

6-15-2006

Holocaust [8th grade]

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Education Department

Understanding by Design Curriculum Units

Trinity University

Year 2006

Holocaust

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The *Night* of Holocaust

Brief Summary of Unit (including curricular context and unit goals)

In this unit students will read *Night* by Elie Wiesel as a means for discovering the atrocities of the Holocaust. Our study will provide them with the opportunity to uncover the following understandings: prejudice generates powerful feelings which can lead to violent consequences and human suffering, suffering produces significant change in humans, and effective communication of the change in an individual can promote the growth of human society. As students read the nonfiction book and conduct research on the historical events surrounding the Holocaust they will answer the questions “why does ‘different’ matter?” and “can hope and despair coexist?” Through a study of atrocities recently committed which have caused significant human suffering, students will explore the question “is it ever right to do the wrong thing?”

The unit will conclude with a project which will allow students to apply what they have learned. After our study of current events which have been compared to the Holocaust, students will have the freedom to create a product which applies their understanding of prejudice, suffering, and effective change to one of these situations. Their projects will be constructed for the purpose of expressing the prejudice and suffering which has been silenced by others, educating people about current atrocities committed against humanity, and fulfilling the call to moral activism which Elie Wiesel makes in his most famous work.

Content Standards

8.8 Reading/variety of texts. The student reads widely for different purposes in varied sources. The student is expected to:

(D) read to take action such as to complete forms, to make informed recommendations, and write a response.

8.11 Reading/literary response. The student expresses and supports responses to various types of texts. The student is expected to:

(B) interpret text ideas through such varied means as journal writing, discussion, enactment, and media.

(C) support responses by referring to relevant aspects of text and his/her own experiences.

8.12 Reading/text structure/literary concepts. The student analyzes the characteristics of various types of texts (genres).

8.13 Reading/inquiry/research. The student inquires and conducts research using a variety of sources.

8.15 Writing/purposes. The student writes for a variety of audiences and purposes and in a variety of forms. The student is expected to:

(A) write to express, discover, record, develop, reflect on ideas, and to problem solve.

(B) write to influence such as to persuade, argue, and request.

(E) select and use voice and style appropriate to audience and purpose.

(H) produce cohesive and coherent written texts by organizing ideas, using effective transitions, and choosing precise wording.

8.19 Writing/evaluation. The student evaluates his/her own writing and the writings of others. The student is expected to:

(D) analyze published examples as models for writing.

8.20 Writing/inquiry/research. The student uses writing as a tool for learning and research. The student is expected to:

(C) take notes from relevant and authoritative sources such as guest speakers, periodicals, and on-line searches.

(D) summarize and organize ideas gained from multiple sources in useful ways such as outlines, conceptual maps, learning logs, and timelines.

(E) present information in various forms using available technology.

8.24 Viewing/representing/production. The student produces visual images, messages, and meanings that communicate with others. The student is expected to:

(A) select, organize, or produce visuals to complement and extend meanings.

STAGE ONE – DESIRED RESULTS

Understandings

Students will understand that:

- Prejudice generates powerful feelings which can lead to violent consequences and human suffering.
- Suffering produces change, positively or negatively.
- Moral activism ends the silence which would otherwise allow suffering to continue.

Essential Questions

- Are some people better than others?
- Can hope and despair coexist?
- Is it ever right to do the wrong thing?

Knowledge

Students will know

- Background information about historical events surrounding the Holocaust
- Stylistic techniques employed by Elie Wiesel in *Night*
 - Characterization, dialogue, realism, sentence construction
- Literary devices as they appear in the novel
 - Symbols, foreshadowing, imagery, simile, tone
- Vocabulary from the novel

Skills

Students will be able to

- Express and support personal responses to literature
- Recognize elements of an author's style
- Conduct research in response to specific questions

STAGE TWO – ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE

Performance Task

A Call to Moral Activism

“Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim.”

-Elie Wiesel, 1986 Nobel Acceptance Speech

After our study of *Night*, we will explore some current situations which have been compared to the Holocaust due to the atrocities committed against humans and the consequent suffering endured. You will choose one of these situations or an alternate situation with our approval on which to conduct further research and study. To apply your understanding of prejudice, suffering and effective change, you will create a product with the following goals in mind:

- To express the prejudice and suffering that so many humans have endured silently at the risk of losing their lives
- To educate people about current situations in which atrocities are still being committed against humanity
- To fulfill the call to moral activism which Elie Wiesel makes in *Night*.

Ideas might include a collage, piece of art, poem, sculpture, series of letters, journal entries, song and/or song lyrics, or a children’s book. Use your imagination! You should choose something that reflects the personal impact you have felt in learning about the situation and that will serve as means through which you can continue your own discovery of self. It should be accompanied by a well-written page in which you explain the personal meaning which you have taken from creating your project.

Your product will be assessed on creativity, educational value, moral activism, effort, research, explanation, and presentation. In addition, you will assess your own work and performance on this task.

Other Evidence

- Chalk Talk contributions
- World War II and the Holocaust teaching notes from home group
- Numbered Heads
- Journal responses to questions about what the students are reading
- Informal checks for understanding
- Exit slips
- Vocabulary quizzes
- “If You Cried, You Died” response to the movie
- Discussion to re-evaluate the essential questions
- Writing prompts

STAGE THREE – LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- *Chalk Talk* – Students will respond to the essential questions about prejudice and suffering posted on butcher paper. Communication must occur solely through their writing and no one will be allowed to speak. Students may make new comments, respond to the comments of their classmates, or pose questions on the butcher paper, but each person must make a contribution. Teachers will facilitate and make contributions as well. Students will write their personal reactions to the Chalk Talk on an exit slip.
- *Jigsaw* – Students will be placed into groups of 4 or 5 to conduct background research on the historical events surrounding the Holocaust (World War II Home Front, Japanese American Internment Camps, World War II Overseas, Concentration Camps, Judaism). Each member of the group will become an expert on one area of material which they will then be responsible for teaching to the rest of their group. Students will be given a list of terms to focus their research and may use both the internet and library resources.
- *Numbered Heads* – Students will be held individually accountable for all of the material covered in the Jigsaw activity. Questions will be generated from the terms.
- *If You Cried, You Died* – Students will watch the film “Auschwitz: If You Cried, You Died” in order to hear the stories of survivors as they return to the concentration camp. On a worksheet, students will define prejudice and genocide, think about the question that they would ask a Holocaust survivor, and write personal responses to provocative quotes in the film.
- *What is Night?* - As an introduction to the literature, students will read the Foreword to the book by Francois Mauriac and discuss Friedrich Nietzsche and nihilism. Students will also watch a clip of Elie Wiesel speaking so that they can hear his voice in their head as they read. On an exit slip, students will think about the connotations that “night” has for them.
- *Chapter One* – Students will read the first chapter of the book as a class and find examples of prejudice as it appears within the opening section of the book. Through short responses, students will think and write about how they would react in the same situations.
- *Cattle Car Simulation* – In order to understand what it means when the Gestapo forces 80 people into a cattle car, tape will be placed in the room to show the actual size of the train cars that were used to transport Jews to the concentration camps. Students will be asked to stand inside the tape and imagine what it would be like with 65 additional people standing in the same area for hours.
- *Chapter Two* – Students will read the second chapter of the book as a class within the Cattle Car Simulation and discuss the use of language to foreshadow the arrival at Birkenau at the end of the section. Students will draw representations of Madame Schacter’s visions using textual evidence to support their choice of color and imagery to convey the experience of the first trip in the cattle cars.
- *Quiz – Essential Elements* – In order to check for understanding of essential knowledge up until this point, students will take a quiz which will ask them to

recall basic facts from their research on the Holocaust, information about Mauriac and Nietzsche, translations of the Latin sayings, and the meanings of vocabulary words from their first two lists.

- *The Long Road to Liberation* – Students will be introduced to a map of Europe and will actively follow the progression of the story from Elie’s home in Sighet through the various concentration camps where he is transferred as we read.
- *Chapter Three* – Students will read the third chapter of the book as a class and discuss the developing character of young Elie, focusing on who he is now and who he will become as a result of the atrocities which he will continue to experience and witness in the concentration camps. It is in this section of the book when he lies in order to stay with his father, begins to show disbelief in God, feels guilty for his lack of reaction as his father is tortured, refuses soup on principle, and becomes the number A-7713. Through exit slips, students will respond to the famous “Never shall I . . .” passage from the book.
- *Chapter Four* – Students will read the fourth chapter of the book as a class and discuss the use of similes and metaphors to create powerful imagery. In this chapter students confront the assassination of a man as he tries to steal a taste of soup and the hanging of a young boy that brings all of the prisoners to tears. Through short responses, students will think about a powerful image, experience, or incident in their life and describe it using a simile or metaphor to effectively and creatively convey the feeling or emotion of that time.
- *Chapter Five* – Students will read the fifth chapter of the book as a class and discuss the changing faith of the characters in the book as they continue to experience the atrocities in the concentration camps. As Elie struggles to believe in God and can’t repent at Rosh Hashanah, he watches Akiba Drumer die because he has lost his faith. Through exit slips, students will . . .
- *Beethoven’s Concerto* – As a way to provide a deeper experience of Chapter Six, students will listen to a violin concerto by Beethoven. On the cattle car trip to Gleiwitz, a young boy plays the piece on his violin in order to say farewell to his fellow prisoners.
- *Chapter Six* – Students will read the sixth chapter of the book as a class.
- *Chapter Seven* – Students will read the seventh chapter of the book as a class.
- *Chapter Eight* – Students will read the eighth chapter of the book as a class.
- *Chapter Nine* – Students will read the final chapter of the book as a class.
- *1986 Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech* – Students will read the author’s call to moral activism as an introduction to the final assessment.
- *Sounds of Silence* – Students will listen to and discuss the Simon and Garfunkel song to spark a discussion about the effects of being silent in the face of human suffering.
- *Is the Holocaust Unique?* – Students will study several other historical events in which atrocities have been committed against humanity in order to prepare for their final assessment.