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English 4800

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Cultural Studies Unit: Holocaust

The main objective of my unit is the Holocaust, and the impact that this event had on not only Europe, but the world in general. My unit is addressed towards either 9th or 10th graders, but I think with some minor adjustments the unit could fit into any grade curriculum. I believe this is an important issue to be studied because it is important that students do not forget what has happened. The only way to prevent a situation like this from happening again is to educate students on the dangers. Although I know there are several different ways to approach the Holocaust, I want to focus mainly the impacts that it had on citizens living in Europe, but I will also showcase some situations that happened against the United States and other countries like Japan.

I believe that students can easily examine this issue from different perspectives because I am trying to do just that in the classroom. Rather than focusing on just one side, I want my students to get an understanding on how the war was affecting everyone. I feel like I will not be teaching this unit correctly if I do not get my students to look at the war through everyone’s eyes. Due to this fact, we will be focusing on resources from the Jewish, German, and American point of view.

In some ways I believe this unit could create a lot of controversy because it is dealing with an issue that is hard for a lot of people to deal with. Some people have issues with it because they do not want to have to experience again what they have already had to once. However, I can also see how this could bring up some problems of race and injustice towards certain people. Yet I believe these are important issues to address because they are still occurring today and I believe that the only way to change this is to educate my students about them. I believe that no matter what problems come up in the classroom, as long as it is addressed in the proper way, then it should not be an issue. If anything I think it can help stimulate more learning with my unit, including things that I had never thought of. I just have to make sure that my students can voice what they are thinking and feeling as long as it is relevant and in an appropriate way.

I am hoping that by learning about the Holocaust, students will want to investigate other injustices that have happened to other races around the world. To me, the importance of learning about this problem is to educate my students of what situations can lead to these problems. Just as people want our students to be educated when it comes to voting or driving, I want my students to be educated about the injustices that can occur if people are not careful.

In terms of the goals I have for my unit, I want my students to have a better understanding of the Holocaust through reading, discussing, writing, and critically thinking about what has occurred. I want my students to feel the need to express themselves about what they are learning and thinking during the activities and units. I want them to feel free to discuss any problems that they are having with this unit, because I want to help them understand it to the best of my ability. In terms of addressing different people’s abilities, I will have oral copies ready of the different texts that we will be reading and reviewing. I will also provide different writing opportunities for my students, possibly not even requiring lengths because some of my students may have trouble meeting them. I will also allow extra time if some people need it to complete certain activities or problems. I am willing to be flexible with my unit as long as people complete all the work.

**Overview of Lessons and Activities**

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| **1** Read *Study the Holocaust:* Part V and discuss | **2** Introduce Jewish/Nazi activity | **3** Continue Jewish/Nazi activity | **4** Write about results of activity. Discuss how it made students feel.  **CE 1.2.2** | **5** Begin reading *Night* |
| **6** Continue reading *Night.* | **7** Look at the articles “The Nuremberg Laws,” and “The Reich Citizenship Law.” Do activity on before and after laws. | **8** Finish *Night.* Show clips of *Pearl Harbor.*  **CE 2.1.8** | **9** Introduce alternative ending activity.  **CE 1.3.1** | **10** Have students finish alternative ending. |
| **11** Look at clips from *Schlinder’s List* and discuss the role he had in the war.  **CE 2.1.8** | **12** Begin reading *The Book Thief* | **13** Continue reading *The Book Thief.* | **14** Introduce activity of Alternative Money Sources | **15** Continue reading *The Book Thief* |
| **16** Finish reading *The Book Thief.* Reflect on similarities and differences between books.  **CE 3.1.5** | **17** Assign final project  **CE 1.1.3**  **CE 1.2.3** | **18** Continue working on final project | **19** Continue working on final project. Possibly consider filming.  **CE 1.4.7** | **20** Students continue filming. Project due next day. |

**Standards Covered in Unit**

* **CE 1.1.3** Select and use language that is appropriate (e.g., formal, informal, literary, or technical) for the purpose, audience, and context of the text, speech, or visual representation (e.g., letter to editor, proposal, poem, or digital story).
* **CE 1.2.2** Write, speak, and visually represent to develop self-awareness and insight (e.g., diary, journal writing, portfolio self-assessment).
* **CE 1.2.3** Write, speak, and create artistic representations to express personal experience and perspective (e.g., personal narrative, poetry, imaginative writing, slam poetry, blogs, webpages)
* **CE 1.3.1** Compose written, spoken, and/or multimedia compositions in a range of genres (e.g., personal narrative, biography, poem, ﬁction, drama, creative nonﬁction, summary, literary analysis essay, research report, or work-related text): pieces that serve a variety of purposes (e.g., expressive, informative, creative, and persuasive) and that use a variety of organizational patterns (e.g., autobiography, free verse, dialogue, comparison/contrast, deﬁnition, or cause and effect).
* **CE 1.4.7** Recognize the role of research, including student research, as a contribution to collective knowledge, selecting an appropriate method or genre through which research ﬁndings will be shared and evaluated, keeping in mind the needs of the prospective audience. (e.g., presentations, online sharing, written products such as a research report, a research brief, a multi-genre report, I-Search, literary analysis, news article).
* **CE 2.1.8** Recognize the conventions of visual and multimedia presentations (e.g., lighting, camera angle, special effects, color, and soundtrack) and how they carry or inﬂuence messages.
* **CE 3.1.5** Comparatively analyze two or more literary or expository texts, comparing how and why similar themes are treated differently, by different authors, in different types of text, in different historical periods, and/or from different cultural perspectives.

**Activities Overview**

To start the unit, I would like to examine a part of *Studying the Holocaust* by Ronnie S. Landau*.* Part five focuses on the History of the Holocaust which I feel would be beneficial for my students to understand before we start reading novels that describe what happens. By knowing how the war happened, and in what order, I am hoping that it will give my students a better understanding of the situation that was happening and how some Jewish people may not have been aware of the war because it was not occurring in their country yet. I also like this book because it has maps that my students can use to follow the events that are happening. I find that it can sometimes be hard to picture what is occurring when you do not know what the countries look like.

After looking at that article, I want my students to get a better understanding of what it would be like to have their rights taken away. Over a two day period, my students will be involved in an activity where for one day they will play a Jewish person and the other day a Neo-Nazi. Depending on their role for that day, students will either have their rights taken away and must follow new laws, or they will have to enforce these laws. After the activity is over, I will have my students write a reflection piece on how this activity made them feel and how they think Jewish people felt during the war. Whatever time we have left will be used to share and discuss in the classroom.

There are two novels that I want to focus on during my lesson to help show different point of views of the war. One novel, *Night* by Elie Wiesel,focuses on the life of a Jewish boy who endures the hardships of several concentration camps. Although parts of this novel are quite disturbing, I think it is important to understand the tortures that the Jewish people were forced to go through. I plan to use this book to not only demonstrate some of the treatments against the Jewish people, but also their denial about what was occurring, and whether that helped or hindered them during the experience. While reading the book, we will take time to examine the articles, “The Nuremberg Laws,” and “The Reich Citizenship Law,” which discuss some of the laws that were implemented on the Jewish people during the war. Students will do an activity to compare the laws that were enforced on Jewish people before and after the war.

One film that I feel would benefit my classroom is *Pearl Harbor,* (2001). I would only show certain parts of the film because there are some parts that would not be acceptable for the classroom. However, I feel that this film can give some insight to not only what happened at Pearl Harbor, but also show why the United States got involved in the war. I have a feeling this movie will help us reflect on why the United States got involved in the war and how this helped the Jewish prisoners trapped in the concentration camps.

After we finish *Night* I want my students to work on an alternative ending for that novel. Reflecting on what we have already read, I want students to consider different scenarios that Elie Wiesel could have gone through, and how that might have impacted the rest of his life. Students need to give a convincing ending, possibly one that the reader would not have seen coming. Using historical references may also be beneficial to the students.

I would also use clips from the film *Schlinder’s List,* (1993) to demonstrate to students the risks that some Germans took to save the lives of Jewish people. I know that I can only show certain clips of this film because there are several parts that would be considered unacceptable for the classroom, such as when the Nazis are performing a naked selection on the Jewish prisoners. However, I feel that by watching the movie, students would not only get an understanding of what Mr. Schlinder did for several hundred Jewish people, but what other Germans were willing to do as well. This movie would also connect great with *The Book Thief,* because just like Mr. Schlinder, Leslie’s papa was also willing to help the Jewish race by being willing to not only continue work for them, but for also harboring a Jewish man.

The other novel that will be beneficial for my unit is *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak,which is narrated by Death. I think this novel is an important piece because it gives the perspective of what a German who was not involved in the war efforts might be experiencing. I think this is an important perspective to consider because I want my students to understand that not everyone who lived in Germany was involved in the war, or at least in a negative aspect. I think this goes well with *Night,* because it goes from the extreme side of the war, the crimes and injustice that was implemented against the Jewish people, to a side of innocence or sacrifice, such as when Leslie’s papa harbors a Jewish man, even though it could mean death for him and his family.

While reading *The Book Thief,* students will have to work on an activity that focuses on how they might have gotten money for their family during the war. This activity ties into the part in the book where Leslie helps her mama with laundry so that the family can make some money to eat. For this activity I want my students to consider what kind of citizen they would be, Jewish, German, American, etc. and come up with different alternatives to make money if they could not do what they normally did. I think this activity will help my students to understand what some families were willing to do just to stay alive.

Once we have finished *The Book Thief,* students will start on their final project for the unit. This project will require students to generate their own Holocaust story, by reflecting on the resources we have already read and new ones that they find. Students can come up with a story from any point of view as long as it has historical accuracy. After students have completed their piece, they will be expected to present part of their story in a five minute film clip. Students have several different options on how they can portray their story in film as long as the storyline is understandable.

**Final Project**

The final project for this unit is a two part project. Working by themselves, students will need to create a Holocaust story, from any point of view and then create a small five minute clip to highlight important information in the piece. Students should include what life was like for the character before the war, what it is like during the war, and if they choose to, what life was like after the war. Students should also take into account pieces we have already read for the unit, and consider using this information to make their story as real as possible. They must include at least one historical place that has significance to the war. Students can write the story in the form of a:

* Poem
* Story
* Newspaper Article
* Graphic Novel
* Or any other format

Students have the option of presenting their film clip however they think is most representing of their story. However, I must be able to get the storyline through their film. There must also be elements of film present in the clip that we discussed in class such as blending of scenes, acting, panning of the camera, etc. Students may choose to have:

* Actors
* Scenes
* Different angles
* Appropriate music
* Or other features as long as it is approved by me

This project is worth 200 points. 100 points for the actual written piece and 100 points for the film clip.

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| **Research**  How accurate is your information?  How credible is your information?  Did you properly cite your research? | \_\_\_\_\_\_/50 |
| **Creativity**  How creative is your final project?  Does your character come alive? | \_\_\_\_\_\_/25 |
| **Results**  Does your project reflect how you feel? | \_\_\_\_\_\_/25 |
| **Mechanics**  Did you use different formats in your film? | \_\_\_\_\_\_/50 |
| **Creativity**  Did you display your story in the film so that people can understand it?  Did you get the final results that you wanted? | \_\_\_\_\_\_/50 |
| **Total** | \_\_\_\_\_\_/200 |

**Other Useful Books for Unit**

*When courage was Stronger than Fear-* Peter Hellman

*When Hope Prevails*- Sam Offen

*Alicia: My Story*- Alicia Appleman-Jurman

*Five Chimneys*- Olga Lengyel

*I Dared to Live*- Sandra Brand

*Hide and Seek*- Theresa Cahn-Tober

*My Mother’s Eyes*- Anna Ornstein

*Entombed*- Bernard Mayer

*All But My Life*- Gerda Weissmann Klein

*Sala’s Gift*- Ann Kirschner

*We Survived*- Erick Boehm

*Auschwitz*- Dr. Miklos Nyiszli

*My Father’s Keeper*- Stephan and Norbert Lebert

*Glimpses*- Benjamin Bender

*The Journey*- Ida Fink

*A Holocaust Survivor’s Memoir*- David Faber