

Teaching the Holocaust in 3-5 Days

Many students become emotionally involved in the stories of survivors but do not always see the connection of that individual's personal experience of the Holocaust to the broader context of Holocaust history. This exercise asks them to choose one aspect of a survivor's testimony, research it further, and develop a short presentation on how that survivor's story illustrates a larger theme in Holocaust history.

Lesson Plan:

Materials Needed:

- Video testimony from 4 survivors from the Witnesses to the Holocaust Archive. Ideally, survivor testimony will cover both genders, a geographic range, and a variety of Holocaust experiences.
- Internet access for students to utilize links to reliable Holocaust websites through <http://www.mchekc.org/HolocaustDirectory.htm> or www.ushmm.org.
- Access to primary and secondary sources for research.

Instructions for Classroom Exercise:

Day 1:

1. Assign each student to one of four groups and allow the group to choose one of the four testimonies you have identified for this project. Allowing students to review the profiles of the survivors from the curriculum appendix will aid in their choices.
2. Allow students time to watch the video testimony of their survivor, utilizing the Viewing Worksheet from the curriculum to take notes over that individual's experience.

Day 2-4:

3. Students should meet in their groups to determine the key theme in the survivor video that they would like to research further. Examples include but are not limited to: the overall experience of hiding, a particular ghetto or camp, gender in the Holocaust, or any other relevant Holocaust topic. Student research should focus on that topic, analyze how the individual survivor's testimony does or does not support what they have learned in their research and should include each of the following:
 - Geography – where did this survivor's experience take place?
 - <http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/focus/maps/>
 - Primary Source Documents – find at least one primary source document that illustrates a point relevant to the thesis of the presentation. Possible sources include but are not limited to:
 - <http://www.mchekc.org/PrimarySourceDocuments.htm>
 - *Documents on the Holocaust* edited by Yitzhak Arad
 - Photographs - find at least 3 photographs that illustrate a point relevant to the thesis of the presentation at <http://www.ushmm.org/research/collections/photo/>
 - Written documentation (primary or secondary) to support their thesis.
4. Students should create a short 10-15 minute visual presentation detailing their findings. This could take the form of a poster, a PowerPoint, or any other media the teacher deems appropriate.

Day 5:

5. 10-15 minute group presentation on their research and how their local survivor testimony supports or does not support their findings.

Special Notes for Teachers:

1. The 3-5 day Unit Utilizing Local Survivor Testimony is designed to meet state standards for using primary source documents, understanding and reading maps, and an ability to utilize and evaluate a variety of sources.
2. This lesson can be adapted to include more than 4 testimonies and to be completed in a variable timeframe appropriate to the students' grade level, maturity, and class time available.
3. Options for expanding this project:
 - Require students to visit MCHC to view the unedited videotaped testimony of their survivor for a more complete telling of the story.
 - Require students to read a memoir of someone with a similar experience to their assigned survivor. How does the memoir testimony substantiate or differ significantly from the testimony of the local survivor? Do they notice a significant difference in the style (written versus oral history) of the testimony?