

### ***Four Perfect Pebbles – Unit Overview***

Lesson	Periods	Status	Task
1	2		Survey the text.
2	2		Chapter 1
3	2		Chapter 2
4	2		Vocabulary for Chapter 2
5	2		History of Antisemitism
6	1-2		Building Schema: Jigsaw Readings from <i>Tell Them We Remember</i>
7	1		Putting the Pieces Together and Re-read Chapter 2
8	2	Optional	Video: <i>Camera of My Family</i>
9	2		Chapter 3
10	1	Optional	Video: <i>Heil Hitler: Confessions of a Hitler Youth</i>
11	4		Chapter 4: Guided Practice Summary by Sections
12	2		Chapter 5: Independent Practice Summary by Sections
13	1-2	As Needed	Ch.5: Sorting and Sequencing Ideas for Summary
14	1		Re-read Chapter 1 and Connect with Chapter 5
15	1-2		Read Chapter 6
16	1-2		Read Chapter 7
17	1		Video: <i>Marion's Triumph</i> – Review Chapters 1-7
18	2		Building Schema: Note-taking Over Readings from <i>Tell Them We Remember</i>
19	1		Chapter 8: Summary by Sections - Assessment
20	1		Chapter 9 & Epilogue
21	2	As Needed	Re-Teach Chapter 8 Summary
22	1		Test: Summarizing Chapter 9 by Sections
23	1		Finish Video: <i>Marion's Triumph</i> Chapters 5 – End
24	2	Optional	Video: <i>One Survivor Remembers</i>
25	2	Optional	Video: <i>The Courage to Care</i>
26	1		Final Unit Exam
	48	(36)	<b>Total Periods for Unit: 36 to 48</b> - Depending upon the use of optional and “as needed” lessons.

Four Perfect Pebbles: A Holocaust Story  
by Lila Perl and Marion Blumenthal Lazan

Objective Statement:

The goal of this unit is to utilize a (non-fiction) Holocaust memoir to practice reading comprehension skills.

Reading References:

I Read It, But I Didn't Get It by Cris Tovani

Mosaic of Thought by ellin Oliver Keene and Susan Zimmermann

7 Keys to Comprehension by Susan Zimmermann and Chryse Hutchins

Holocaust References:

Tell Them We Remember (TTWR) by Susan D. Bachrach

The World Must Know (WMK)

Surviving Hitler: A Boy in the Nazi Death Camps by Andrea Warren

This book is a William Allen White Award winner and many schools have it in their libraries. It would be an excellent text to compare and contrast with Four Perfect Pebbles.

Materials Needed:

- Classroom set of Four Perfect Pebbles
- Classroom set of Tell Them We Remember
- a folder in which each student can keep their work for the unit
- sheets of newsprint for drawing
- small sticky notes
- highlighters – 2 different colors

## Lesson 1: Survey the Text

### 2 Class Periods

#### Reading Skills: **Activating Relevant Prior Knowledge Questioning**

##### Purpose:

- Surveying the text before reading allows students to gather some background information about the text and activate prior knowledge they may have about the Holocaust.
- Surveying also helps the students generate questions about the text that set a purpose for reading and motivate students to read.

Process: Work together as a whole-class group. As you work through the steps of the survey, ask the students to share background knowledge they have and questions that occur to them. Record these ideas on transparency sheets or chart paper for future use.

- Notice the title and sub-title. Ask students what ideas they connect to the word “Holocaust” in the sub-title.
- Notice the authors’ names.
- Look at the photos on the covers. Notice how the portrait is set over a background photo.
- Read the excerpt and summary on the back cover.
- Notice the photo facing the title page inside the book and the caption underneath it.
- Notice the copyright date.
- Read the dedications.
- Read the Table of Contents.
- Flip through the book and look for the two sections of photos. Look at the photos and read the captions.
- Read the Prologue.

##### Example Questions:

- Why is the book called Four Perfect Pebbles?
- Who are the people in the background picture on the cover? Are they getting on a train? Where are they going?
- How old was Marion when her family was first affected by the Nazis?
- How old was she when she was liberated?
- Did all of the family survive?
- If the family escaped to Holland, why weren’t they free of the Nazis?
- Why is one of the chapters titled “The Greatest Disappointment”? What was this disappointment?

- Why is Chapter 7 titled “Freedom and Sorrow”? If you were free, wouldn’t you be happy?
- Was the family able to stay together or were they separated during their imprisonment?
- What was the yellow star in the photo used for?
- What was the “Hitler Youth”?
- What was Kristallnacht?
- Why was the synagogue blown up?
- Why was Walter Blumenthal imprisoned at Buchenwald?
- What was Westerbork? Why did the Blumenthals live there?
- What is typhus?
- What is a “Youth Aliyah” home?
- Why did the family go to Peoria?

## Lesson 2: Chapter 1

### 2 Class Periods

**Reading Skills:**      **Creating Sensory Images**  
**Questioning**

#### Process:

The teacher will read the chapter aloud as the students follow along in their own texts. At intervals, the teacher will stop reading and ask students to practice using sensory images and asking questions. Depending on how familiar students are with thinking about what they read, the teacher may need to “Think Aloud” to model for the students how good readers create sensory images and ask questions as they read. To facilitate the development of visual images, the students could draw the pictures that form in their minds as a result of reading certain passages of text. This chapter also lends itself to forming images of sound, smell, touch, and taste.

#### Suggested Stopping Points:

- At the end of paragraph 2 – Ask students to sketch in their journals the way they imagine the “three-decker bunks” would look that “ran the length of the barrack.” This might be a situation where students might use prior knowledge if they have ever seen a picture of the bunks where prisoners slept in a Nazi concentration camp. After students have a moment to draw their pictures, you could show them photos to build background knowledge for students who haven’t seen such photos before.  
Photo Reference:      TTWR – pages 93, 54-55  
   WMK – page 193
- The last full paragraph on page 3 and the next paragraph that continues onto page 4 have a description of the outhouse and what the prisoners would have to do to relieve themselves. Ask students to draw a picture of how this communal outhouse might look. They could also imagine what the prisoners smelled. The sensory images are unpleasant, but the text lends itself well to forming strong images.
- The second-to-the-last paragraph on page 4 tells about *Appell* or roll call and the paragraph that runs from page 4 to 5 describes the electrified barbed wire surrounding the camp, the guards, the dogs, and the searchlights. The paragraph does not mention guard towers, but I asked the students how the guards would use the searchlights to keep watch on the perimeter of the camp. They were able to infer that there would be guard towers along the fence. Ask them to draw how they think these things might look.

Photo Reference:      TTWR – pages 54-55

WMK – pages 136

Also Surviving Hitler by Andrea Warren has a photo on page 79 of a guard tower and a portion of fence at Auschwitz. Be sure to read the caption under this photo and explain about the grass. On the back cover, there is a view from the guard tower.

A teachable moment presented itself as we were working through this chapter. The students asked me if people tried to escape from the camps. Others wanted to know why the prisoners didn't tunnel under the fence to get out. I shared with them that in addition to patrolling the perimeter with dogs and using searchlights from towers to watch the fence-line, the Nazis also used a technique called *collective responsibility* to discourage resistance. Please read the following passages to familiarize yourself with this concept:

Reference: WMK – page 171

It is important for students to realize that skillful authors anticipate questions that readers will ask and provide the information needed to answer many of those questions. Students must learn to recognize when this happens in a text. Pages 7-9 of Chapter 1 explain why the book is called Four Perfect Pebbles. This question should be among those raised during the survey process. Take time to discuss Marion's search for four perfect pebbles. Is this just a silly child's game?

NOTE: Later in the unit, students will have the chance to make connections between Four Perfect Pebbles and One Survivor Remembers, the film memoir of Gerda Weissman Klein. In the film, Gerda describes how she occupied her mind by deciding whether she would have a red or blue dress for the celebration she imagined she would have after the war. She speaks about how important it was to have imagination – some way to occupy your mind - in order to survive. Help the learners make a connection between Gerda's debate about her dress and Marion's search for the pebbles.

At the end of this lesson, I wanted the students to notice something about the structure of this text and effective writing. In the lingo of the "Six Traits" used to evaluate samples for the Kansas Writing Assessment, this book offers a good example of "organization." Chapter 1 is a strong lead for the rest of the book. I asked the students to look ahead at the first two pages of Chapter 2 and notice that its content was going to go backward in chronological order; it begins with how Ruth and Walter met each other. I asked the students why the author might have started the book with an incident from the chronological middle of the story. They didn't get where I was going with my question until I asked it a new way: What would their impression of the book have been if the family history in Chapter 2 had been first? Would they have wanted to keep on reading? They said "No." They agreed that Chapter 1 was compelling; it increased their curiosity about Marion's story and caused them to want to continue reading the book.

### **Lesson 3: Chapter 2 and Building Schema**

**10 Class Periods**

**Reading Skills:**

- Monitoring Comprehension**
- Questioning**
- Building Background Knowledge**
- Determining Importance**
- Making Connections**
- Using Fix-Up Strategies**

**Periods 1 & 2: Read the chapter, monitor comprehension, ask questions.**

Chapter 2 briefly covers many key concepts: Jewish life before the Holocaust, antisemitism, the Nazi rise to power, persecution of Jews and others under Nazi rule, the Nuremberg Laws. Within the scope of a memoir, the book does a good job giving an overview of important background information and showing how the Blumenthal family was affected by historical events. However, it contains lots of unfamiliar vocabulary. I expect that there will be many parts of this chapter that my students will not understand, and there are concepts that I would like to develop to a deeper degree.

Process:

Because I predicted that the chapter would pose some comprehension challenges, I selected “monitoring comprehension” as a target skill. I wanted the students to become conscious of which parts of the text they understood and which parts they didn’t. I made a photocopy of the chapter for each student and gave them both a pink and yellow highlighter. I told them that they should mark everything that they understood with pink and everything that confused them in yellow. Every word of the chapter needed to be one color or the other by the time they were finished. They needed to be ready to summarize and explain all of the parts they marked with pink. In addition, I asked them to be aware of the questions that the text prompted them to have and write down at least three of those questions in the margins close to the passage that elicited the question. After explaining the task, the students had about 30 minutes to work. The students needed 20 - 40 minutes of time during an additional class period to finish.

### Lesson 3: Chapter 2 and Building Schema – Continued

#### **Periods 3 & 4: Build vocabulary.**

After Periods 1 & 2 of this lesson, I collected the photocopied chapters after the students had marked them and written in their questions. As I evaluated their work, I kept a list of problematic vocabulary words and another list of questions. I felt that there would be no point in discussing concepts until we had dealt with critical vocabulary, so I chose to attack that next. The following list contains the Chapter 2 words that my students did not understand.

#### Vocabulary for Chapter 2:

merchant (p.10)  
bookkeeper (p.11)  
ranted (p.12)  
denounced (p.12)  
\*political party (p.12)  
parliament (p.13)  
prosperity (p.13)  
woes (p.13)  
frenzied (p.14)  
\*\*antisemitism\*\* p.14  
long-smoldering (p.14) – Look up “smolder”  
prejudices (p.14)  
\*fanned into flames (p.14)  
boycott (p.15)  
\*der Fuhrer (p.16)  
spurt (p.17)  
regime (p.18)  
quota (p.19)  
\*emigrate (p.19) – to leave one country to settle in another  
\*immigrate (p.19) – to enter and settle in a foreign country  
annexed (p.21)  
allotted (p.21)

\* These are the terms I explained to students rather than asking them to look the words up in a dictionary.

\*\* The author uses the spelling *anti-Semitism*. This is common in older texts. I’ve used the spelling recommended by USHMM because they want to avoid the use of the hyphen and capital letter, which may lend credence to the idea that Jews can be defined as a race. See the news article by Michael J. Jordan titled “The semantics of anti-Semitism.”

Note: In several cases, the definition given in the text was quite clear. I think the problem was that my students didn't understand the conventions of the text well enough to pick up on the context clue the author gave them. It might be helpful to explain that definition context clues are one way that authors help readers with terms they anticipate the reader won't understand. It would also be wise to explain that when authors want to show that a word is from another language they often will use italics.

Terms defined in the text for which students needed further explanation:

Reichstag (p.13)

Chancellor (p.15)

Iron Cross (p.15)

swastika (p.17)

*Judenrein* (p.18)

*Schutzstaffeln* or SS (p.18)

affidavit (p.21)

Tante (p.22)

Process:

I wrote each vocabulary word and the page number where it appeared on an index card. At the start of Period 3, I gave each student one of these index cards and asked him/her to look-up that word in a dictionary. After reading through all of the dictionary definitions for that word, students were asked to locate the word in Chapter 2 and look at the context surrounding it. They were instructed to write down the definition that best matched the meaning of the word in the text. After allowing time for using the dictionary, each student was then asked to go to the overhead, read the definition of the word and write it for the class to copy. See "Vocabulary Ch.2" for a student note-taking sheet and an answer key.

### **Lesson 3: Chapter 2 and Building Schema – Continued**

#### **Periods 5 & 6: Build understanding of the history of antisemitism.**

Antisemitism is a difficult concept to teach, but it is very important to teach it well. Students often ask questions like “Why did Hitler hate the Jews?” It is important for them to understand that Hitler and the Nazi party could not have murdered 6 million Jewish people if antisemitism had not been hard-wired into European culture over thousands of years of time. Hitler believed that Jews were an inferior race, but many others in his society also held that belief. I do not mean in any way to absolve Hitler of the evil he committed; I simply think it is ridiculous to blame one man for the murders of millions of people. Hitler could not have done what he did without the help of many willing perpetrators and the lack of interference from many bystanders.

Over the years, I have tried several ways to succinctly teach the history of antisemitism and have never found the perfect method. During this unit, I tried to teach it using the chapter on Antisemitism in TTWR. This did not work very well. I think the chapter is too abstract for my reading students to grasp the concepts; they needed concrete examples. I fell back upon a tried and true cloze reading that I created when I first began teaching the Holocaust and have revised several times since. There are several reasons why I like to use this reading. First, it helped me feel more confident that I was sharing accurate information with my students when I wasn't very confident about my own mastery of the content. It also helped keep me on track; I didn't have to worry about forgetting an important point I wanted to make. Second, it helped make a lecture-style lesson more interactive. It was a way to hold students accountable for listening carefully without overburdening them with note-taking. Third, it prevented the inaccuracies that sometimes happen when students take notes. I wanted them to have something that they could keep and refer to in the future. I will include this cloze reading with the materials for this lesson so that you may use it too. However, as I've already stated, I am not convinced this is the very best way to teach antisemitism and am still searching for other effective methods.

#### **Process:**

Each student will need a copy of the cloze reading, and the teacher will need an overhead transparency copy of the cloze reading. I have found it most effective to allow questions as we read through the reading together and fill in the blanks. I also feel free to stop and elaborate at any points where I feel it would be helpful. Usually I can complete the cloze reading in two class periods.

### **Lesson 3: Chapter 2 and Building Schema – Continued**

#### **Periods 7 & 8: Build understanding of the historical context of Pebbles Ch.2**

##### Purpose:

I wanted to help students gain historical context for the events described in Chapter 2, and I needed a fairly fast way to do this. This activity also allowed the students to practice determining the most important ideas in a nonfiction chapter with the help of their classmates.

##### Materials Needed:

A copy of TTWR for each student

1 copy of “Map the Five W’s and H” for each student

This graphic organizer can be found on pages 255-258 of Reading Strategies for the Content Areas: An ASCD Action Tool by Sue Beers and Lou Howell.

3 transparency copies of the graphic organizer

3 transparency pens

2 additional copies if you want the students to take notes from the group presentations

##### Process:

Randomly assign students one of the following chapters from TTWR. Try to assure that the number of students to each chapter is as equal as possible.

- |   |                                    |             |
|---|------------------------------------|-------------|
| A | “The Nazi Terror Begins”           | pages 10-11 |
| B | “The boycott of Jewish Businesses” | pages 14-15 |
| C | “The Nuremberg Race Laws”          | pages 18-19 |

Give each student a copy of TTWR and a copy of the graphic organizer. Explain that they are each to read the chapter that has been assigned to them. While they read, they should be looking for the most important ideas in the chapter. Explain that in nonfiction text, a good reader often looks for the Five W’s and H – who, what, when, where, why, and how. The graphic organizer also contains a space for “Importance/ Impact/ Significance?” I like to think of this as “So what?” – Why was this information important enough to include in this textbook about the Holocaust? Give students 10-15 minutes to read the chapter and taking notes.

After the students have had a chance to work independently, have them gather in homogeneous cooperative groups. Give each group one transparency copy of the graphic organizer and an overhead pen. Tell them they have an additional 10-15 minutes to compare their notes and reach consensus about the main ideas of the chapter. They should then write these key ideas on the transparency and prepare to explain these ideas to the rest of the class.

Each group will take a turn sharing the main ideas of their chapter with the rest of the class using the transparency they have prepared as a visual aid. You may want to give the students additional copies of the graphic organizer and ask them to copy the main ideas for the other chapters that they did not read. For the sake of time, I did not do this. I simply asked them to listen to each other carefully. I did not expect mastery of these concepts; I intended for this activity to be an introduction to the historical background.

It took a few minutes of a second class period for the last group to share the main ideas from their chapter of TTWR. When they finished, I told the students that I wanted them to read Chapter 2 over again. I told them that they could choose whether they wanted to read the photocopy that they had high

Next:

Debrief/ Discuss Ch.2

Camera of My Family – Text-to-Text connections Jewish life before the Holocaust

Jigsaw Activity – Readings from TTWR

Heil Hitler: Confessions of a Hitler Youth