

Lesson 7: Survivor Visits

**by Josephine Cripps, Teacher, Summit K-12 School, Seattle
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Once the students have a basic understanding of European geography, anti-Semitism, and key events of the years 1933-1945, they are ready to meet a survivor.

The Speakers Bureau of the Washington State Holocaust Education Resource Center includes approximately 30 speakers. Participants include Holocaust survivors, liberators, a survivor of the Armenian genocide, children of survivors, and others.

For assistance in booking a speaker, the teacher emails WSHERC's Speaker's Bureau at info@wsherc.org. The teacher can also access the Speaker's Bureau through www.wsherc.org. In any event, the teacher should request a speaker well in advance of the visit.

Before A Visit:

On the day before a speaker's visit, the teacher distributes the speaker's one-page biography. Most biographies are downloadable from the WSHERC website.

The teacher and students read the biography aloud, work on correct pronunciation of names and places, and review the geographical locations that the speaker will discuss.

The teacher reviews E & E—Expectations and Etiquette:

1. All students will be on time for the speaker's visit. Late arrivals may be declined admission.
2. All students will sit as close to the speaker as possible. This helps the speaker hear and be heard.
3. Students will remove *all* distractions from the area during the speaker's visit.
4. Students will not take water or bio-breaks during the visit.
5. Students will demonstrate active listening—eyes alert and trained on the speaker—during the entire visit.

6. During the Question and Answer phase of the visit, students will be sensitive and compassionate in their questioning. They will not ask questions which may cause the speaker pain. If a student is unsure about a question she wants to ask, she will quietly seek advice from her teacher regarding the appropriateness of the question.

Immediately After a Visit:

- If the visitor wishes, the teacher may take a photograph of the visitor with the class (in my experience, several speakers have appreciated receiving such a photograph).
- As they leave class, *every* student individually thanks the speaker.
- Two students—exemplary citizens--serve as escorts for the visitor. The students help the visitor pack up, if necessary, and they guide the visitor through the hallway and out of the school.

The Day After A Visit:

All students write a thank you letter to their visitor.

Students write a rough draft of the thank you letter in their Holocaust Journals.

The Format for the Thank You Letter:

Date

Salutation: The visitor will be addressed formally (Mr./Mrs./Ms.) or by their first name.

Paragraph 1: The student introduces herself and states her reason for writing.

Paragraph 2: The student lists at least 3 important things she has learned from the speaker.

Paragraph 3: The student lists at least three ways she will use her new knowledge to make the world more safe and just.

The letter ends with a brief close which re-states the student's gratitude.

Once the teacher has approved the student's first draft, the student will use "nice" paper—not notebook paper—to write a polished, final draft.

Once all letters are collected, they are mailed to the Washington State Holocaust Education Resource Center:

2031 Third Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98121