



LESSON 2 WORKSHEET 2

Two sides to every story

Read the background information, Extract A and Extract B, and answer the questions at the end.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Research by an organisation called 'Liberty' shows that most people in the UK think human rights are important. However, the Human Rights Act is controversial. Some politicians and people in the media want to get rid of it, while others think it is really important to keep it. These different views are expressed in the newspapers.

In 2011 the Home Secretary, Theresa May, referred to a human rights case in a speech at the Conservative Party conference:

'We all know the stories about the Human Rights Act... The illegal immigrant who cannot be deported because – and I am not making this up – he had a pet cat. This is why I remain of the view that the Human Rights Act needs to go.'

Her speech was referring to the case of a Bolivian man and his right to family life. This case has been written about in the newspapers in very different ways.

EXTRACT A

Migrant facing deportation wins right to stay in Britain... because he's got a cat

From a report by the *Daily Mail* in October 2009

It may have been one of the least plausible attempts to avoid deportation – but it worked. An illegal immigrant was allowed to stay in Britain because he had a cat, it was revealed yesterday.

The unnamed Bolivian was spared deportation after he told a court that he and his girlfriend had bought the animal as a pet.

Immigration judges ruled that sending him back home would breach his human rights by interfering with his family life.

The decision by the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal caused 'disappointment' at the Home Office and amazement among anti-immigration campaigners, who questioned why the existence of a pet cat could be considered relevant to an immigration case.

Sir Andrew Green of the Migrationwatch think tank said the argument over the cat was 'utterly absurd' and reflected badly on the attitudes of judges.

However one immigration judge, Judith Gleeson, remarked in the official ruling that the cat 'need no longer fear having to adapt to Bolivian mice'.

The cat ruling was made by immigration judge James Devittie after the Bolivian submitted evidence that claimed joint ownership of the pet with his girlfriend demonstrated he was settled in Britain and it would break human rights rules to remove him.

The solicitor who represented the Bolivian, Barry O'Leary, told the *Sunday Telegraph* that the cat was one detail among many in the case.

He said: 'When giving the reasons for the success the judge did comment on the couple's cat,' he said. 'It was taken into account as part of the couple's life together.'

'The Home Office asked for the decision to be reconsidered.'

'They argued it should be reconsidered because the decision was wrong in law, and one error they cited was that too much consideration was given to the couple's cat.'

Sir Andrew Green said: 'Drawing pets into the consideration of issues of such importance is so utterly absurd that you could not make it up.'

'This is symptomatic of the attitude held by many judges, which is complete disregard for the impact of such decisions on the future of our community.'

EXTRACT B

Theresa May's twisted tale of a Bolivian's cat

From an article by James Welch in *The Guardian*, 4 October 2011

The Tory conference may have lapped up May's example of Human Rights Act abuse, but she misrepresents the case.

'I'm not making this up,' said the Home Secretary, as she regaled the Tory faithful with yet another Human Rights Act folly: an 'illegal immigrant' could not be deported because he had a cat.

I'll start with a minor point: the man, a Bolivian, was not an 'illegal immigrant'. He came to this country quite legally as a student but stayed beyond the expiration of his visa.

More significantly, his right to remain in this country had nothing to do with his cat. For four years before his case came before the immigration courts the man lived with a British woman. They did all those coupley things: bought crockery, went out clubbing, got a pet cat. The shared cat was one of a number of factors used by the couple as evidence their relationship was genuine.

The couple relied on a Home Office policy that applied at the time (issued in 1996 under the last Conservative government) under which someone who had been in a relationship with a British citizen (or someone of another nationality who was 'settled' here) for at least two years would be given the right to stay. The Home Office rejected the application and the couple appealed.

By the time the appeal was heard the policy had been revoked but still applied to existing applications. The immigration judge allowed the appeal for that reason. The man was allowed to stay. The ruling had nothing to do with the cat, although the senior immigration judge who heard the case ended her ruling with a rather feeble – and in retrospect unfortunate – joke: the cat 'need no longer fear having to adapt to Bolivian mice'.

QUESTIONS

- Read Extract A. What is the purpose of the article?
- Read Extract B. What is the purpose of the article?
- Compare Extracts A and B. How do the authors present the facts differently?
- Compare Extracts A and B. Which author is most effective at persuading the reader of their point of view and why?