceptions identified and corrected. Therefore, after reviewing the pre-viewing discussion questions provided for your class, create a “Everything We Know About...” list. Preview key vocabulary words and have students raise additional questions they hope will be answered by this program. Most importantly, students should be told that as “terrorism investigators” they must listen closely, so that after viewing the program, they will be able to tell whether or not the facts/beliefs they put on their list were scientifically accurate.

**After Viewing:** After a brief discussion about the program, challenge your “terrorism investigators” to prove or disprove the accuracy of the facts they put on their “Everything We Know About...” list. Discuss what else they learned and use the follow-up questions and activities to inspire further discussion. Encourage students to research the topic further using the Internet and the key vocabulary words.

# Teacher's Guide - Pre-viewing

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### **Pre-viewing Discussion**

Before students generate their list of “Everything We Know About...” this topic, stimulate and focus their thinking by raising these questions so that their list will better reflect the key ideas in this programme:

- Ask students to consider why people engage in terrorism. Do students think terrorism is completely random, or do they think there is a purpose to this type of violence?
- Ask students to describe a familiar terrorist incident from history. What means did the terrorists use in the attack? Were people injured or killed in the attack? Did the terrorists have a goal? Was it accomplished?
- Ask students to think about terrorists such as the people who attacked the United States on September 11, 2001. Ask your class to suggest some personality traits of a person who would be willing to die in the name of his or her religion or cause. Is willingness to die for one's cause an admirable trait? Why or why not? Would students be able to sacrifice themselves in the name of their culture, faith or country?

After the class has completed their “Everything We Know About...” list, and before watching the programme, ask them what other questions they have that they hope will be answered during this program.

Ask students to listen closely to the DVD to check if everything on their class list is accurate and to hear if any of their own questions are answered.

# Teacher's Guide - Programme Summary

## *Understanding Terrorism*

Throughout history, terrorism has claimed millions of innocent lives and disrupted societies all over the world. But what exactly is terrorism? Despite controversy over which incidents can truly be called acts of terrorism, the term can be defined as the use or threat of violence to achieve a specific goal.

Terrorism generally can be divided into two categories: state terrorism, or terrorism from above, in which governments lash out against their own people, and terrorism from below, in which groups or individuals try to disrupt the civil order to further their own agendas. Governments resort to terror to prevent other parties or popular movements from taking control, while groups or individuals use terrorism for various reasons, such as to fight against unpopular governments, to send a political message, or to further a criminal enterprise.

Support and protection of one's religion has also been a strong motivation for terrorism throughout history.

While state terrorists have used the full force of a government's police and military against their enemies, individuals and groups have resorted to strategies such as kidnappings, hijackings and bombings.

Terrorists have used these guerrilla-style tactics with the intention of striking fear into thousands of people, while hoping that the media will bring their message to the world's attention.

Individual terrorists come from a wide range of social, political and cultural backgrounds. Many are young, passionate and revengeful, and most importantly, are willing to die for their cause.

Fuelled by their hatred and fanaticism, terrorism has become a horrifyingly common occurrence in today's world.

# Teacher's Guide - Vocabulary

## *Understanding Terrorism*

The following words are included for teacher reference or for use with students. They are listed in the order in which they appear in the video.

**Khmer Rouge** — A communist group in Cambodia led by Pol Pot that was responsible for killing over one million Cambodians in the late 1970s.

**ethnic cleansing** — A term used to describe the forced removal and mass murder of ethnic groups during the 1990s civil war in the former Yugoslavia.

**genocide** — The planned destruction of a group of people because of their race, religion, ethnicity or political beliefs.

**African National Congress** — A political party led by Nelson Mandela that fought against apartheid, the racist government policy of South Africa.

**apartheid** — A South African government policy that was characterized by racial, political and economic discrimination against black and mixed-race citizens.

**anarchy** — A situation in which there is no form of government power in charge of a country. A person who is in favor of the elimination of all government power is called an anarchist.

**guerrilla** — A person, not part of a regular military force, who engages in warfare.

**Tonton Macoute** — A private police force used by Haitian dictator Francois Duvalier to terrorize his enemies.

**Al Qaeda** — An international group formed by Osama bin Laden in the late 1980s that has vowed to fight against the United States and its interests throughout the world, and overthrow what bin Laden perceives to be illegitimate and “corrupt” Muslim governments.

**Irish Republican Army** — A militant nationalist group that was formed in 1916 to seek an end to British rule in Northern Ireland.

**AUM Shinrikyo** — A religious cult from Japan that was responsible for a deadly nerve gas attack on a Tokyo subway in 1995.

# Teacher's Guide - After viewing

## *Understanding Terrorism*

### **Follow-up Discussion**

The most important part of this segment is to examine facts and beliefs generated by the class in their “Everything We Know About...” list. Students will retain their previous misconceptions — in preference to the new information — until they actively recognize and correct their own errors. It is important to lead students to the correct ideas while identifying and correcting any misconceptions from the class list. Encourage students to share the answers they got to the questions raised before viewing the program. Raising a thought-provoking question is a good way to assess the overall depth of understanding.

Some suggestions are listed below:

- Although terrorists have never successfully toppled a democratically elected government, experts warn that terrorists may, in effect, achieve this goal by forcing a democratic government to develop strong security measures that curtail the freedom and civil liberty of its citizens. Ask students to discuss the degree to which American society has been disrupted by terrorism. Do students think measures such as increased surveillance and monitoring of individual activities, use of military tribunals, and detention of suspected terrorists without formal charges should be temporary or need to become a permanent part of American society? Why?
- The IRA, despite causing many deaths and injuries to civilians over the years, carefully selected their targets so as not to lose public support for their intentions. However, other terrorist groups and individuals are increasingly targeting innocent civilians in their attacks. Does the targeting of civilians help or hurt a terrorist's “cause”? Why do students think modern terrorists have opted for this indiscriminate strategy? Ask students to offer their interpretations of the theory that the terrorist's goal is “to kill one person and frighten a thousand.”
- Led by Nelson Mandela, Umkhonto We Sizwe, the military wing of the African National Congress, used terror tactics to try to overthrow the system of apartheid in South Africa. Do students think the use of terrorism in this case was justified? Why or why not? Is the use of terrorism justified in a case when a group is trying to overthrow a racist government or attempting to get rid of a foreign power? Ask students to discuss if there are instances in which they feel the use of terrorism might be an appropriate tactic.

# Teacher's Guide - After viewing

## *Understanding Terrorism*

### Focus Questions

You may wish to ask your class the following questions to assess their comprehension of key points presented in the program:

1. What is terrorism? What is the purpose of terrorism?
2. What is the difference between terrorism “from above” and terrorism “from below”?
3. In what ways have dictators used terrorism throughout history?
4. What is “ethnic cleansing”?
5. What was apartheid?
6. Why have governments such as those in the former Soviet Union and Haiti resorted to terrorism?
7. What role has religion played in the history of terrorism?
8. Why do terrorists target public places as a strategy?
9. How do terrorists use the media?
10. How have the intended victims of terrorists changed over the years?
11. What are some of the ways in which terrorists can strike?
12. What are some personal characteristics of a potential terrorist, or terrorist leader?
13. Why did Osama bin Laden issue a fatwah against the United States?
14. What is al Qaeda? How are al Qaeda members trained and financed?
15. Do terrorists ever achieve their goals?

### Follow-up Activities

- Break students into small groups and ask each group to do extensive research on groups and individuals such as Japanese kamikaze pilots, the Contras, Ayatollah Khomeini, Fidel Castro and Al Capone. Ask each group to offer a presentation to the class that describes the nature and purpose of the violence associated with their subject. Ask the class to debate whether these parties participated in terrorism or not, and to justify their responses with evidence they learned from the group presentations.
- Experts agree that terrorists seek maximum media exposure in order to promote their agenda or cause. Ask students to write journal entries in which they offer their opinions of the media's role in terrorism. Should media outlets such as television and radio limit their coverage of terrorist incidents? Does the media inadvertently help terrorists by giving them the attention they want, or does the public's right to be informed override such concerns?
- State sponsored terror has been the cause of more deaths throughout history than terrorism committed by groups and individuals. One of the first examples of the use of state terror was the public guillotining of individuals during the French Revolution. Ask students to construct a time line of significant examples of state terrorism starting with the late 18th century and concluding with modern times.
- In his January 29, 2002 State of the Union address, President Bush named Iran, Iraq and North Korea as sponsors of state terrorism and called them an “axis of evil.” Cuba, Libya and Syria were later added to this list. Ask students to locate these countries on a world map, identify their leaders and research their history and cultures. As a follow-up, ask students to discuss if they agree or disagree with President Bush's decision to publicly identify these six countries as promoters of terrorism.