THE CARCASSONNE HOSTAGE SIEGE

A classroom activity pack • Reading, vocabulary, speaking and critical thinking

Learning goals
- Identify the people and understand their roles
- Match key terms to their meanings
- Put the main events in chronological order
- Retell information and discuss the article respectfully

Suggested level: B1–B2 English learners **Time:** 45–60 minutes

Teacher note

This pack is based on the news text supplied in class. It deals with a real act of terrorism and real deaths. Keep the focus on understanding the report, the people affected, the emergency response and the meaning of self-sacrifice. Avoid graphic detail or turning the event into a competition. Some details in the source text are incomplete; answers should stay within the information provided.

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

1. Meet the people

Read the profiles. Then use the character cards created for this lesson to identify each person. The cards are learning aids; the short profiles below summarise the article.

LT COL ARNAUD BELTRAME

A French gendarme who volunteered to take the place of a hostage. He stayed inside while his phone line remained open to the security forces. He later died from his injuries.

HERO / GENDARME

RADOUANE LAKDIM

The 25-year-old attacker named in the report. He carried out a series of attacks and took hostages at a supermarket in Trèbes. Police shot him dead during the intervention.

ATTACKER

CHRISTIAN GUIBBERT

A former police officer who was shopping at the supermarket. He heard several shots.

WITNESS

THE HOSTAGES

People held inside the supermarket during the three-hour hostage-taking. One gendarme exchanged places with them so they could be evacuated.

CIVILIANS

GÉRARD COLLOMB

France’s interior minister at the time. He praised Beltrame’s heroism and commented on the security services’ monitoring of the attacker.

GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL

FRANÇOIS MOLINS

The state prosecutor who gave information about the investigation and the attacker’s previous record and surveillance.

PROSECUTOR

SALAH ABDESLAM

A prisoner whose release the attacker reportedly demanded during the hostage-taking. The report says he was the only surviving suspect from the November 2015 Paris attacks.

PERSON MENTIONED

2. Character identification & matching

Task A. Match each person (1–6) with the correct role (A–F). Write the letter in the answer column.

Person	Role	Your match
1. Arnaud Beltrame		_____
2. Radouane Lakdim		_____
3. Christian Guibbert		_____
4. Gérard Collomb		_____
5. François Molins		_____
6. Salah Abdeslam		_____

Task B. Choose the best description for each card. Write the correct name.

Who volunteered to take a hostage's place?

Name: _____

Who heard shots while shopping?

Name: _____

Who gave information about the investigation?

Name: _____

Who was held in prison and whose release was demanded?

Name: _____

3. Vocabulary matching

Match the words (1–8) with the definitions (A–H). Write the correct letter.

Words	Definitions	Answer
1. hostage	A. A person who sees an event happen	_____
2. gendarme	B. To move people away from danger	_____
3. volunteer	C. A person held by someone who threatens them	_____
4. evacuate	D. A French police officer with military status	_____
5. witness	E. Harm to the body	_____
6. prosecutor	F. To offer to do something without being forced	_____
7. surveillance	G. Official monitoring or observation	_____
8. injuries	H. A lawyer or official who presents a criminal case for the state	_____

Use three words in your own sentences.

_____

_____

_____

4. Put the events in order

Number the events from 1 (first) to 6 (last), according to the article.

Order: _____ Police stormed the supermarket after a shot was heard over the open phone line.

Order: _____ Lakdim entered the Super U supermarket in Trèbes and took hostages.

Order: _____ Beltrame volunteered to exchange places with a hostage.

Order: _____ Lakdim stopped a car near Carcassonne and attacked its occupants.

Order: _____ Beltrame was found seriously injured and later died in hospital.

Order: _____ Earlier, Lakdim attacked police officers who had been out jogging.

Retell the story in 5–7 sentences. Use these linking words: first, then, after that, meanwhile, finally.

5. Speaking prompts

Work in pairs or small groups. Choose three prompts. Use evidence from the article and speak respectfully about the people affected.

1. Describe Arnaud Beltrame’s decision. What did he do, and what happened afterwards?

2. Explain the roles of the gendarmes, the witness and the prosecutor.

3. Why was the open mobile-phone line important during the hostage-taking?

4. What information did the authorities have about Lakdim before the attack?

5. What questions did the article raise about security and surveillance?

6. How can a news report show respect for victims while explaining violent events?

6. Reading comprehension

Answer in complete sentences. Use only information from the article.

1. Where did the hostage-taking take place?

2. How many people were inside the supermarket, according to the report?

3. What did Beltrame volunteer to do?

4. How did Beltrame help the security forces outside the supermarket?

5. What happened after the security forces heard a shot?

6. What did the attacker reportedly demand during the hostage-taking?

7. Why did the prosecutor say questions would be asked about the attack?

8. What did the interior minister say about the authorities' assessment of Lakdim?

Teacher’s answer key

Use this page for checking. Accept answers that accurately paraphrase the source text. The article contains some damaged or missing words, so do not penalise students for not supplying details that are not clearly stated.

Task 3A – Character matching

1–C 2–E 3–D 4–F 5–A 6–B

Task 3B – Identification

1. Arnaud Beltrame 2. Christian Guibbert 3. François Molins 4. Salah Abdeslam

Task 4 – Vocabulary

1–C 2–D 3–F 4–B 5–A 6–H 7–G 8–E

Task 5 – Sequencing

1. Lakdim stopped a car and attacked its occupants. 2. He attacked jogging police officers. 3. He entered the supermarket and took hostages. 4. Beltrame exchanged places with a hostage. 5. Security forces stormed the supermarket after hearing a shot. 6. Beltrame later died from his injuries.

Task 6 – Suggested comprehension answers

1. At a Super U supermarket in Trèbes, near Carcassonne in southern France.

2. About 50 people.

3. He volunteered to take the place of a hostage.

4. He left his mobile phone line open so security forces outside could hear what was happening.

5. They immediately stormed the supermarket and shot the attacker dead.

6. He reportedly asked for the release of Salah Abdeslam.

7. Because Lakdim had been monitored by security services but was still able to obtain a weapon and carry out the attacks.

8. Collomb said the authorities had monitored him but did not think he had been radicalised.

Optional extension: Ask students to write a short, neutral news summary (100–120 words) using the sequence activity. Remind them to distinguish confirmed facts from reported claims and to avoid sensational language.