Article and Questions

This **Breaking News** issue includes:

1) a PDF file (the complete document)

*and*

2) a Word file that contains **only** the article and questions.

These files contain **only** the article and student activities. They do **not** contain the Answer Key.

The **Word** file allows students to complete assignments using a computer either at school or at home. Teachers can assign all or parts of the file by email attachment or a school website. The **Word** file also allows teachers to:

• easily modify and format content including changing fonts and text sizes

• create a PDF document and use Adobe Reader's 'Read Out Loud Mode'

• save paper and copying costs and help protect the environment

• promote and encourage students’ computer skills

**The Russia-Ukraine War Drags On**



Russia's assault on Ukraine began on February 24. Russian President Vladimir Putin falsely claimed Ukraine threatened Russia's security. In fact, the attack was entirely unprovoked. Now, the brutal war may be entering a dangerous new phase.

**A Tragic Human Toll**

In mid-May, the United Nations (UN) made a sobering report. It said that Russian bombs and soldiershad killed over 3000 Ukrainian civilians. That includes 235 children. However, the actual number is likely much higher. How much higher? No one will know until the fighting stops.

What is known for certain? The Russians have been heartlessly breaking international rules of conflict. They have destroyed residences, schools, hospitals, factories, and shelters. Women, children, and the elderly have all been targets.

To escape this horror, some 5.1 million people have fled Ukraine. They have been pouring into nearby countries, Europe, and North America. Another 7.7 million have left their homes but remain in the country. Ukraine's pre-war population was about 44 million. These **refugees** and displaced people make up more than one‑quarter of that number.

**Mr. Putin's Mistake**

Because the battlefield is in Ukraine, no Russian civilians have died. However, the Russian military has had extensive losses. About 40,000 of its soldiers have been wounded or killed out of an invasion force of around 150,000.

These losses are a major setback for Mr. Putin. He expected to be victorious in just days. His huge army far outnumbers Ukraine’s military. Russia also has more weapons – and more powerful ones, too.

**Defying The Enemy**

Yet as the conflict wears on, Ukraine has shown great grit and resilience. It is determined to beat back the invaders.

“We are fighting for our children’s freedom and therefore we will win,” declared Ukraine’s **steadfast** president, Volodymyr Zelensky. He refuses to even consider the possibility of defeat.

Many Western nations have rallied behind Ukraine. They are providing **intelligence**, weapons, and financial aid to help the besieged country. They have also levied crippling **sanctions** against Russia, its leaders, and its **oligarchs**. These sanctions are devastating Russia’s economy.

What's more, the Russian military has proven to be incompetent and unmotivated, say many observers. Its leaders have suffered **logistical** problems at every turn. Tanks have become stuck in mud. Supplies are slow to arrive.

**Mariupol’s Last Stand**

Yet make no mistake. Some areas of Ukraine have been effectively wiped out by Russian forces and bombs. For example, Mariupol, a city in southeastern Ukraine, has been all but destroyed. As of May 10, Russia controlled this city. Mariupol had about half a million people before the war.

“We were hungry [and] the child was crying when the shells were striking near the house,” said one Mariupol resident. "We were thinking, this is it, the end.”

The number of **casualties** there still can’t be counted, but it is known to be high. The people of Mariupol had no food, medicine, and other necessities for weeks. Eventually, the UN and Red Cross helped some escape.

The Russians have two main motives for capturing Mariupol. First, they want to create a land corridor between the Crimean Peninsula and the eastern part of Ukraine known as the Donbas Region. The Russians have **occupied** Crimea since 2014. And much of the Donbas is controlled by Russian‑backed sympathizers.

Second, Mariupol is a port city on the Sea of Azov. It is where Ukraine’s steel, coal, and corn is shipped to customers in the Middle East and beyond. By taking over this export hub, Russia hopes to strangle Ukraine’s economy.

**Is Worse To Come?**

Still, Mr. Putin has been denied the swift victory he’d hoped for. So he is doubling down. Military specialists believe he wants to strengthen his army’s positions in southeastern Ukraine. They expect to see more strikes on civilian targets in this area. In the Donbas, he is focusing on two eastern sections. They are Luhansk and Donetsk. They run from Mariupol in the south to Ukraine’s northern border.

However, President Zelensky says Ukrainian troops have had some success there in pushing back the Russians.

“We will fight for every metre of our land,” he declared.

**The West’s Response**

Meanwhile, Europe, Canada, the U.S., and many other nations continue to support Ukraine. Most of Europe relied heavily on Russian oil and natural gas before the war. Now, the European Union wants to ban all imports of Russian oil by year's end. That would be a huge blow to Russia's economy and influence.

And Prime Minister Justin Trudeau recently visited the war-torn country. He re-opened the Canadian **embassy** in Kyiv, Ukraine's capital. It had been closed when the war broke out for safety reasons. He told Mr. Zelensky that Canada would impose more than 1500 new sanctions on Russia.

Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly also made the trip. She visited a once-pretty town where bombs had turned houses into rubble and ash. The Russians must be stopped, she stressed.

“Ukraine is fighting an **existential** war for all democracies,” she said.

**casualty:** someone killed or injured in war or by accident

**embassy:** a building where diplomats live or work

**existential:** relating to human existence and experience

**intelligence:** information that is collected about a foreign country, especially one that is hostile

**logistic:** connected with the practical organization needed for a complicated plan involving a lot of people and equipment

**oligarch:** an extremely powerful Russian who became rich in business after the end of the former Soviet Union

**occupy:** to enter a place in a large group and take control of it, especially by military force

**refugee:** a person forced to leave their country because there is a war or for political, religious, or social reasons

**sanction:** an order that limits trade or contact with a country

**steadfast:** not changing in your attitudes or aims

**Comprehension Questions**

1. When did Russia invade Ukraine?

2. What reason did Russia's president give for this 'Special Military Operation'?

3. What was the population of Ukraine before the war began?

4. How many Ukrainians fled their homes after the fighting started? Where did they escape to?

5. Why did so many civilians leave their homes and communities? Explain.

6. What did Russia expect would happen when it invaded Ukraine?

7. Describe what actually happened. How many casualties has Russia suffered?

8. How has the international community supported Ukraine during this conflict?

9. In April, fighting shifted to eastern Ukraine. Which city did Russia focus its efforts on?

10. Describe the damage this city suffered. What happened to many of its residents?

**Questions For Further Thought**

1. The article states, "***In mid-May, the United Nations (UN) made a sobering report. It said that Russian bombs and soldiers had killed over 3000 Ukrainian civilians. That includes 235 children. However, the actual number is likely much higher.***"

What reasons can you suggest to explain why the actual death toll might be much higher than reported? Give examples to support your response.

2. During a recent visit to Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly said, "***Ukraine is fighting an existential war for all democracies, including the ones in Europe, but also across the Atlantic for us and the U.S***." What do you think she meant by this statement? For what reasons could you agree with this statement? For what reasons could you disagree? Explain.

**Questions For Online Exploration**

*Note*: The links below are listed at **www.lesplan.com/en/links** for easy access.

1. Watch this summary of the most recent events in Russia's war on Ukraine:   
**https://www.yout-ube.com/watch?v=5fq7f-67nfY** [0:50-10:56]

What questions do you have about this report?

2. Learn more about President Putin's comments during the May 9 Victory Day celebrations in Russia:  
**https://www.yout-ube.com/watch?v=4aSuRGyAMxM** [6:28]

What observations can you make about his speech? What do you wonder?

3. Despite continued attacks in the Donbas, Ukraine remains confident that it will emerge victorious:  
**https://www.yout-ube.com/watch?v=VlTKvrPV3F4 [7:05]  
https://www.yout-ube.com/watch?v=9Bao6I6oF2c [3:34]  
https://globalnews.ca/video/8822021/we-will-win-zelenskyy-remains-confident-ukraine-will-emerge-victorious** [2:53]

How would you describe President Zelensky's role during this conflict? Explain.

4. Mariupol has suffered the most devastation in this conflict. Learn more about the current situation in this port city:  
**https://www.yout-ube.com/watch?v=\_qGAxZscYSE** [3:40]  
**https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/russia-ukraine-war-genocide-1.6447550  
https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/ukraine-russia-war-may8-1.6445839**

As you see it, why has Russia continued to focus its efforts in Mariupol?

**Putting It All Together**

**A. Write the letter that corresponds to the best answer on the line beside each question:**

\_\_\_\_\_\_ 1. **A person forced to leave their home because of war or for political, religious, or   
 social reasons is called a(n):** a) refugee b) evacuee  
 c) deserter d) migrant

\_\_\_\_\_\_ 2. **How many Ukrainians have fled their homes because of Russia's Special Military Operation?** a) 250,000 b) 7 million  
 c) 12 million d) 44 million

\_\_\_\_\_\_ 3. **Which large city in southeastern Ukraine suffered much damage?** a) Mariupol b) Donetsk  
 **c)** Moscowd) Kyiv

**B.** Mark the statements **T (True)** or **F (False)**. If a statement is **True**, write one important fact to support it on the line below. If a statement is **False**, write the words that make it true on the line below.

\_\_\_\_\_\_ 4. **True** or **False?** Russia expected a quick and easy victory when it invaded Ukraine.

\_\_\_\_\_\_ 5. **True** or **False?** Russia's army is following the rules of war and is not targeting civilians.

\_\_\_\_\_\_ 6. **True** or **False?** Justin Trudeau visited President Putin in Kyiv.

**C. Fill in the blanks to complete each sentence.**

7. Many nations have imposed sanctions against Russia's leaders and rich \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

8. Reports indicate that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Russian soldiers have been killed or wounded in Ukraine.

9. Prime Minister Trudeau re-opened the Canadian \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in Ukraine.

**D. Respond to the following question in paragraph form. *(Use a separate sheet of paper if necessary.)***

10. What do you suppose will happen next in the Russia-Ukraine conflict? Give reasons to support your response.

**Assessment Rubric**

This rubric may be helpful in providing students with formative, strength-based feedback and/or assessing students’ responses holistically. This easy-to-modify activity is included in the doc file which you can download from:   
**www.lesplan.com/subscribers**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Emerging** | **Developing** | **Proficient** | **Extending** |
| **Supports thinking** | Answers or reflections are brief and include obvious facts/details/ evidence. | Answers or reflections are general and supported with some relevant facts/details/evidence. | Answers or reflections are clearly supported with specific, relevant facts/details/evidence. | Answers or reflections are insightful and supported with specific, relevant facts/details/evidence. |
| **Shows understanding** | Responses show a basic understanding of the text, topic, issue or message. | Responses are thoughtful and show a general understanding of the text, topic, issue or message. | Responses are thoughtful and show a complete understanding of the text, topic, issue or message. | Responses are insightful and show a deep understanding the text, topic, issue or message. May synthesize ideas or explain the ‘so what’. |
| **Thinks  critically** | Makes straightforward connections or inferences. Focuses on retelling. | Makes logical connections to self (T:S) and/or background knowledge (T:S). Inferences are logical | Makes meaningful connections to self. Considers ideas between texts (T:T).  Inferences are plausible. | Makes powerful connections that go between texts and/or beyond the text (T:W).  Inferences are plausible and insightful. |