

Learning with The Irrawaddy, No. 36

To accompany the July 2009 issue of The Irrawaddy magazine.

Selected article: *June, the Cruellest Month*

TEACHER'S NOTES

Here is the 35th issue of 'Learning with The Irrawaddy', a monthly educational supplement to The Irrawaddy magazine. It is designed for reading/writing, English or social studies classes in Post-10 schools and adult education classes on the Burma border. With each issue of The Irrawaddy, we select one article and design some learning activities for it. The language level in this month's article is intermediate.

NOTE: YOU DO NOT HAVE TO DO ALL OF THE ACTIVITIES LISTED IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE. YOU CAN CHOOSE WHICH ACTIVITIES ARE MOST APPROPRIATE DEPENDING ON HOW MUCH TIME YOU HAVE, AND THE LEVEL OF ABILITY OF YOUR LEARNERS.

In this issue we have included:

- ★ this teacher's guide
- ★ a copy of the student worksheet
- ★ A copy of The Irrawaddy magazine
- ★ a copy of the article from The Irrawaddy magazine

A. Activities before reading

Activity 1

Discussion

(Before giving students their copies of the Learning with the Irrawaddy)

The title of the article is "June, the Cruellest Month." Ask students what they think of when they think of June and ask them to explain why. Answers might include things like rain, school. Ask them to think about other people. What might a fisherman think of June? A rice farmer? A teacher?

Activity 2

Prediction

There is no right answer for a prediction question. If possible, have students make a prediction, then look at the pictures that go with the article (printed on the last page of the student guide) and make a new prediction. They should be able to predict that June will be a bad month because of some attack, or military activity.

Activity 3

Prior Knowledge

Brainstorm with students what they know about the KNLA and the DKBA. Only the main events are necessary. If students already know a lot on this topic, skip this section.

Students may not know very much about the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, so you may want to give them some background knowledge before they start reading the article.

B. Activities during reading

Activity 4

Order the events.

First : E. III. **Second:** F. VII.

Third & Fourth: D&C V&I **Fifth:** G. II. **Sixth:** B. VI

Activity 5

Match the vocabulary

Answers: A. V B. III C. IV D. I E. VI F. II

Activity 6

Gap-fill

Answers: A. inspired B. pledged C. seized
D. stationed E. employed F. witnessed

Activity 7

Main point

The main point captures the most important part of the article in just one sentence. Pick the best main point from the choices below:

Answers:

- I. The situation in Sri Lanka has influenced the situation in Burma

This is not the main idea, it is only one possible reason why the junta attacked the KNLA and it is only mentioned at the end of the article.

- II. An attack by the DKBA forced people in Karen State to flee into Thailand

This is the main idea. All the paragraphs provide information on the attack - its causes and its effects. The title is also related to this idea.

- III. The KNLA has been fighting for a long time.

This is a true fact and it is related to the article, but it is not the main purpose of the article. The article also talks about the DKBA and the junta, a specific attack and its results

- IV. June is the author's least favorite time of year.

The title is about the cruelest month for the people who were affected by the DKBA attack, not about the author. This statement is not true and it is not the main idea of the article.

Activity 8

Cause and effect.

Students should try and use their own words to complete this activity and not copy directly from the text.

Causes:

1. *The Junta wants to marginalize the power of the KNLA before the 2010 elections.*
2. *The Junta wants to pressure Thailand because Thailand criticized Burma about the Aung San Su Kyi trial*
3. *The Junta is unhappy with Thailand because Thailand lets the family of KNLA soldiers live in Thailand*

Tamil Tigers

The Tamil Tigers, also known as the LTTE were a group that fought for independence from Sri Lanka. They formed in 1976 and began a long civil war.. The civil war recently ended (May 2009) when the Sri Lankan government launched a strong attack in the area controlled by the Tigers and defeated them. The Tamils are an ethnic group also found in Southern India and they believe that Northern Sri Lanka should be a separate country. Since they had fewer soldiers or weapons than the government, they often used guerilla tactics to fight the civil war.

4. The Junta was inspired by the success of the Sri Lankan government who recently attacked and defeated the Tamil Tigers

Effects:

1. *Four thousand people from Pa-an District had to leave their homes and go to Thailand.*
2. Soldiers were killed (Maybe 20 DKBA and 5 KNLA)
3. DKBA took KNLA territory including 7th Brigade and Battalions 21, 22, 101 and 202.
4. KNLA will now use a guerilla fighting style

Can you think of any other events or reasons why this event may have happened?

Students might have their own answers to this question or they might not. There are no right answers, so encourage brainstorming. Possible ideas might include:

- The international community is busy watching the Aung San Su Kyi trial so no one will notice the attack
- The KNLA has been weakened over the past year so the attack was likely to be successful

Can you think of any other effects of the attack that aren't mentioned in the article?

There are likely to be many effects of this attack and the article only mentions a few. Students should be able to brainstorm some more effects. You can organize their ideas into "short term" or "immediate" effects, and "long term" effects. Or you can organize their ideas into "effects on the local community", "effects on the region" and "international effects". Some ideas might include:

- Crowding of existing refugee camps
- Increased political tension between Thailand and Burma
- Increased malnutrition and starvation in Pa-an area (the rice crops won't get planted or harvested this year)

Activity 9

Summarize: Table

If your students are good at summarizing you may want to skip directly to the next activity. Students should use their own words to complete this exercise, but the information should be something similar to this:

Who: The DKBA
What: attacked the KNLA
Where: in 7th Brigade, in Pa-an District
When: from June 2nd to 21st, 2009
Why: There are three possible reasons: to decrease the power of the KNLA before the elections, to punish Thailand for criticizing Burma about the trial and to punish Thailand for keeping KNLA family members in Thailand.
Effects: As a result of the attack, 4,000 refugees crossed into Thailand, 20 DKBA/junta soldiers died, 5 KNLA soldiers died, DKBA took territory and the KNLA will become guerilla fighters.

Activity 10**C. Activities after reading****Summarize: Writing**

Every student's summary should be different but contain the same information as in the previous activity's table, use full sentences and not copy directly from the text.

Activity 11**Discussion**

There are many questions here for students to discuss. You may want to organize small groups to discuss specific questions or organize a class debate on one issue. You can also assign students to write a short paragraph about their opinion on one of these questions for homework.

