

Utilizing Multiple Testimonies in a Classroom Activity

This unit allows students to view multiple testimonies covering a variety of Holocaust experiences. This approach helps them to create a larger and more complex picture of the Holocaust experience while at the same time developing a more nuanced understanding of the individual and unique nature of each survivor's experience.

Lesson Plan Option 1:

Materials Needed:

- Video testimony from at least 4 survivors from the Witnesses to the Holocaust Archive. Survivor testimony must include both genders, a geographic range, and a variety of Holocaust experiences including at least one death camp experience, one none-camp experience (example: in hiding, Shanghai, German Jews, etc.), and one ghetto experience.
- Timeline of the Holocaust available in the curriculum or at <http://www.mchekc.org/Timelines.htm>.
- Internet access to USHMM maps at <http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/focus/maps/>.
- Large blank European map for plotting locations as a class. (Projection or paper)

Instructions for Classroom Exercise Option 1:

1. On the first day of the unit, hand out the Timeline of the Holocaust and the profiles of the survivors you have chosen. This will serve as a reference for students as you move through the Core Concepts in Holocaust Education.
2. As you proceed through your unit, show the survivor testimony (or segment of testimony) that corresponds to the historical point you are making. For example, when you get to *Kristallnacht* in 1938, show testimony from a German Jew who experienced the event. As a class, discuss how the survivor's country of origin related to the timing and circumstances of their Holocaust experience. Plot that survivor's location on the class map (each survivor in a different color.)
3. As a culminating activity have students write a short essay detailing how individual experiences of the Holocaust varied based on geography and timing. As an alternative, lead a class discussion over the same topic.

Special Notes for Teachers:

1. This exercise 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. Given the time, and excellent option for showing the context of the Holocaust against the progression of WWII is to choose one survivor from each country represented in the archive.
3. Options for expanding this project: Require students to choose one local survivor testimony and 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?

Lesson Plan Option 2:

Materials Needed:

- Multiple video testimonies from the Witnesses to the Holocaust Archive that illustrate a single theme in the Core Concepts in Holocaust Education. Survivor testimony must include both genders and a geographic range where applicable.
- Timeline of the Holocaust available in the curriculum or at <http://www.mchekc.org/Timelines.htm>.

Instructions for Classroom Exercise Option 2:

1. On the first day of the unit hand out the Timeline of the Holocaust.
2. On the first day of the selected theme from the Core Concepts, hand out the profiles of the survivors you have chosen to illustrate this topic. This will serve as a reference for students as you move through the Core Concepts in Holocaust Education.
3. After you have taught your unit on the Holocaust theme, show the relevant chapters from 2-4 different local survivors who address that topic in their testimony. As much as possible, make sure your choices represent both genders and a geographic range of experiences. For instance, if you are talking about Auschwitz, utilize men and women who come from a variety of countries. The experiences of Polish Jews in Auschwitz are often somewhat different than the experiences of Hungarian Jews in the same camp.
4. As a culminating activity, have students write a short essay detailing how individual experiences of the survivors were similar or different based on the timeline of the Holocaust and their country of origin.

Special Notes for Teachers:

1. This exercise is designed to meet state standards for using primary source documents and an ability to utilize and evaluate a variety of sources.
2. Options for expanding this project: Require students to choose one local survivor testimony and 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?
3. Repeat this process for as many themes in your unit as possible.