



Lesson 1: What We Already Know

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Goal: Students will discover what they already know about the Holocaust. They will learn several key terms, and they will learn *why* we study the Holocaust.

Activity: The teacher groups the students in teams of 3 or 4. She mixes “high” and “low” students.

The teacher gives each team a handout—a copy of a Circle in a Frame thinking map. The map may be on standard paper, but enlarging the maps to 11” X 17” may prove helpful: there’s more room for students to write.

Inside the circle, the word **Holocaust** is written.

The teacher instructs the students:

*First, we’re going to find out what you already know about this term **Holocaust**. Why do we want to find out what you already know? Because you may know something someone else doesn’t know, so you can teach that person. And vice versa. This is what we call Each One Teach One. By working in teams sharing your knowledge, you’re making each other smarter!*

For me-- your teacher who wants to help you learn--this activity helps me discover what you already know, and that helps me know what to teach you.

We start with brainstorming. Here’s what you do. Working together as a team, writing inside the circle, jot down everything you know about the Holocaust. What you know might include phrases, or single words, or numbers or facts.

One person can write, or everyone can. Just be sure you obey the Law of Brainstorming: Everyone contributes and everything that’s said is written down.

As you work, help each other. Encourage everyone in your group to speak up and write. No knowledge is too large or too small to write down.

Do not use books or other materials. Those come later. For now, we're simply finding out what you already know

Don't worry about spelling. That too will come later.

As the students brainstorm and write, the teacher circulates among the teams and encourages full participation. "Each one teach one," she keeps reminding the students.

After ten or so minutes—when all the groups have a few jottings in their circles—the teacher gives the next instruction:

In the space surrounding the circle but inside the box, write down where you got your information. Be as specific as possible. For instance, if you got information from the Internet, what was the site? If you read a book, what was its title? If you talked with someone, what was the person's name?

The students work another 2 or 3 minutes. The teacher continues circulating, affirming and encouraging. She reminds each team to write all their members' names on their map.

The teacher collects the maps and brings the whole class back together.

One at a time, and coached by the teacher, the groups come forward and share their knowledge. Each group has a couple of minutes to present their work. If inaccurate knowledge is presented, the teacher gently but firmly corrects the error.

As each group comes forward, earlier groups' knowledge is repeated and reinforced, and more knowledge is added.

After all groups have presented, they post their maps.

The teacher praises the students' efforts and passes out each student's Holocaust Journal (a spiral notebook).

She instructs the students:

*Some terms are so important, they form the basis—the common language—of this course of study. Therefore we want to define them carefully and make sure we all understand them. One such word is *Holocaust*.*

She writes **Holocaust** on the board, and the students write it in their journals.

She says, Now that you are studying this important time, you are historians. And here is how historians define the Holocaust.

She writes the definition on the board and asks the students to do the same in their journals:

The Holocaust was the period from 1933-1945 during which Germany and its collaborators murdered 6 million Jews and 5 million others.

She follows this procedure with 2 other key terms: **Shoah** and **Genocide**.

With both of these words, she repeats the previous procedure.

Shoah: The Hebrew word for *catastrophe*, and a term that is interchangeable with *Holocaust*.

Genocide: Systematic, government-sponsored murder of an entire people

At the end of this mini-lesson, the students have written three words and definitions in their Holocaust journals. This is the start of their common language.

Next the teacher says:

*Thank you for your attention, your thoughts, and your hard work today. I have just one more question before we close. The question is--**Why?** Why do we study the Holocaust?*

Discussion ensues. If necessary, the teacher guides the students in their thinking. By the end of the discussion, all students understand that we study the Holocaust in order to (1) honor the memory of those who perished and (2) prevent future genocide. The teacher emphasizes that she respects her students enough to entrust them with this serious, crucial work.

She may offer the students a quotation or two, to make her point clear.

For example: **It is too late for the victims...but not for our children, not for mankind.**

--Eli Wiesel

Finally, the teacher passes out index cards—one to each student.

She instructs:

Now is the time for your questions. I'm giving you these index cards in case there's something more you want to know. Write down any questions you have. I will collect the cards—with or without your names--and the next time we meet, I will do my best to answer your questions.

The teacher puts the cards in a box on her desk. Her final instruction:

As other questions arise, ask them during class or add them to our box. If I don't know the answer, I will do my best to find it out. This work is too important for unanswered questions.

Materials:

Pencils/Pens

Holocaust Circle-In-A-Frame Maps (8 1/2X11" or 11X17")

Holocaust Journals (one spiral notebook for each student)

Index cards and a box to contain them



Holocaust