

# **Learning with the Irrawaddy 1**

## **To accompany January 2005 Issue of Irrawaddy Magazine**

### **Teacher's Notes**

This is the first copy of 'Learning with the Irrawaddy', a monthly educational supplement to the Irrawaddy Magazine. It is designed for Reading, English or social studies classes in Post-10 schools on the Burma border.

With each issue of Irrawaddy magazine, we will select one article and design some learning activities for it. We recommend that you use these exercises with Intermediate level English students and above. You don't need to use all activities suggested here – choose those that are most appropriate for your students.

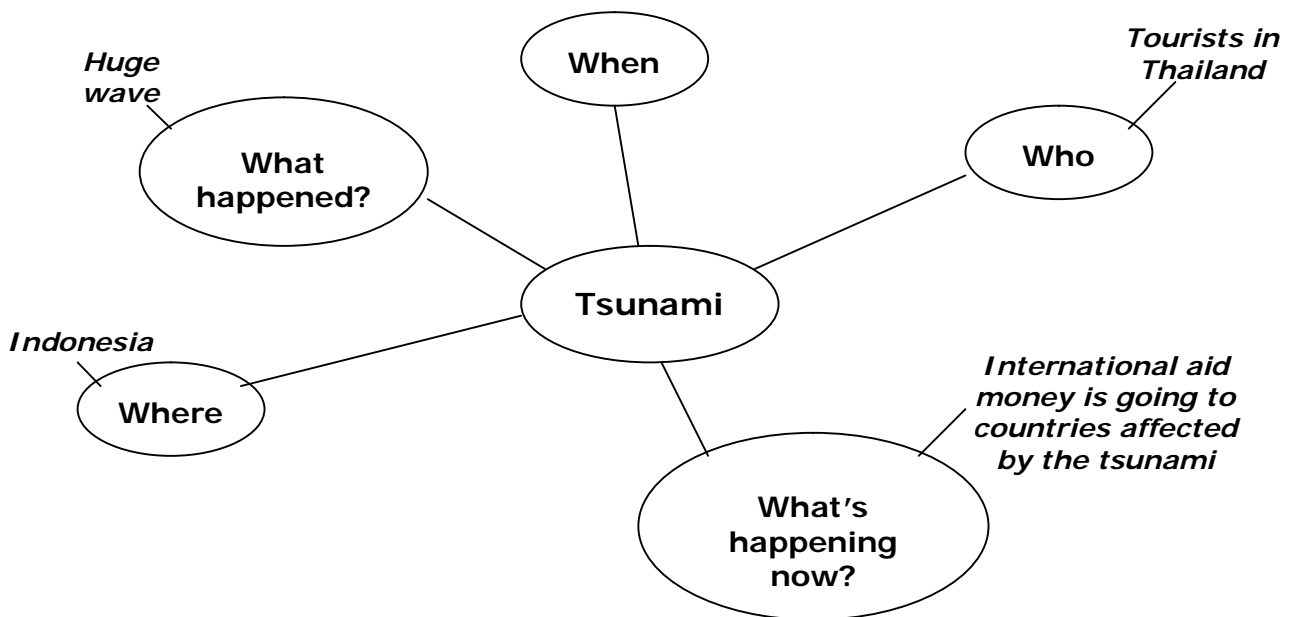
We have included a class set of photocopies of the article, a class set of worksheets, together with this teacher's guide. Have fun!

Selected article: *Pity Burmese Tsunami Survivors in Thailand*, page 22

## Activities to do Before Reading

### Activity 1 Mind-map: What do you know about the Tsunami?

- a) Discuss the Tsunami with your students. What is a tsunami? When was this tsunami? What countries were affected? How many people died?
- b) Draw this mind-map on the board. Get students' ideas to complete the mind-map.  
*Or get students into groups to copy and complete the mind map.*  
Don't correct the information, just get their ideas.



### Activity 2 What does the title mean?

The title of this article is *Pity Burmese Tsunami Survivors in Thailand*. What does this mean? Who are the Burmese survivors? What do they do? Where in Thailand do they live? Get students ideas about the article.

**Activity 3****Predict the answers.**

a) Students guess the answers to these questions.

They can do this alone, in pairs, or in groups.

1. How many Burmese people in Thailand died in the Tsunami?
2. How many registered Burmese workers lived in South-Western Thailand?
3. How many Burmese people were deported by the Thai authorities in the two weeks after the tsunami?
4. Do the Thai authorities treat foreign tsunami victims well?

b) Give students the article. They check to see if their guesses were correct.

**Answers:**

1. between 700-1000 (according to HREIB)
2. 60,000
3. about 1500
4. yes, the Thai's official treatment of foreign tsunami victims is *laudable*.

**Activities to do During Reading****Activity 4****Key vocabulary**

- a) Students scan the text and underline any words they don't know.
- b) In groups, encourage them to identify the meanings of these words in their dictionaries.
- c) Match these words with their definitions

devastated	<i>to attack</i>
trawler	<i>difficult</i>
complicated	<i>admirable, very good</i>
round up	<i>mad, crazy</i>
pre-empt	<i>to steal things after a disaster</i>
hysterical	<i>very stupid</i>
loot	<i>a type of fishing boat</i>
ridiculous	<i>to force people into one face</i>
accost	<i>destroyed, broken</i>
laudable	<i>to do something before something happens</i>

**Answers:**

Devastated - *destroyed, broken*      trawler - *a type of fishing boat*  
Complicated - *difficult*      round up - *to force people into one place*  
pre-empt - *to do something before something happens*  
hysterical - *mad, crazy*      loot - *to steal things after a disaster*  
ridiculous - *very stupid*      accost - *to attack*  
laudable - *admirable, very good*

**Activity 5**

**Match the paragraphs**

a) Give students these paragraph summaries. Students match the summaries with the paragraphs. They can do this alone, in pairs, or in groups.

1. Some injured Burmese are getting treated in Thai hospitals.
2. The newspapers claim that Burmese people are pretending to be Thai, and looting people's possessions.
3. Thai immigration is deporting many people, without taking them to court first.
4. Many Burmese migrant workers on the West coast of Thailand were killed in the tsunami.
5. Some villagers attacked some aid workers who were trying to help Burmese tsunami victims.
6. Many Burmese lost their ID. Thai immigration is arresting people who don't have ID.
7. Most Burmese people can't speak fluent Thai.
8. The Thai government is good to foreign tourists, but not Burmese migrants affected by the tsunami.
9. Kyaw Myint was working on a fishing boat when he witnessed the tsunami.
10. Many Thai employers don't allow their Burmese workers to return home.
11. Some Thai people are sympathetic to the Burmese tsunami victims. However, the newspapers are accusing Burmese people of looting.
12. More Burmese people were killed in Thailand than in Burma. It is difficult to identify Burmese victims.
13. Nobody was arrested for beating the aid workers, and police are investigating the aid agency.

**Answers:**

The paragraphs are in this order: 9, 4, 12, 1, 6, 3, 11, 2, 7, 10, 5, 13, 8

**Activity 6****Identify the main point**

What is the main point of this article?

- 1) Many Burmese migrant workers were killed in the Tsunami.
- 2) Burmese tsunami victims are not treated well by the Thai government.
- 3) Some Burmese migrant workers lost their ID documents in the tsunami.
- 4) Some organizations are helping Burmese tsunami victims in Thailand.

**Answer:** 2

**Activity 7****Comprehension questions**

Answer these questions.

- 1) How many Burmese workers lived in the tsunami-affected provinces?
- 2) Why is it difficult to identify bodies of Burmese people?
- 3) Is Pang Nga hospital helping injured Burmese people?
- 4) What does *Khao Sod* newspaper claim Burmese people are doing?
- 5) Do many Burmese people speak fluent Thai?
- 6) What is Somyos Leetrakul's job?
- 7) What happened to Somyos Leetrakul when he tried to help tsunami victims return to Burma?
- 8) How many people were arrested for beating Somyos Leetrakul?

**Answers:**

- 1) 60,000 registered workers, and an unknown number of illegal migrant workers.
- 2) There is no dental or DNA data, and their friends and relatives are afraid to visit body collection centres.
- 3) Yes
- 4) Looting Khao Lak and Phang Nga provinces. Learning to speak fluent Southern Thai to trick Thai people.
- 5) No, and those that do have strong Burmese accents.
- 6) Co-ordinator of World Vision.
- 7) He was attacked by a mob, then arrested.
- 8) None.

## Activity 8

### Fact, opinion, or hypothesis?

- a. Explain the difference between *facts*, *opinions* or *hypotheses* to the students.

These statements from the article are either *facts*, *opinions* or *hypotheses*.

A *fact* is something that is definitely true – there is proof available to support this. An *opinion* is what someone thinks, it is not definitely true or false, as it depends on the beliefs of the person.

A *hypothesis* might be a fact, but there is no proof, or not enough proof to make it a fact, so we don't know for sure.

- b. Students identify which are which.

- 1) He was working on a trawler based in Phang Nga Province until December 26
- 2) Before the disaster there were 60,000 registered Burmese workers in Thailand's six western seaboard provinces
- 3) The identification process is complicated because there are no dental data or DNA material available
- 4) The HREIB is seeking assistance from the Law Society of Thailand and sympathetic Thai politicians
- 5) The charge is ridiculous
- 6) The situation reached farcical proportions on January 12
- 7) The fracas was incited by a local fishing operator concerned that his workers would desert him
- 8) Official treatment of other foreign nationals has been laudable

### Answers:

- 1) fact
- 2) fact
- 3) hypothesis
- 4) fact
- 5) opinion
- 6) opinion
- 7) hypothesis
- 8) opinion

## Activities to do After Reading

### Activity 9

#### What do you think?

Answer these questions with your own ideas.

- a) Why are the Thai immigration authorities deporting Burmese tsunami victims, without taking them to court?
- b) According to World Vision, their workers were beaten because a local fishing operator was afraid his Burmese workers would desert him. Why was the fishing operator afraid his Burmese workers would desert him?
- c) What could the Thai authorities do to improve conditions for Burmese tsunami victims?

#### Possible answers:

- a) Perhaps the immigration authorities want to deport Burmese people as quickly as possible, in case there are any problems, and they are blamed. Perhaps they believe the stories about Burmese looters.
- b) Perhaps he thought they would run away to look for their relatives, or try to get back to Burma.
- c) Some suggestions:
  - not arrest people for having no ID
  - not arrest people for coming to identify dead relatives
  - provide hospital treatment for injured people
  - assist people who want to return to Burma
  - provide facilities to replace lost ID documents

### Activity 10

#### Write a letter.

You work for HREIB. Write a letter to Prime Minister Thaksin, describing the situation of Burmese migrant tsunami victims, and asking for better treatment for them.

## Activity 10

## Activity 11

### Roleplay

Students work in groups of three. Get students to work out what these people would say to each other, then rehearse the discussion. Get a few groups to perform their dialogue to the class.

*Student 1:* A Thai fishing boat owner. You are afraid the Burmese people who work on the fishing boat will leave to go back to Burma. If this happens, your boat will not have people to do any work, and you will lose a lot of money.

*Student 2:* A Burmese fisher. You want to return to Burma for a short time, to check that you family are OK. You are afraid because your family live near the sea, and you don't know if the tsunami has affected them.

*Student 3:* A Burmese fisher. Some of your young cousins were working on another boat. They are missing, and you want to go down to the body identification centre and see if they have been killed. You want permission to leave for only one day, then you will come back and work.