

# **Learning with the Irrawaddy 3**

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

### **Teacher's Notes**

Here is the third issue 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 select one article and design some learning activities for it. We recommend that you use these exercises with students who have an **Intermediate level of English**. You don't need to use all activities suggested here – choose those that are most appropriate for your students.

In this issue we have included:

- this teacher's guide
- some copies of Irrawaddy magazine
- a class set of photocopies of the article
- a class set of worksheets.

Selected article: *A Risky Farewell to Arms*, page 19

## Activities to do Before Reading

### Activity 1

#### Prediction: Title

Look at the title of the article: *A Risky Farewell to Arms*.

Check that students understand the work *risky* (*unsafe, possible that something bad might happen*).

Based on this title, what do students think will be in the article?

### Activity 2

#### Brainstorm: Who's fighting?

How many groups have signed ceasefires with the Burmese military government?

How many groups are fighting?

Make a chart on the board, and get students ideas.

#### Example Answers:

This is a list of some groups that have signed ceasefires since 1988, and some groups that are fighting the military government as of July 1, 2005<sup>1</sup>. (*Sources: Irrawaddy magazine and Non-Violence International*)

Ceasefire groups	non-ceasfire groups
UWSA (United Wa State Army)	KNLA (Karen National Liberation Army)
MTA (Mong Tai Army)	KNPP (Karenni National Progressive Party)
SSPP (Shan State Progress Party)	CNF (Chin National Front)
NDAA (National Democratic Alliance Army)	SSA-South (Shan State Army)
PNO (Pa-O National Organisation)	ABSDF (All Burma Students Democratic Front)
PSLA (Palaung State Liberation Army)	WNO (Wa National Organisation)
KNPLF (Karenni State Nationalities Peoples' Liberation Front)	All Burma Muslim Union
KNLP (Kayan New Land Party)	Arakan Liberation Army
SSNPLO (Shan State Nationalities Peoples' Liberation Organization)	PDF (People's Defense Force)
NMSP (New Mon State Party)	PLF (People's Liberation Front)
CPB (Communist Party of Burma)	Arakan Rohingya National Organisation
MNDAA (Myanmar National Democracy Alliance Army)	Kuki National Army
	Zomi National Front

<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to get up-to date, accurate information about all armed groups. By the time you read this, some of these groups may have stopped, or resumed fighting. Also the size of many of these organisations is difficult to estimate. There are also many smaller breakaway groups, some fighting, some under ceasefire.

**Activity 3****Prediction: True or False?**

- a) Students read the introductory paragraph. Clarify anything they don't understand. They then read the sentences, and decide whether they are true or false.

*You are about to read an article about the situation for Burma's ceasefire groups. There has been civil war in Burma since 1948, when many ethnic minority groups took up arms against the Burmese government. Since 1988, many of these groups have signed ceasefire agreements. A ceasefire agreement means that both sides agree to stop fighting each other. When these groups signed ceasefire agreements, they kept their weapons. Now the Burmese government is asking some of these groups to disarm – to give up their weapons.*

*Currently Burma's military government is holding a National Convention, to try to write a new constitution for Burma. Many of the ceasefire groups have been invited to attend the National Convention. Groups who attend the National Convention hope that they can participate in the political process, and achieve their goals by political means.*

1. More than twenty ethnic minority armed groups have signed ceasefires with the Burmese military government since 1988.
2. The National Convention re-started in 2004, after an eight year break.
3. Ceasefire groups have been invited to attend the National Convention.
4. In May, the SPDC asked the Shan State National Army, a ceasefire group, to disarm.
5. The Palaung State Liberation Army still have their weapons.
6. Many opposition groups criticized ceasefire groups for participating in the National Convention.

- b) After students have done activity 2, give them the article. Students read the article, and check their predictions.

**Answers:**

1. *False – seventeen groups, according to the article.*
2. *True*
3. *True*
4. *True*
5. *False – they surrendered their arms.*
6. *True*

## Activities to do During Reading

### Activity 4

#### Paragraph Summaries

- a) Give students these paragraph summaries. Students match the summaries with the paragraphs. They can do this alone, in pairs, or in groups.
1. There is fighting between UWSA and SSA.
  2. Many ceasefire groups are participating in the National Convention to write a new constitution. However, they cannot participate in open discussions there.
  3. The ceasefire groups thought participating in the National Convention would help their cause. Other opposition groups criticised them for this.
  4. Perhaps other ceasefire groups might take up armed struggle again.
  5. The government has offered money and business opportunities to encourage ceasefires.
  6. Ceasefire groups are worried the junta will force them to disarm.
  7. The Burmese military has signed 17 ceasefires with ethnic minority armed groups. Therefore they can think they have beaten their enemies.
  8. Ceasefires have not created stability in Burma.
  9. The junta has been cracking down on Shan groups.
  10. The Palaung State Liberation Army gave up their weapons.
  11. The junta uses the ceasefire to set up extra security forces in ceasefire areas.
  12. The ceasefire groups thought that they would gain political strength from signing ceasefires.
  13. Recently, the junta has asked ceasefire groups, including the SSNA, to disarm. The SSNA decided to join the SSA in armed struggle.

#### Answers:

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

#### Key vocabulary

## Activity 5

- 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) Here are some words from the text. Students use them to fill the gaps in the sentences.

<b>resume</b>	<b>draft</b>	<b>stalemate</b>	<b>privileges</b>	<b>merge</b>	<b>take part</b>
<b>wary</b>	<b>stability</b>	<b>token</b>	<b>morale</b>	<b>exposed</b>	<b>forecast</b>

1. The weather is getting wetter. I \_\_\_\_\_ a lot of rain for tomorrow.
2. It was raining, so the football game stopped. Now it isn't raining, so we can \_\_\_\_\_ the game.
3. The soldiers are standing in the open field. They are very \_\_\_\_\_, the enemy can see them easily.
4. It is good to \_\_\_\_\_ your essay before you write a final version.
5. I failed my examinations – I feel very disappointed, and my \_\_\_\_\_ is very low. I want to quit school.
6. Neither side can win – they have reached a \_\_\_\_\_.
7. A country can get \_\_\_\_\_ if there is no war, and people can get all their basic needs.
8. Government officials get a lot of \_\_\_\_\_. They sometimes get free cars, and free air travel, and many business opportunities.
9. There are a lot of dangerous dogs in our street. I am very \_\_\_\_\_ when I walk home at night.
10. Our school and another school are going to \_\_\_\_\_ to form one big school.
11. "Are you going to \_\_\_\_\_ in the singing competition?" "No, I can't. I'm busy that day"
12. The committee had one \_\_\_\_\_ women, but nobody listened to her ideas.

### Answers:

1. *forecast*   2. *resume*   3. *exposed*   4. *draft*   5. *morale*   6. *stalemate*  
7. *stability*   8. *privileges*   9. *wary*   10. *merge*   11. *take part*   12. *token*

**Activity 6****Words and phrases from context**

Here are some excerpts from the article. Students locate the phrase in the text, and choose the best synonym or definition for the underlined words.

1. *The junta has used this approach since assuming power in 1988...*  
(paragraph 1)
  - a. method
  - b. food
  - c. weapon
  - d. money
  
2. *In effect, the junta has offered financial inducements to return to the fold*  
(paragraph 3)
  - a. ideas
  - b. assistance
  - c. businesses
  - d. encouragement
  
3. *But to the junta, ceasefires apparently were not seen as an end in themselves.*  
(paragraph 5)
  - a. written document
  - b. meeting
  - c. final conclusion
  - d. peace agreement
  
4. *The merger came after the government had pressured the SSNA to surrender their arms...* (paragraph 16)
  - a. threatened
  - b. forced
  - c. asked
  - d. suggested
  
5. *They came under strong criticism from opposition groups...* (paragraph 9)
  - a. deserved
  - b. needed
  - c. attacked
  - d. received
  
6. *...this has hardly brought more stability to the country* (paragraph 12)
  - a. eventually
  - b. not
  - c. slowly
  - d. very

**Answers:**

1. a    2. d    3. c    4. a    5. d    6. b

**Activity 7****Identify the main point**

Students decide which is the main point, which are supporting points, and which is not part of this article.

a) What is the main point of this article?

1. The SSA and the SSNA have joined together to fight the government, because the SSNA did not want to disarm.
2. Most opposition groups want to join the National Convention, because they want to participate in the political process.
3. The military regime has signed ceasefires with many armed groups, and some of these groups are not happy with their situation.
4. Many ceasefire groups are attending the National Convention, but they cannot participate in open discussion.

**Answer:** 3

b) Look again at the options above. One option is the main point. Which of the other options are:

- *supporting points?*
- *not a point of the article?*

**Answers:** *supporting points – 1, 4 not a point of the article – 2*

**Activity 8****In fact**

*In fact* is a phrase that tells you that the next piece of information is a little surprising.

*e.g. He looks like an old man. In fact, he is only 25.*

The information 'he is only 25' is surprising, as he looks like an old man.

*I keep a pet tiger in my bathroom. In fact, I have four tigers in my house.*

The information 'I have four tigers in my house' is surprising, even after the information about the bathroom tiger.

a) Match the sentences that go together.

- |   |          |  |
|---|----------|--|
| 1. Everyone thinks she is Thai.                           |          | he was lying very still, waiting for the enemy to leave. |
| 2. The soldier pretended he was dead.                     |          | they cost 100 baht for a kilo.                           |
| 3. The government claims the country is peaceful.         |          | I have never been to medical training.                   |
| 4. I told them I am a doctor.                             | In fact, | her mother is Japanese, and her father is Palaung.       |
| 5. The President never went to high school or university. |          | she left school after fourth standard.                   |
| 6. Bananas are not cheap at the market this week.         |          | there is a lot of fighting in the border.                |

**Answers:**

1. Everyone thinks she is Thai. In fact, her mother is Japanese, and her father is Palaung.
2. The soldier pretended he was dead. In fact, he was lying very still, waiting for the enemy to leave.
3. The government claims the country is peaceful. In fact, there is a lot of fighting in the border.
4. I told them I am a doctor. In fact, I have never been to medical training.
5. The President never went to high school or university. In fact, she left school after fourth standard.
6. Bananas are not cheap at the market this week. In fact, they cost 100 baht for a kilo.

b) Find two examples of *in fact* in the article. What is the surprising information? Why is it surprising?

**Answers:**

*Paragraph 2 – In fact, however, they are allowed only a token presence.*

This is surprising because it contrasts with the previous information that they are participating in the National Convention.

*Paragraph 11 – In fact, the ceasefires have allowed the junta to move selectively among the former rebel groups to form squads of “special police.”*

This is surprising because of the information in the previous paragraphs, where the ceasefire groups think that the ceasefire is useful for them.



**Activity 9****Timeline**

What order did these things happen?  
Put the events on the timeline.

**Answers:**



**now**



**1948**



- *SSNA merges with SSA-South*
- *Junta pressures SSNA to disarm*
- *Palaung State Liberation Army surrenders arms.*
- *National Convention resumes*
  
- *National Convention is suspended*
- *SSNA signs a ceasefire agreement*
  
- *UWSA agrees to a ceasefire*
  
- *The military junta takes power*
  
  
- *Many ethnic minority groups take up arms against government*

## Activities to do After Reading

### Activity10

#### Causes and Effects

- a) *ide* Do you think it is a good idea for people to come to refugee camps to get an education? Why/why not? Can you think of any better solutions?  
Have a discussion, and write students' ideas on the board.

### Activity 11

#### Debate

Is a ceasefire good?

1. Students in 2 groups ; group A discusses advantages and B discusses dis