

In their Shoes: Teaching the Holocaust through the Journey of a Chain of Witnesses, Survivors, and Rescuers

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Overview

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ Galatians 6:2ⁱ

The numbers often tell history: number of deaths, number of communities destroyed, and number of murderers, etc. While the numbers are one method of telling history, names, faces, testimonies, photographs, and narratives are another method that illustrates history. In fact, it is the compelling narratives that enable masses of people to remember and recall innumerable accounts of tragic and dehumanizing events. These events are often indelibly imprinted in the deep memory of survivors, bystanders, rescuers, and witnesses who each experienced a single event (genocide) in a multitude of ways. This unit will be taught from the perspective of this group of people, who each in his or her own way, bared one another's burdens and resisted their oppressor's efforts to make them less than human.

English Literature/English Composition and World History classes in 9th-10th grade will benefit the most from the poetry and prose, oral histories and video histories, and film and photographs that students will encounter as they build upon their freshman experience of reading, Elie Wiesel's, *Night*, and *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Additionally, all students travel to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, located in Washington, DC, in their freshman or sophomore year at Parkway West High School as part of a culminating grade-level mandated assignment centered on their I-Witness project. Explored in detail will be a complex set of beliefs, biases, and bigotry espoused worldwide that is often propagandized to promote and perpetuate genocide. Race, ethnicity, and religious affiliation frequently serve as the root causes for a xenophobic executor to seek and target a group of people with one goal in mind: mass extinction.

Enhancing trauma awareness is a secondary component in this unit. Why? Because one cannot comprehend the incomprehensible act of murdering six million plus Jews on the

command of a single dictator; without examining the deep trauma, scars, and wounds that were inflicted upon both: survivors and witnesses. Undoubtedly, attachment, bonding, and healing are core issues that have been deeply interrupted in the lives of children and adult survivors alike. It has been well documented that everyone in the labor and death camps were subjected to humiliation, torture, and prolonged deprivation of basic needs. Moreover, many trauma-impacted survivors felt an overwhelming sense of helplessness that they were unable to express during their time in captivity. As a result they learned to profoundly suppress their emotions and continue along the pathway set by their captors. Hence, once they were set free and returned to the world they appeared to have no deficits as a result of their experiences. In reality, what the world did not see-or refused to see- are the emotional deficits each witness and survivor carries.

For too many students their lives are one traumatic event after another as they experience life amid violence, generational poverty, neglect, abuse, loss, separation, and chronic danger. This type of existence is trauma filled; yet, the effects of the trauma are barely perceptible to these students who have internalized the prolonged stressors in their life as normal. Sadly, this lifestyle has created an apathy in them that is often displayed when they're confronted with other people's trauma and pain. Thus, exploring life after trauma is an essential strand interwoven in a few unit activities that are designed to challenge student apathy in a non-confrontational manner.

The activities are based on Sandra Bloom's, *Creating Sanctuary*,ⁱⁱ utilizing the Sanctuary Model.

Rationale

*First they came for the communists, and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a communist.... then they came for me and there was no one left to speak out for me.*ⁱⁱⁱ Martin Niemoller's excerpt from his sermon, *First they came for me*, expresses the sole purpose for this curriculum unit: **to prepare students to act**. The need for action has become more urgent because: first, Holocaust survivors are dying and few people are left to tell their stories, second, a genocide in the Darfur region of the Sudan took place this century, lastly, acts of war, massacres, and international human rights violations continue unceasingly with no one speaking for the hundreds of thousands that have been slaughtered. Therefore, as long as entire regions, villages, communities, and ethnic groups are still imperiled by other's hate, bigotry, discrimination and desensitization for their "brother" there will always be a need for human intervention and prevention in the face of these atrocities. Additionally, as these unrelenting evils arise it is important that students take a stand and move from apathy to advocacy in the chain of witness.

An uninvolved witness is simply a bystander. However, the bystander's lack of involvement occurred long before being thrust before documents, artifacts, and photographs that are designed to create synecdochic memory. The synecdoche – when a part of something refers to the whole- typically uses a fragment to demonstrate the relationship between the whole and the fragment. As evidence of this, Professor, Michael Bernard-Donals^{iv}, declares

“of the objects collected for display by the designers of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *shoes* are among the most powerful *icons*...and they were chosen specifically to provide museum visitors the opportunity to identify with those who were destroyed, and to learn something about the events of the Holocaust, events for most visitors, occurred before they were born.” (417)

In effect, Bernard-Donals validates that the age of the visitor and the intentionally selected content placed before the visitor create the antithesis of what is desired: connection to past events. Despite this frequent occurrence many educators unwittingly persist in ushering a student into studying the Holocaust by emphasizing the number of the dead, the number of people who were captured, and the number teeth extracted, and the amount of hair shaved from the Jewish people.

An alternative approach to using (iconic images) as a method to help students transform from apathy to advocacy is teaching them to become a link in the chain. Yet, to accomplish this feat we must first acknowledge that we are all too familiar with students who prefer to remain uninvolved in class. Notwithstanding their age, generational influences, and background many of my student’s appear numb and desensitized to other’s pain and suffering. This archetypal student is easy to recognize. They sit passively following the teacher’s guidelines but never display passion, curiosity, or personal connections. Tacitly they resist becoming involved by avoiding eye contact with the teacher, staring out of classroom windows, and purposefully distracting others from participating in what, Primo Levi, in *The Drowned and the Saved*,^v considered to be historical and distant by today’s generation: histories. Levi highlights this point when he states,

“the experiences that we survivors of the Nazi Lagers carry within us are extraneous.... and become more extraneous as the years pass. For the young people of the 1980’s, they are matters associated with their grandfathers: distant, blurred, ‘historical.’” (382)

Levi is acutely aware that with the passage of time and other problems taking center stage in the world survivors run the risk of not being listened to. Levi further asserts, “as collective witnesses to a fundamental, unexpected event, survivors, personal experiences form a collective history-that can not be ignored!” (382)

So, he wisely reminds us that these events must be *remembered* and students must listen because this event- could happen again- at any place- and at any time.

Remember events is what Levi challenges us to do and I am taking the challenge a step further by challenging teachers to break students “*cycles of silence*” that envelop our classrooms when apathy shows up! **Apathy** is defined as a lack of emotion; lack of interest; unconcern, indifference.^{vi} A snapshot of apathy can, look like student’s *receiving* rather than questioning, analyzing, and critiquing their *learning*. When students perform the above tasks they are learning to act on their own values, feelings, and purposes for learning rather than uncritically espousing the teachers feelings, thoughts, and values. Certainly, this process (students acting on their own values, etc.) would represent a

seismic shift in the belief that students are purely repositories for teacher's extensive knowledge. Nonetheless, as students closely people, places, and propaganda, that are ubiquitous in Holocaust narratives it is imperative that they uncover their deep feelings and clearly articulate them to their audience. Why? By acknowledging their feelings and sharing their voices in response to witnessing trauma survivors' testimonies students become active participants in the chain of witness. Of course, participation trumps witnessing and provides students with a vehicle to apathetic resistance: a powerful voice. When students speak and pour into classroom discussions with authentic feelings and selected words, an appearance of apathy, is not allowed to morph into silence that was once present in tension filled classrooms. The result of "giving voice" to students is that over time, as their discomfort gives way to comfort, and this practice is fully accepted, more students will gain the courage to reject apathy, too. Apathy is the first obstacle to advocacy. As proof, in his sermon, Niemoller reminds us that apathy is unacceptable, even dangerous, because

"then they came for me and there was no one left to speak out for me."^{vii} (1006)

Interrupting the cycle of apathy is only an important first step for engaging and establishing an authentic historical relationship to the past for 21st century learners. An important second step is for students to use their voice to *bear witness*, simply stated, students must tell their own stories-and the stories of others to pass on what they have witnessed. While bearing witness may sound simple; it is, in fact, a very complex and complicated act for many who have suffered traumatic experiences and lived to *bear witness* to their own tragedies. Nevertheless, Eli Wiesel argues that,

"anyone who listens to a witness becomes a witness. So all those who are our students, our children, our children's children, and who listen to our tale, become custodians of that tale."^{viii} (Wiesel and Heffner 154)

Wiesel encapsulates many survivor's dilemma in deciding the "how" and the "when" of deciding to speak or not to speak of the trauma, the wounds and the scars that are inevitably unleashed while illuminating their journey of survival. In spite of this, undeniably, survivors often feel obliged to tell their stories, lest the world forget what happened to them, and those that didn't make it out alive to tell their own stories. Even though survivors courageously and painfully acknowledge their scars, as Aharon Apelfeld, *The Story of a Life*^{ix}, did when he wrote,

"I still haven't found the words to give voice to those intense scars on my memory" (50)

it is still impossible at times to fully capture what life was like in the camps. What makes it impossible for the audience to capture the complete experience is the "witnesses' chronic frustration and skepticism about the audience's ability to understand their testimony as a premise of these encounters."^x (Langer 21) Conversely, it seems Applefeld ultimately prevailed over his struggle of pain by selectively sharing his memories of being motherless and separated from his father for twenty years as a result of being imprisoned during the Holocaust. Yet, for every survivor testimony that is shared, Langer, reminds us of the paradox that exists when we use taped videos of

survivor's testimony to expand our consciousness. Langer raises the important question of what are we to do with the following paradox?

“ We are torn apart and even today we don't want to talk; maybe, you know, it's also a fear...of the confrontation between us.... I come, you know, from conversation that turned [that] way in my mind...but would anybody understand? I don't know. And that's probably the biggest tragedy I face, because I cannot relate or convey my experience to another person and make him, you know, better...through my experience.”^{xi}(Langer and Stanley M [testimony] 37)

Ultimately, Langer concludes that survivor testimonies are critical to expanding consciousness because they grant the witness a rare view into the deep memory of the survivor who travels back in time to demonstrate the affect of their camp experience and the effect of living daily with that same experience. It is my deepest hope that in moving students from apathy to advocacy students will develop a deep understanding of the courage, fortitude, and “grit” that each survivor, witness, and rescuer displayed by bearing witness for generations to come.

Throughout this unit students maintain a separate journal (binder) to include all responses to literature, film, reflections, and classroom discussions. Formal writing assignments, reading assignments, assessments and notes are kept in this binder too, hence students will end up with a portfolio that reflects their level of proficiency in addressing common core state standards.

This curriculum unit is anchored around the following core texts: *The Book Thief*, Markus Zusak, *Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow*, Susan Campbell-Bartoletti, *Rena's Promise, A Story of Sister's in Auschwitz*, Rena Kornreich, *A Dead Child Speaks*, Nelly Sachs, *After Auschwitz*, Anne Sexton, *First They Came for the Jews*, Martin Niemoller, Testimonies of *Father S, Leon S. and Edith P*, and *Schindler's List*, [film] Steven Spielberg, *Testimony: The Legacy of Schindler's List and the USC Shoah Foundation*, Steven Spielberg and The Shoah Foundation. *Auschwitz and the Camera*, Deborah R Staines, *Night*, Elie Wiesel, *Nobel Prize Speech*, and a live testimony of a Holocaust survivor in connection with the Holocaust Awareness Museum and Education Center in Philadelphia, PA.

This unit is designed for instruction, twice a week, for eight weeks in 90-minute classes. The culminating project is *Witness to History Project –Student Presentation* where students will hear a survivor testimony first-hand who experienced the Holocaust as a child or a teenager. Learn and retell his or her story, write the survivor's biography [including why it's important to continue to share this story] and present the biography to 20 more people.

Objectives

SWBAT understand the ongoing dangers of bigotry, hatred and extremism (in order to) uncover their deep feelings and articulate them to their audience on these topics

SWBAT gather and use information for research purposes (in order to) present survivor's stories to other's that are unfamiliar with bearing witness and the trauma it evokes

SWBAT analyze, evaluate, (in order to) and synthesize information presented during class discussions to critically examine their own thoughts, feelings, and attitudes about their role in speaking up or taking action to defend the rights of someone who is different from them

SWBAT work collaboratively in groups (in order to) collectively give voice to their own trauma and learn how to manage their response to other people's pain

SWBAT use appropriate verbal and nonverbal techniques to present information to others (in order to) communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

SWBAT use strategies to analyze stereotypes in visual media (in order to) recognize stereotypes that serve the interests of some groups in society at the expense of others; identifies techniques used in visual media that perpetuate stereotypes

SWBAT develop systematic thinking and analysis about personal, national, and global decisions, interactions, and consequences

Strategies

Text Analysis

What is a text analysis and **why** is it important?

Too often we space out when we read and the words disappear without us being fully conscious of them and what they are trying to impart to us, through the use of descriptive writing, metaphor, style. So we miss the full impact of what we have read, or we experience the impact without understanding why we were impacted.

Analyzing the text is allows you to **dissect** what you have read.

Text analysis is not just about reading, either. You can apply this technique to music, art, film, even advertisements and political speeches. Being able to analyze what you see or hear allows you to be in charge how you see or hear something. It is how we start to learn to think for ourselves.

This exercise will help you understand a fundamental division between **what** is communicated and **how** it is communicated.

Consider the lens of: *pathos* (the emotions of speech) *logos* (the logical content of a speech) and *lexis* (the style and delivery of a speech).

Have your students pick a scene in *The Book Thief*, *Rena's Promise*, or *Night*—this should be just a few paragraphs.

PART 1-- THINKING ABOUT TEXT:

1. What is your initial reaction to reading this section of text? How did you feel when you

read it? Use feeling words such as: nervous, agitated, depressed, sad, and lonely... If they don't know then have them read it again and notice their physical response—do you shift in your seat? Do you look out the window (try to escape)?

2. Why do you think the text had that effect on you? (Is there something in your experience that you relate to this scene? Is there something in the way it is written (see next question)? What experiences or prior knowledge do you bring to the text?

3. **What effect does the text have on your reading experience?** (*Here let's look at the craft of the writing, like theme, language, metaphors, images, recurring motifs, allusions, and dialogue*)

PART 2-- THINKING ABOUT ART (use www.yadveshem.org)^{xiii} to select abstract art connected to the Holocaust):

You will do this in class first, working with your students to help them understand how to analyze art and then allow them to take the exercises home and choose their own work of art—it needs to be abstract, remember.

As a class discuss the works in the slide show—I usually start with a discussion first and make sure that I help them move beyond literal responses, like “I see a man there...”

1. What is your initial reaction to looking at this work of art (or listening to this piece of music)? How did you feel when you look at it? i.e. nervous, agitated, depressed, sad, lonely...

2. Why do you think the painting has that effect on you? (Is there something in your experience that you relate to when you see this painting? Does it remind you of something? If it does, does what it reminds you of help you understand the piece or hinder your perception of it? Avoid cliché thinking. Is there something in the way it is painted that you think is curious or interesting (see next question)?

3. What elements of the painting might be influencing your visual experience?

- Here look at: **colors**—are there a lot of colors or just a few? What do the colors mean to you?
- The **medium** (is there thick paint or is it thin like watercolor? Is it mixed media and does that mean something to you?)
- What about **blank space**—is the canvas visible and does that mean something? Is the canvas completely covered over, why?
- **Shapes and lines**—do they look fast or slow? Sharp or dull? Fragile or strong? Fragmented or unified? Etc.

After you go through one or two paintings together, have your students explore the above questions through some writing, so they can think privately about those questions and have a record of what they thought about. After your students have examined the text and the paintings as a class, you can assign the text analysis essay.

PART 3—Crafting the Essay

Now you want your students to develop their analysis more formally, using the same techniques above and getting them to connect a painting to a scene of their choice in *The Book Thief*, *Rena's Promise* or *Night* (remember just a 2-3 paragraphs). You might give

them a rubric to help them break down the elements, as this is a complex essay and challenging at times—but once they get it, they will never forget the experience! They should include the painting and the section of text at the front of the essay. This essay should be 3 pages, though some write much more.

Pathos. What emotional effect does the painting you chose have on the scene you chose?

Exit Slips

The exit slip strategy is used to help students process new concepts, reflect on information learned, and express their thoughts about new information. This strategy requires students to respond to a prompt given by the teacher, and is an easy way to incorporate writing into many different content areas. Furthermore, the Exit Slip strategy is an informal assessment that will allow educators to adapt and differentiate their planning and instruction.

The Exit Slip strategy also allows educators to adapt to students' interests and inquiries on a given subject. This strategy can also be used to publish student comments, ideas, and opinions. Published exit slips provide students with a recap of the previous day's lesson; they give students confidence that their voice matters, and the students eagerly search for their entries.

Exit Slips allow the teacher to collect students' responses and plan accordingly for the next class session, differentiating for the abilities and understanding of different students. This strategy is extremely useful in the classroom because it takes just a few moments to do, and gives teachers an informal measure of the students' understanding of a new lesson or concept.

Primary Sources (Eyewitness Accounts)

First-hand testimony creates connection as well as makes people and places of the Holocaust more intimate while communicating unique information. In particular, first-hand testimony is a powerful way to convey the reality of the Holocaust and to forge personal connections between students and survivors. The effectiveness of survivor presentations relies on the ability of educators to help students contextualize the experience through appropriate preparation and building historical context.

Think Aloud The think-aloud strategy asks students to say out loud what they are thinking about when reading, solving math problems, or simply responding to questions posed by teachers or other students. Effective teachers think out loud on a regular basis to model this process for students. In this way, they demonstrate practical ways of approaching difficult problems while bringing to the surface the complex thinking processes that underlie reading comprehension, mathematical problem solving, and other cognitively demanding tasks. Thinking out loud is an excellent way to revise a paper for a specific audience, predict the outcome of a scientific experiment, use a key to before reading a new passage, monitor comprehension while reading a difficult textbook, and so

on. Getting students into the habit of thinking out loud enriches classroom discourse and gives teachers an important assessment and diagnostic tool.

Classroom Activities

Activity 1: Enhancing Trauma Awareness

Overview: Help students begin to process their traumatic experiences through writing about it and sharing their story in a small group.

Objective: Students will be able to: understand why it is important to write about and share their traumatic events, (IOT) support one another during the sharing process and feel less anxiety when they think about their trauma and other people's trauma.

Do Now: Think-Pair-Share: What has changed your life significantly? Write for the next 20 minutes about the event, people, and places involved in this segment of your life, turn to your partner and share this experience for the next 20 minutes, add any details your partner asked about. Names may be changed to protect others; however, this must be a genuine experience that caused you trauma.

Guided Practice: (The **bolded** statements represent avoidance tactics that students sometimes use when asked to face their deep fears; hence, they need to be talked through the process)

Didn't do the activities Explore why and look for avoidance. Use this opportunity to review negative thoughts and practice positive behavior support plan exercises if possible. For example, ask, "When it was time to do the activity, what thought popped into your head that made you decide not to do it?"

Started to do it, but felt upset and cut it short Commend the student for his or her courage, but point out that this won't help him or her feel better. Reiterate the assignment and the need to stick with it until anxiety decreases. Talk about ways to redo the assignment in the coming week with more support or using an easier fear.

Did it but never felt upset

This could mean that the group member is making progress or somehow avoiding the assignment (e.g., using some kind of "security blanket" or safety net that makes the situation somehow not count). Examples of this include having someone there for support or doing it at a certain time of day. Explore whether there was anything special that made the student feel okay. If so, consider asking him or her to remove that part of the experience to make the assignment more challenging next time. Remember that the goal is to eliminate all stress- or trauma-related avoidance. Since the group member is likely to encounter a particular situation in his or her real life, it is necessary to work on connecting with the assignment.

Started to feel unsafe because something happened

If something happened that was potentially dangerous (or that would cause anxiety in anyone who was there), this reaction is normal and healthy. Congratulate group members

on their good judgment in detecting real danger. Discuss ways to plan the next phase of the assignment (sharing) to avoid any real danger and involve the group in solving this problem. Remind group members that you are working on stress- or trauma-related distress, not trying to make sure they never feel upset again.

Said they did the homework, but it is not really believable

Ask for details in order to get a better idea of whether they did it or not. Do not confront them about it if you think they are lying to you, but do make sure to plan an alternate assignment (same foci) carefully with them and make sure it is something they can realistically accomplish.

Independent Practice: Identify common themes in your group's trauma narratives that elicited empathy as you were sharing your experience. Don't forget to identify the role of active listening.

Homework: Students will break their traumatic experience into small steps using the design of a staircase. This will enable them to focus on ALL events that comprise the ENTIRE experience.

Lesson 1: Through the Eyes of Innumerable Witnesses

Overview: This lesson is designed to sharply focus student's attention on the feelings of death in [*The Book Thief* and *Auschwitz Shifts From Memorializing to Teaching*^{xiii}] that is inextricably present in every step of the journey Jewish men, women, and children took. The desired outcome is for student's to ask the question, what is my responsibility to the present?

Please note: that there are many other pairings that can be used in addition to or in place of the above texts.

Objective: Students will be able to engage in a complex analysis of the past (Holocaust genocide), examine its relationship to the present and infer their responsibility into the future.

Do Now: Write the Angel of Death a letter looking back at a pivotal moment in your life when you knew that you should have taken a stand for someone who was being mistreated. Describe your thoughts, feelings, and reasons for not acting. End your letter with how you correct the situation if you could go back and have a "do over."

Guided Practice: Teacher will guide students in analyzing and evaluating the following **excerpt** from *The Book Thief* using a double-entry journal for close reading.

Summer came.

For the book thief, everything was going nicely.

For me, the sky was the color of Jews.

When their bodies had finished scouring for gaps in the door, their souls rose up. When their fingernails had scratched at the wood and in some cases were nailed into it by the sheer force of desperation, their spirits came toward me, into my arms, and we climbed out of those shower facilities, onto the roof and up, into eternity's certain breadth. They just kept feeding me. Minute after minute. Shower after shower. I'll never forget the first day in Auschwitz, the first time in Mauthausen. At that second place, as time wore on, I also picked them up from the bottom of the great cliff, when their escapes fell awfully awry. There were broken bodies and dead, sweet hearts. Still, it was better than the gas. Some of them I caught when they were only halfway down. Saved you, I'd think, holding their souls in midair as the rest of their being – their physical shells – plummeted to the earth. All of them were light, like the cases of empty walnuts. Smoky sky in those places. The smell like a stove, but still so cold.

I shiver when I remember – as I try to de-realize it.

I blow warm air into my hands, to heat them up.

But it's hard to keep them warm when the souls still shiver.

God.

I always say that name when I think of it.

God.

Twice, I speak it.

I say His name in a futile attempt to understand. "But it's not your job, to understand." That's me who answers. God never says anything. You think you're the only one he never answers? "Your job is to..." And I stop listening to me, because to put it bluntly, I tire me. When I start thinking like that, I become so exhausted, and I don't have the luxury of indulging fatigue. I'm compelled to continue on, because although it's not true for every person on earth, it's true for the vast majority – that death waits for no man – and if he does, he doesn't usually wait very long.

On June 23, 1942, there was a group of French Jews in a German prison, on Polish soil. The first person I took was close to the door, his mind racing, then reduced to pacing, then slowing down, slowing down...

Please believe me when I tell you that I picked up each soul that day as if it were newly born. I even kissed a few weary, poisoned cheeks. I listened to their last, gasping cries. Their vanishing words. I watched their love visions and freed them from their fear.

I took them all away, and if ever there was a time I needed distraction, this was it. In complete desolation, I looked at the world above. I watched the sky as it turned from silver to gray to the color of rain. Even the clouds were trying to get away.

Sometimes I imagined how everything looked above those clouds, knowing without question that the sun was blond, and the endless atmosphere was a giant blue eye.

They were French, they were Jews, and they were you.

Independent Practice: Students will use literature circle roles to analyze the following excerpt from *Auschwitz Shifts From Memorializing to Teaching*

For nearly 60 years, Auschwitz has told its own story, shaped in the aftermath of the Second World War. It now unfolds, unadorned and mostly unexplained, in displays of hair, shoes and other remains of the dead. Past the notorious, mocking gateway, into the brick ranks of the former barracks of the Polish army camp that the Nazis seized and converted into prisons and death chambers, visitors bear witness via this exhibition.

Now those in charge of passing along the legacy of this camp insist that Auschwitz needs an update. Its story needs to be retold, in a different way for a different age.

...A proposed new exhibition at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum here, occupying some of the same barracks or blocks, will retain the piled hair and other remains, which by now have become icons, as inextricable from Auschwitz as the crematoria and railway tracks. But the display will start with an explanatory section on how the camp worked, as a German Nazi bureaucratic institution, a topic now largely absent from the present exhibition, which was devised by survivors during the 1950s.

Back then they wished to erase the memory of their tormentors, as the Nazis had tried to erase them, so they said as little as possible in their exhibition about the Germans who had conceived and run the camp. They focused on mass victimhood but didn't highlight individual stories or testimonials of the sort that have become commonplace at memorial museums as devices to translate incomprehensible numbers of dead into real people, giving visitors personal stories and characters they can relate to. Those piles, including prostheses and suitcases, also stressed the sheer scale of killing at a time when the world still didn't comprehend, and much of it refused to admit to, what really happened here.

...The new exhibition would go on to describe the process of extermination, leading visitors step by step through what victims experienced, and end with a section on camp life, meaning the "daily dehumanization and attempts to keep one's humanity," said Piotr Cywinski, the bearish, red-bearded 39-year-old Polish director of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

"If we succeed we will show for the first time the whole array of human choices that people faced at Auschwitz," he explained. "Our role is to show the human acts and decisions that took place in extreme situations here — the diversity of thinking and reasoning behind those decisions and their consequences. So, we may pose the question, should a mother give a child to the grandmother and go to selection alone, or take the child with her? This was a real choice, without a good solution, but at Auschwitz you had to make the choice."

...The gradual passing of survivors has also meant that Auschwitz faces a historical turning point.

"Teenagers now have grandparents born after the war," Mr. Cywinski noted. "This is a very big deal. Your grandparents are your era but your great-grandparents are history.

"The exhibition at Auschwitz no longer fulfills its role, as it used to," he continued. "More or less eight to 10 million people go to such exhibitions around the world today, they cry, they ask why people didn't react more at the time, why there were so few righteous, then they go home, see genocide on television and don't move a finger. They don't ask why they are not righteous themselves.

"To me the whole educational system regarding the Holocaust, which really got under way during the 1990s, served its purpose in terms of supplying facts and information. But there is another level of education, a level of awareness about the meaning of those facts. It's not enough to cry. Empathy is noble, but it's not enough."

This is the theme to which officials here return often. Auschwitz, they say, must find ways to engage young people (some 850,000 students came last year), so they leave feeling what the director called “responsibility to the present.”

Homework: (Select 3 questions to respond to using the constructed-response format that requires a thesis statement, evidence from the text, and a concluding sentence)

1. What lines in the passage from “The Book Thief” stand out most to you? Why? How do you interpret them? How would you describe Death, the narrator of this passage? Why?
2. Markus Zusak uses poetic words to describe brutal events. After reading the excerpt, do you feel this style does justice to what he is describing? Why or why not?
3. How else in your life, whether in textbooks, news accounts, novels, films or oral histories, have you encountered the information about the deaths in Auschwitz and other concentration camps that inspired this passage? Which depictions most affected you? Why?
4. According to the Times article, why might Auschwitz “no longer speak for itself” the way it did for an earlier audience? Why do those who are in charge of its legacy think, “Auschwitz needs an update”? What was the goal when the site was first opened to visitors, and how has that goal changed?
5. What do you think Piotr Cywinski, the director of the museum, means when he says, “But there is another level of education, a level of awareness about the meaning of those facts. It’s not enough to cry. Empathy is noble, but it’s not enough.”
6. “The Book Thief” tells the story of the Holocaust in a very different way than the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, but both seek to engage and educate young people. How do you think the story of the Holocaust should be told to people your age? How should it *not* be told? Why?

Lesson 2: Through the Eyes of Numerous Survivors

Overview: This lesson is designed for students to recognize and respond to the challenges survivors faced in maintaining their identities, the sacrifices survivors made for others, and lessons students want to impart to the next generation.

Objective: Students will be able to illustrate how real people’s lives were affected by historical events. To achieve this objective the teacher and students will register for an I Witness^{xiv} account at <http://iwitness.usc.edu> and use the registration key ECHOES.

Do Now: Imagine that your family is ordered to pack and leave your home within the next 24 hours with armed gunmen standing inside your house to make sure you comply! What would you take? Why? Next, describe the feelings and thoughts you are experiencing when the guards separate you by gender/age and you NEVER see your parents or siblings again. Draw three pictures with captions to express yourself. Be prepared to share within a small group.

Guided Practice: The teacher will facilitate the class discussion as students view excerpts of Edith P and Leon S testimonies in class. Students will be asked to jot down their feelings and the feelings of the survivor while their listening attentively to the video clip. They will also be asked to check their initial writing to see if they expressed the same idea as a survivor. Using the survivor’s language students will be asked to write a short biography or ode to the survivor that captures the survivor’s story.

Independent Practice: Student’s will assemble an online portfolio of 15 survivors using their I Witness accounts and will include male, female, old, young, and children survivors. For each survivor students will create a profile of each survivor. To be included in the profile is: a timeline of their journey before being liberated, who they were separated from, unique circumstances surrounding their time in captivity, forms of resistance, helpers, if any, character traits they believed helped the person survive with examples, include geographical references to where the survivor came from, was deported to, and where they presently live or are buried.

Homework: In student’s binders they will answer the following questions about their experience researching and recording information from real people whose lives were deeply impacted by historical events.

Questions:

- 1.) Do you think about your identity differently at different times?
- 2.) What propaganda currently exists that promotes hate, bigotry, discrimination against a specific ethnic group and your own ethnic group? (give concrete examples)
- 3.) Aside from physical resistance, what other options are available to the “targeted group” to stand in defiance to their oppressor?

Lesson 3: Through the Eyes of Courageous Rescuers: Taking A Stand

Overview: This lesson is designed to offer a detailed examination of why and how individuals chose to rescue victims of the Holocaust, as well as organizing open resistance to the Nazis. Readings from Holocaust and Human Behavior are complemented by a varied selection of resource websites that detail examples of rescue and resistance.

Objective: Students will be able to examine the work of several rescuers during the Holocaust, compare and contrast their motivations and methods. Evaluate the risks taken by rescuers and apply their assessments to crises today. This lesson outline may be used to deepen a discussion of rescue during World War II. The readings from *Holocaust and Human Behavior*^{xv} in this outline describe rescue efforts in The Netherlands, France, Hungary, Poland, and Denmark. A number of websites include accounts of rescue efforts in other locations.

Do Now:

Brainstorm ideas about why and how people rescued others from Nazis during World War II. In small groups choose one question only! What might have motivated people to

become rescuers? What methods might rescuers have used? Be prepared to report your findings and use chart paper to synthesize responses from ALL groups.

Guided Practice: Teacher will guide students in using literature circles to read, respond to, and analyze the following texts.

Chapter 8, Bystanders and Rescuers, "*Choosing to Rescue*", "*Links in a Chain*", "*The Courage of Le Chambon*", "*The Mysterious Major*", "*Schindler's List*", "*A Nation United*", "*A Man With A Mission*". Chapter 11, *Choosing to Participate*, "*The Road Not Taken*" *The Jews of Poland*, Chapter 5, *The Warsaw Ghetto*, "*Let the World Know*" *The Jews of Poland*, Chapter 6, *The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*, "*Polish Responses*"

Independent Practice: Students will independently view two of the following videos and three of the following websites and write a review for each film and each website.

Film: remember that many of these videos are digital and can be borrowed from your local library

- As If It Were Yesterday (Belgian rescue of Children)
- Courage to Care (more detailed stories told by rescued and rescuers)
- Schindler's List (now-familiar tale of conversion of Oskar Schindler from perpetrator/bystander to rescuer)
- So Many Miracles (Jewish couple revisits their Polish rescuers)
- Weapons of the Spirit (Pierre Sauvage returns to le Chambon which harbored over 3,000 escaping Jews)

Websites: *Courtesy of Facing History and Ourselves website*

- [Raul Wallenberg and the Rescue of Jews in Budapest](#) - provides the student with insight into the size and rapidity of the Hungarian deportation efforts. On this page, the clickable timeline, Budapest 1944-1945 provides important context.
- [To Save a Life: Stories of Holocaust Rescue](#)
- [Varian Fry](#) (from the Varian Fry Foundation)
- [The Optimists: The Story of the Rescue of the Bulgarian Jews From the Holocaust](#)
- [RESCUERS: Portraits of Moral Courage in the Holocaust](#) (Part of video Shtetl)
- [Chiune and Yukiko Sugihara](#)

Homework: As part of their binders, have students reflect on the work of rescuers. Based on what they've learned students should reflect and record on how they think they would react to similar challenges.

A power point presentation, IMovie, blog, or journal writing is acceptable for this assignment.

Extension Activity: "Goodness, like evil, often begins in small steps. Heroes evolve; they aren't born." Ervin Staub, Holocaust Survivor, Use the following quotation to write a 2 page essay agreeing or disagreeing with this idea!

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^{iv} Bernard-Donals, Michael. *Synecdochic Memory at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*. *College English*, Volume 74, Number 5, May 2012. 417-436

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^{vi} Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary

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^{viii} Wiesel, Elie and Richard D Hefner. *Conversations with Elie Wiesel*. New York: Random House, 2003.

^{ix} Apelfeld Aharon and Aloma Halter. *The Story of a Life*. New York: Schocken, 2004.

^x Langer, Lawrence. *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory*. New Haven. Yale University Press, 1991.

^{xi} Langer, Lawrence. *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory*. Yale University Press, 1991.

^{xii} <http://yadveshem.org>

^{xiii} Kimmelman, Michael. Auschwitz shifts from Memorializing to Teaching. *New York Times*. 18, February 2014.

^{xiv} <http://iwitness.usc.edu>

^{xv} *Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior*. Brookline, Massachusetts

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<http://iwitness.usc.edu>

Over 1,000 video testimonies, multimedia activities, and digital resources provided to teachers and students at no cost. Teacher's can create online discussion forums and assignments for entire classes.

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As the Jewish people's living memorial to the Holocaust, Yad Vashem safeguards the memory of the past and imparts its meaning for future generations. Established in 1953, as the world center for documentation, research, education and commemoration of the Holocaust, Yad Vashem is today a dynamic and vital place of intergenerational and international encounter.

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Appendix-Common Core Standards

Common Core Standards

The Common Core State Standards provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them. The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers.

Reading Standards for *Literature* grades 9-10 (Key Ideas and Details)

1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
2. Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text

Reading Standards for *Literature* grades 9-10 (Craft and Structure)

1. Determine the meanings of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g. how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone)
2. Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it and manipulate time (e.g. pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

Reading Standards for Literature grades 9-10 (Integration of Knowledge and Ideas)

1. Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g. recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text.

Reading Standards for *Informational* Text grades 9-10 (Key Ideas and Details)

1. Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.

Reading Standards for *Informational* Text grades 9-10 (Craft and Structure)

1. Analyze in detail how an author's ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text (e.g., a section or chapter)
2. Determine and author's point-of-view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric that point of view or purpose.

Writing Standards grades 9-10 (Text types and Purposes)

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
 - a. Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s), from alternate or opposing claim(s), and create an organization that establishes clear relationship among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons and evidence
 - b. Develop claim(s) and counterclaim(s) fairly, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations for both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level and concerns.
 - c. Use words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and counterclaims.
 - d. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing
 - e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows form and supports the argument presented.

Speaking and Listening Standards grades 9-10 (Comprehension and Collaboration)

1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

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- a. Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful well-reasoned exchange of ideas.
 - b. Work with peers to set rules for collegial discussions and decision-making (e.g. informal consensus, taking votes on key issues, presentation of alternate views), clear goals and deadlines and individual roles as needed.
 - c. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.
 - d. Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.
2. Evaluate a speaker's point-of-view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, identifying any fallacious reasoning or exaggerated or distorted evidence.

Speaking and Listening Standards grades 9-10 (Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas)

1. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate purpose, audience, and task.
2. Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Language Standards grade 9-10 (Knowledge of Language)

1. Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or writing.
 - a. Write and edit work so that it conforms to the guidelines in a style manual (e.g. MLA Handbook, Turabian's Manual for Writers) appropriate for the discipline and writing type.