

Lesson 24: One Survivor Remembers

2 Class Periods

Reading Skills: Making Text-to-Text Connections

Purpose:

Four Perfect Pebbles is useful for teaching many core concepts of the Holocaust, but it has one major short-coming. Students might conclude, after reading *Pebbles*, that most Jewish families were able to stay together during the years of the Holocaust and that most family members survived. These assumptions would be false. I believe that it is important to dispel these ideas with a more accurate picture of the experience of most survivors. Most survivors were separated from their families, and most were lucky to have even a few other members of their families survive.

The video version of Gerda Weissman Klein's story, *One Survivor Remembers*, is a useful tool for allowing students to compare and contrast Marion Blumenthal's with that of another survivor. I believe Gerda's story more accurately reflects the general experience of Holocaust survivors. The video is appropriate for middle school students and can be shown in one class period. (It also won an Academy Award the year it was released!)

Materials Needed:

A VHS or DVD of *One Survivor Remembers*

One copy for each student of the handout "Connections Chart for *One Survivor Remembers*"

Process:

First of all, be aware that the film is 39 minutes long. If your class period is 45 minutes long, as mine is, you will not be able to dally about getting started. This is not the sort of film that you want to finish the last five minutes of the next day!

Ask the students to preview the connections chart. They will need to be familiar with the information you are requesting so that they know what to watch and listen for. The information for *Four Perfect Pebbles* is already filled in; they are looking for comparable information for *One Survivor Remembers*. Warn the students that there will be some pieces of important information that the narrator will not say aloud; they will need to read the screen at times to get the information they need for the chart.

Show the film. Students should fill in details on the chart as they watch.

The next day, allow the students to get together in groups of 3-4 to compare and share information. It is pretty impossible to get all the information from just one viewing!

After a few minutes of small group sharing, bring the class together as a whole to check the chart and discuss the similarities and differences between Marion's story and Gerda's story.

Name: _____ Hour: _____ Date: _____

**Connections Chart for *Four Perfect Pebbles / Marion's Triumph*
and *One Survivor Remembers***

Points to Compare	<i>Four Perfect Pebbles & Marion's Triumph</i> Marion Blumenthal	<i>One Survivor Remembers</i> Gerda Weissmann
Family Home	Hoya, Germany	
Family Members	Father: Walter Mother: Ruth Brother: Albert Marion	Father: Mother: Brother: Gerda
Date & Age @ Nazi Occupation	Date: January 30, 1933 Age: Not born until 12/1934	Date: Age:
Togetherness/ Separation of Family Members	Westerbork: Lived Together Bergen-Belsen: Ruth & Marion separated from Walter & Albert Death Train: Family Together Liberation: Family Together	Brother - Deported: Father - Deported: Mother - Deported: Gerda – Deported: Age
Types of Camps	Westerbork: Refugee Camp Westerbork: Transit Camp Bergen-Belsen: Transit/ Concentration Camp	

Types of Camps (continued)		
Demonstrations of Kindness	Guard at Bergen-Belsen gave Albert an apple.	
Final Months & Days of Imprisonment	On a death train.	
Liberation	Place: Tröbitz, Germany By: Russian troops Date: April 23, 1945 Age: 10.5 Weight: 35 lbs.	Place: By: Date: Age: Weight:
Survivors of Family	Ruth, Albert, and Marion Walter died of typhus six weeks after liberation.	
Keys to Survival	Able to stay close to family – especially mother.	
Spiritual Resistance	-Game to occupy time: finding four perfect pebbles -Never gave up hope -Positive attitude	

New Life	Peoria, IL Married: Nathaniel Lazan 3 children 9 grandchildren	
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Name: _____ Hour: _____ Date: _____

**Connections Chart for *Four Perfect Pebbles / Marion's Triumph*
and *One Survivor Remembers***

Points to Compare	<i>Four Perfect Pebbles & Marion's Triumph</i> Marion Blumenthal	<i>One Survivor Remembers</i> Gerda Weissmann
Family Home	Hoya, Germany	Bielsko, Poland
Family Members	Father: Walter Mother: Ruth Brother: Albert Marion	Father: Mother: Brother: Arthur Gerda
Date & Age @ Nazi Occupation	Date: January 30, 1933 Age: Not born until 12/1934	Date: September 1939 Age: 15
Togetherness/ Separation of Family Members	Westerbork: Lived Together Bergen-Belsen: Ruth & Marion separated from Walter & Albert Death Train: Family Together Liberation: Family Together	Brother - Deported: Sent away for forced labor Father - Deported: June 28, 1942 Mother - Deported: June 29, 1942 Selection in Bielsko. Separated from Gerda. Sent out on trucks. Gerda – Deported: June 29, 1942 Age 18 Tried to rejoin mother. Picked up and thrown onto truck. “You are too young to die.” Soon on train with other teenage girls from Bielsko – friend Ilse; met Suse.
Types of Camps	Westerbork: Refugee Camp Westerbork: Transit Camp Bergen-Belsen: Transit/ Concentration Camp	Slave Labor Factory that produced fabric for the German military. Frau Kügler – Nazi guard Other places for slave labor. Worst was Märzdorf; thoughts of suicide

Types of Camps (continued)		
Demonstrations of Kindness	Guard at Bergen-Belsen gave Albert an apple.	Frau Kügler – saved her life. Allowed Gerda to stay in bed when sick, but came to get her up and working for a surprise inspection.
Final Months & Days of Imprisonment	On a death train.	On a death march. Began January 29, 1945. 3 months long. Lack of food. Exposure to winter weather without adequate clothing or shelter. Ilse died April 28, 1945. Suse died just before liberation.
Liberation	Place: Tröbitz, Germany By: Russian troops Date: April 23, 1945 Age: 10.5 Weight: 35 lbs.	Place: Volary, Czechoslovakia In an abandoned bicycle factory. By: American troops, Kurt Klein and another soldier Date: May 7, 1945 Age: 21 Weight: 68 lbs.; white hair
Survivors of Family	Ruth, Albert, and Marion Walter died of typhus six weeks after liberation.	Parents believed to have died at Auschwitz. Never learned what happened to Arthur. Kurt Klein's parents also believed to have died at Auschwitz.
Keys to Survival	Able to stay close to family – especially mother.	Able to stay close to friends: Ilse, Suse, Liesel Ski boots that her father insisted she wear saved her life on death march.
Spiritual Resistance	-Game to occupy time: finding four perfect pebbles -Never gave up hope -Positive attitude	Imagination. Occupied her mind with a debate over whether to wear a blue or red dress at the party she imagined having after liberation.

New Life	Peoria, IL Married: Nathaniel Lazan 3 children 9 grandchildren	Married Kurt Klein, her liberator. 3 children _____ grandchildren Currently living in Phoenix, AZ
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