

Using Survivor Testimony - to understand resistance in the Holocaust

Submitted by Carrie McCallum, St. Helens High School, St. Helens, OR

Carrie McCallum began teaching Language Arts at St. Helens High School in St. Helens, Oregon twelve years ago. In 2011, Carrie began teaching a semester elective course on Holocaust and genocide literature, after nine years of teaching Holocaust related curriculum in her Language Arts 9 classes. Carrie has attended numerous workshops related to teaching about the Holocaust, such as the Belfer conference at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, and has received fellowships to attend the Memorial Library Summer Seminar and the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous Summer Seminar for teachers, both in New York City. In addition, Carrie participated in the Holocaust and Jewish Resistance Teacher's Program in the summer of 2011, where she traveled to Israel, Germany, and Poland to visit museums and authentic sites related to the Holocaust. Carrie is also a member of the Washington State Holocaust Education Resource Center's education advisory committee and the Oregon Holocaust Resource Center's education committee.

Subject: Language Arts or Social Studies

Grade Level: Can be adapted for grades 6-12

Duration: At least two hour long class periods, additional time for project research

Overview: Students will view survivor testimonies that relate to the concept of resistance in the Holocaust and will discover that the concept of resistance takes on many forms. Students will also explore what it means to be a bystander and a perpetrator.

Objectives: To help students understand that resistance comes in many forms. To help students understand the terms bystander and perpetrator.

Activities and Procedures:

5-10 minutes	Begin class by displaying the words "bystander" and "perpetrator" and ask students what the words mean to them. A bystander is a person who is present at an event without participating in it. A perpetrator is someone who is responsible for or commits an act.
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	<p>After students have given definitions of the words and the teacher has supplied the dictionary definitions, tell students they are going to be watching several Holocaust survivor testimony clips and will have to think about who in the clips could be deemed bystanders and who could be considered perpetrators.</p>
3-5 minutes	<p>Show students the first and second clips of Frieda Soury, where she talks about her dog being taken by the Gestapo soldier and where she recalls having to leave her home at 14. Then show Klaus Stern's testimony where he talks about his best friend, Walter, and where he shows the number tattooed on his arm.</p>
10-15 minutes	<p>After students finish the clip, ask them to discuss with a partner who they believe to be the bystanders and perpetrators in the clips. After students have had a chance to discuss with a partner, discuss it as a whole class. Be sure to point out that some of the perpetrators in particular are people that we don't hear the names of, but who are involved nonetheless, such as the person who tattooed Klaus's arm and the people who force Frieda to leave her home at 14 and keep her mother away from her. Make a special point to ask students what they think of Klaus's friend, Walter. When he decides to end his friendship with Klaus, could he be considered a bystander or a perpetrator? As a Hitler Youth, what is he? Also discuss what choices Walter had as a young boy.</p>
2 minutes	<p>Ask students their thoughts on the differences between a bystander and a perpetrator. Also ask if there were other ways the German people could have reacted, besides being involved in what was going on or simply watching it occur without doing anything to help it or stop it. Hopefully this will lead into the next part of the discussion, which is about resistance.</p>
8-10 minutes	<p>Begin the next part of the discussion by having students complete a word association activity. Write the word "resistance" down where everyone can see it and have students brainstorm words that relate to the topic. After you have written down all of their ideas and have an exhaustive list, leave the list where they can see it and ask students to free write for five minutes about a time that they resisted something in their own lives. While students write, the teacher should also write. If there is a document camera available, the teacher should try to project their writing too, so students can see them working and possibly get some ideas.</p>

5-10 minutes	When five minutes have elapsed, ask for students who would be willing to share what they have written. Teachers should also share their writing and possibly begin the sharing activity.
3 minutes	After several students have shared their stories, tell them that they will next be watching clips that relate to the idea of resistance. Explain that resistance during the Holocaust was accomplished in many ways and define the term for them: resistance is the refusal to accept or comply with something; the attempt to prevent something by action or argument.
6-8 minutes	Ask students to look for examples of resistance as they watch Peter Metzelaar's testimony. Show them the clips of Peter Metzelaar's testimony in their entirety.
5 minutes	Next, students will complete a think-pair-share activity. Once students have viewed all three clips, ask them to write down what examples of resistance they see in Peter's testimony. Allow students a minute or two to write and then ask them to share with a partner. Ask students to look for differences between what they categorized as resistance and what their partner identified, if any.
10 minutes	After pairs have had a minute or two to talk with each other and share ideas, facilitate a whole class discussion about what events and people represented resistance in Peter's story. Students will hopefully identify the actions of the individuals who hid Peter and his mother as resistance, including the underground movement, the Posts, and the women who hid Peter and his mother in The Hague. Students should also think about how Peter's mother resisted by choosing to go into hiding instead of being deported, making the nurse's uniform, and traveling with Peter from The Hague to Amsterdam. Make sure students understand that resistance in the Holocaust involved Jewish people and non-Jews, as evidenced by the people involved in Peter's story.

Follow-up Project: In order to be certain that students understand that there were different types of resistance, such as the partisans, spiritual resistance, uprisings in the ghettos, sabotage, covert pictures that were taken or diaries that were kept, etc., students will begin researching topics that relate to resistance. They will spend at least two days researching and preparing poster or PowerPoint presentations on topics such as the ones listed below:

- Warsaw Ghetto Uprising – Mordecai Anielewicz, Vladka Meed
- Spiritual Resistance – Emanuel Ringelblum, Janusz Korczak
- Vilna Partisans – Abba Kovner, Hirsh Glik, Yitzhak Wittenberg
- The Baum Gruppe
- The White Rose – Hans and Sophie Scholl
- The Bielski Partisans
- Sobibór Uprising – Leon “Leibl” Feldhandler, Lt. Aleksandr “Sasha” Pechersky
- Auschwitz-Birkenau Uprising – Rosa Robotka, Ella Gartner
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- Jewish Fighters/Parachutists from Palestine – Hannah Szenes (Senesh)
- Rescuers such as Corrie Ten Boom, Irene Sendler, Chiune Sugihara, Oskar Schindler, etc.
- Le Chambon-sur-Lignon – Andre Trocme
- Diarists such as Anne Frank, Chaim Kaplan, Petr Ginz, etc.
- Jehovah’s Witnesses resistance

Students should be encouraged to use reputable websites, such as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (www.ushmm.org), Yad Vashem (www.yadvashem.org), and The Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation (www.jewishpartisans.org) to conduct their research. They also need to include primary source documents in their presentations, such as photographs, songs, letters, maps, or diary entries, which help them illustrate the answers to the following questions:

1. Who was this individual or who was part of this group?
2. Where and when did this resistance take place?
3. Why did this individual or group resist?
4. What specifically did this group do to resist?
5. Who was this individual or group trying to assist? Who was he/she/they resisting against? Be specific.
6. Was the resistance successful? Why or why not?
7. What might have happened to this person or group if he/she/they had been caught, or what happened when he/she/they were caught?

Research should be done in class and sources should be noted somewhere on/in the presentation.

Adaptations: Words such as bystander, perpetrator, and resistance can be simplified for younger audiences and teachers can ask more specific or leading questions to help struggling students understand key concepts. Research projects can be simplified or broadened based on the needs of the students. Projects can be completed in groups, if necessary.