

Building a Curriculum Around Local Survivor Resources

For many students, the Holocaust seems like a distant event that happened to unimaginable numbers of people. To help them understand the individual experiences of the history and to draw relevant local connections, this lesson encourages students to focus on one local survivor as they learn the overarching history of the Holocaust.

Lesson Plan:

Materials Needed:

- Video testimony from at least 4 survivors from the Witnesses to the Holocaust Archive who are also featured in the book *From the Heart*. Survivor testimony should include both genders, a geographic range, and a variety of Holocaust experiences.
- Profiles from *From the Heart* included in the curriculum appendices.
- Timeline of the Holocaust available in the curriculum or at <http://www.mchekc.org/Timelines.htm>.
- Large European map for plotting individual's locations as a class. (Projection or paper)
- Computer or video access for groups to view their survivor testimony.

Instructions for Classroom Exercise:

1. Assign each student to one of four groups and allow the group to choose one of the four testimonies you have chosen for this project.
2. On the first day of the unit, hand out the Timeline of the Holocaust. This will serve as a reference for students as you move through the Core Concepts in Holocaust Education.
3. As you proceed through your unit, allow students time as small groups to view the segment of their assigned survivor's testimony and to read the segment of the profile that corresponds to the time period you are discussing in class. As you complete your class time on a Core Concept have the students journal individually about their survivor and what was happening to him/her during that specific time.
4. As a culminating activity have the groups discuss their individual journal entries and prepare 5-10 minute oral presentations about their survivors for the class. As each group reports, plot that survivor's experience on the class map.
5. After each group has presented their survivor, lead a class discussion about the individuality of Holocaust experiences and how timing and geography impacted that experience.

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 read a published 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?

