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Genocide Lessons

Rationale:

Historical inquiry through use of primary source documents in conjunction with a Holocaust novel study.

Objectives:

Students will analyze primary sources from 20th century genocides.

These lessons are done in conjunction with a Holocaust novel study like Devil's Arithmetic. This is a book that is read in 7th grade Communication Arts/Reading. The first lesson should be before they begin reading the novel. The second lesson should be done after finishing the book. Of the two lessons the second is most important because it focuses on genocide – what it is and how you can recognize it. These lessons will work with any Holocaust novel study.

Time Needed:

You will need at least three 3 – 4 days for these lessons.

Grade Levels:

I used these lessons with 7th grade. You could adapt them for grades 6 – 12.

Assessment:

You can use multiple assessments for these lessons.

I graded the Genocide worksheets for a total of 27 points.

You could use a simple rubric for the blog piece.

You could have students write a reflection after viewing the Committee on CONSCIENCE DVD.

Standards

Blue Valley Standards for Communication Arts

- The student reinforces skills and strategies that are specific to the understanding or narrative, expository, technical and persuasive texts in the content areas. Students improve their comprehension of content-area vocabulary, develop critical thinking skills and summarize essential information while reading excerpts from social studies, science, mathematics and communication arts.

Kansas State Standards for Social Studies

- The student understands the historical inquiry process and the use of primary and secondary sources.
- Student will be able to examine a topic in history using the historical inquiry process, historical thinking skills, and both primary and secondary sources to analyze changes over time and make logical inferences concerning cause and effect.

Blue Valley Standards for Library Media

- The student understands the importance of critically evaluating information read, viewed and heard.
- Student will interpret meaning of a visual and/or message e.g., video, speeches, political cartoons, photographs.
- The student understands the importance of seeking information from diverse resources and multiple perspectives.
- Student will seek information from diverse resources and multiple perspectives to solve an information problem.

Day 1 – Introductory Lesson for Holocaust Novel

Begin the lesson by explaining the difference between the word “holocaust” and “Holocaust.” Define both for the students.

USHMM Definition - Holocaust refers to a specific genocidal event in 20th-century history: the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Jews were the primary victims -- 6 million were murdered; Gypsies, the handicapped, and Poles were also targeted for destruction or decimation for racial, ethnic, or national reason. Millions more, including homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war, and political dissidents, also suffered grievous oppression and death under Nazi tyranny.

Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary Definition – holocaust refers to 1 an offering the whole of which is burned; burnt offering 2 great or total destruction of life

Create slides for projecting:

What is an **allegory**? A literary device of presenting abstract ideas or moral principles in the form of symbolic characters, events or objects, extended metaphor.

Post Martin Neimoller’s quote “First they came for the ………” as you read the following book aloud to the students.

Read aloud **Terrible Things** by Eve Bunting and have the Martin Neimoller quote projected while you share the read aloud. Neimoller’s quote is the foundation of Bunting’s allegory of the Holocaust.

Discuss the implications of “Terrible Things” after you read it. Share Martin Luther King’s quote “Our lives begin to end…” Would this be a good allegory as well?

Finally, as students begin reading the novel **Devil’s Arithmetic** have them keep a running list of questions they have about the Holocaust that can’t be answered through reading the book.

Day 2 – Post Novel Study

Begin by having students ask any questions about the Holocaust that were not answered during the novel study.

Review the difference between The Holocaust and holocaust. For the next few days we are going to look at holocausts with a small “h.”

What is a human right? Write answers down on the whiteboard and have students keep track in their notes. Have students write down 5 (five) rights that they personally have.

Of the following are there any that are more important than others?

- Dignity
- Individual worth
- Justice
- Equality

Discuss that the United Nations was formed in 1948 and the “**Declaration of Human Rights**” came out that same year. It took another 11 years to come up with the same declaration for children.

Before students come in I’ve placed the large index cards on each chair. There are 31 cards and each contains a part of the “**Declaration of the Rights of the Child.**” The pieces are from the “**Plain Language**” version. Once we’ve discussed genocide and it’s origins we talk about how it took over a decade to come up with the rights of a child. Each student takes their card and reads it out loud in order 1 – 31.

This recitation allows students to see what a perfect world would look like before we talk about genocide and its consequences, particularly to children. It’s important that they keep in mind the rights in the declaration that are promised or guaranteed to the children of the world as they study the genocides.

Pass out worksheet titled “**Stages of Genocide.**” Define “**genocide**” and give examples of the genocides since the Holocaust. Talk to students about where the word “genocide” comes from. (The definition for genocide is on the worksheet – have someone read it out loud).

Use the power point presentation (inside this notebook) and go over the five (5) signs of genocide. As you go over the signs be sure to make references back to the Holocaust and what they’ve read in the novel. Everyone needs to fill out their work sheets.

Once you've finished the 5 signs, number the students off by 8. Each group takes a folder that has one of the stages of genocide and a definition. Note that there is a word bank too. As a group, they need to read the definition and summarize or paraphrase it so that they can report out to the whole group about their stage. As they report out everyone will complete their worksheet and the 8 stages.

When each group reports out on the stages of genocide each folder has a laminated copy of the particular stages. I borrowed a ladder from the custodian and put strong tape on each rung. After the student defined the stage and what could happen and what to watch for they took their word and placed it on the appropriate rung on the ladder. Students then get a visual of the stages.

You may also want to use the power point presentation by Gregory H. Stanton (original author of the 8 Stages of Genocide) that can be found at <http://www.genocidewatch.org/aboutgenocide/8stagesofgenocide.html> It has good photos of the Holocaust as well as other 20th century genocides to show the stages and what they mean.

We then discuss what keeps us from going to the extermination level since we see so many of the stages in our own building when it comes to classification, symbolization, and polarization. As the students talk about the stages we constantly refer back to the Holocaust and what they've read in their novel

Day 3 –

Take students to the USHMM site

http://www.ushmm.org/genocide/take_action/gallery/portraits and click on Elie Wiesel's testimony. It is only a few short minutes but he makes a really powerful statement about genocides and then he says "I believe firmly and profoundly that anyone who listens to a witness becomes a witness." This is very profound. As students do the lesson today they need to remember Elie Wiesel and what he said.

Pass out the "**Source Process Grid**" to each student.

Divide the students into 5 groups. Each group will be assigned to a table with a folder. The folder contains primary sources including photos and documents from a particular genocide. Genocides include Bosnia-Herzegovina, Rwanda, Darfur, Armenia, and Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. You can add additional genocides from the 20th century, ie: Burundi, DR Congo, Chechnya. Set up 5 tables with the folders on them and also a globe so students can locate where these countries are on the planet.

Each folder has at least five (5) primary sources. These sources include photos, written testimonies, audio testimonies from <http://www.ushmm.org>, diary entries, and declassified documents.

These items should be useable under the fair use policy for educational purposes. As students analyze these primary sources they will hopefully be able to identify the source type, people, objects and activities going on in the source. They will be making inferences or conclusions about the signs and stages of genocide discussed earlier in the lesson and chart these. Finally, thinking back to the "**Declaration of the Rights of the Child**" they can decide what rights, if any, are being denied children in these different genocides.

Once they've completed the Source Process Grid they will answer the questions on the back.

- **Is there a genocide going on and how do they know it?**
- Which of the 3 sources is the **most revealing** and why?
- Which of the 3 sources is the **most reliable** and why?

Students will be assessed on their completion of the "Stages of Genocide" and "Source Process Grid" worksheets.

Students can then go to http://www.ushmm.org/genocide/take_action for Overviews of the genocide their primary sources documented. They can read the overviews of Darfur, Rwanda, and Bosnia.

For Armenia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and Cambodia you can go to <http://www.ppu.org> which is the Peace Pledge Union web site out of the United Kingdom. They have short, 1 page,

summaries of the actual genocides and what happened. This helps students if they are still not sure what really happened in the case of these genocides. You can run these off so they can read them at their tables or you can have links on your web site for them to go to the computers and read them.

Day 4 –

Discuss yesterday’s activities with the primary sources.

- Which sources were most reliable and revealing?
- Talk about the difficulty of saying “Genocide” and then following up.
- How many sources do you need to make a declaration of genocide?
- How many of your sources included children and abuses to those children?

Talk about the need for the “**Declaration of the Rights of the Child.**”

Watch the Committee on CONSCIENCE video DVD “**Defying Genocide: Choices that Saved Lives.**” You can receive this DVD free through the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The program is about 20 minutes long and talks about the genocide in Rwanda and what normal people did to save the lives of children in an orphanage. This film works for the middle or high school.

From “**Echoes and Reflections**” use several primary source testimonies talking about genocide in the future. Lesson 10, Total Running Time 03:33 and includes interviews with:

Jan Karski
Joseph Berger
William McKinney

Each man speaks about genocide now and in the future. You can read the backgrounds on each man before the students listen to the testimonies.

Set up a blog on <http://www.edublogs.org> where students can discuss the possibilities of future genocides and how they can help now. See also the “**Extended Activities**” in this book for possible blog starter questions or statements.

Finally, have students who want to go to http://www.ushmm.org/genocide/take_action/action/pledge and sign up on the Pledge Wall. They can answer the question “What will they do to meet the challenge of genocide today?” They can also see what others have said about this critical issue facing all human beings today. Students love the chance to take action!

Extended Activities

-On the Teaching Tolerance web site the teacher that posted the “Ladder of Prejudice” lesson, continued using the ladder by having students find periodical articles that represented the stages of genocide. Students then taped them on the ladder. This served as a great visual.

-Create a blog for students to go to and respond to. You could post questions for them to ponder and dialogue with each other about. Questions like:

- Why do genocides continue to happen in our world?
- What are some things that we can do as citizens of the world to help stop genocides?
- Why does the world continue to ignore the signs of genocide?

-The DVD “**Witnessing Darfur: Genocide Emergency**” is also put out by the USHMM but is more high school level. This movie could be used in place of or in addition to “**Defying Genocide: Choices that Saved Lives.**”

-There are lots of quotes about genocide that you could post on big pieces of chart paper and put on the wall or on tables. Write the quotes and have the students go from quote to quote and write their reactions or feelings about the quotes. Here are some possible quotes you could use:

“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about the things that matter.”
Martin Luther King

“The wrongs which we seek to condemn and punish have been so calculated, so malignant, and so devastating, that a civilization cannot tolerate their being ignored, because it can not survive their being repeated.” **Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson**

“Goodness is a powerful mirror. Goodness challenges us in a way that evil does not.”
Rabbi Harold Schulweis

“Great crimes start with little things...” **Jan Karski, Rescue and Aid Provider**

“Some of the people disapproved, their disapproval was only silence...”
Kurt Messerschmidt, Jewish Survivor of the Holocaust

Additional Resources for Genocide

Internet Resources

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: Committee on CONSCIENCE – <http://www.ushmm.org>

Choices for the 21st Century Education Program at <http://www.choices.edu> – lessons on genocide

Teaching Tolerance – <http://www.tolerance.org> – web site has genocide lesson plans and ideas for the classroom

Human Rights Watch – <http://www.hrw.org>

Human Right in Action – <http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/humanrights/>

Human Rights web sites that are suitable for children – http://www.pbs.org/whet/wideangle/printable/classroom_2rights_handouts3.html

Stop Genocide Now – <http://wtopgenocidenow.org/iact/>

Books

Terrible Things by Eve Bunting (1989)

Broken Memory: a Novel of Rwanda by Elizabeth Combres (2009)

Darfur: African Genocide by John Xavier (2008)

Genocide by Jane Springer (2006)

Genocide: Modern Crimes Against Humanity by Brendan January (2006)

Not on our Watch: the Mission to End Genocide in Darfur and Beyond by Don Cheadle (2007)

Forgotten Fire by Adam Bagdasarian – excellent young adult historical fiction novel about the Armenian genocide. Narrated by a young Armenian teen boy that loses everything to survive. (2002)

Over a Thousand Hills I Walk With You by Hanna Jansen (2006)

A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide by Samantha Powers
(2003)

Every Human Has Rights: A photographic Declaration for Kids based on the UN
Universal Declaration of Human Rights – Book published by National Geographic
(2009)

Stand Up for Your Rights – A book about human rights written by and for the young
people of the world. (1998)

We Are All Born Free – The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Pictures (2008)

Century of Genocide: Critical Essays and Eyewitness Accounts by Samuel Totten
(2004)

Multimedia

Echoes and Reflections: Multimedia Curriculum on the Holocaust – Curriculum
notebook and CD from the ADL, USC Shoah Foundation Institute and Yad Vashem

Darfur Now: Six Stories, One Hope by Cathy Schulman Video Recording (DVD)

Defying Genocide: Choices That Saved Lives – Video Recording (DVD) Produced by
the Committee on CONSCIENCE through the USHMM

Witnessing Darfur: Genocide Emergency – Video Recording (DVD) Produced by the
Committee on CONSCIENCE through the USHMM