

LEARNING THROUGH MEMOIR

STORY CIRCLE

Level: 9-10

Curriculum area: History

Lesson overview

In this lesson, students are introduced to a Holocaust survivor via the medium of memoir. Through close analysis, they deepen their understanding of the human impact of the Holocaust and make connections to key historical themes of the Holocaust. Students collaborate to create a resource relating to their extract. They come together in a story circle to present their resource, jointly creating an interpretive chronology of the survivor.

Victorian Curriculum 2.0 content descriptors

Investigation: Australians at war (1914-1945)

Historical knowledge and understanding

- Significant events, individuals and developments of the Holocaust **VC2HH10K21**
- The diverse experiences and perspectives of Jewish and non-Jewish peoples during the period of the Holocaust **VC2HH10K22**

Historical concepts and skills

- Analyse the purpose, features, content and context of historical sources **VC2HH10S03**
- Analyse the perspectives, beliefs, values and attitudes of people and groups based on evidence from a range of sources **VC2HH10S05**

Number of lessons: Approximately two one-hour lessons

Materials

- Extracts from one of eight Melbourne-based Holocaust survivors, as selected by the teacher (Memoirs available from MHM)
- Worksheets containing context, glossaries and graduated questions for each extract (Provided by MHM)
- Paper and writing equipment for students to create a hard copy poster, or laptops to create a digital resource

Learning intentions

Students will learn to:

- use memoir to deepen their understanding of the human impact of the Holocaust.
- use memoir to make connections between the personal experiences of a Holocaust survivor and key historical themes of the Holocaust.

Success criteria

Students can:

- describe, explain and analyse written text, making connections between the personal experiences of a Holocaust survivor and key historical themes of the Holocaust.
- collaborate with other students to extract key information from a memoir to create a biographical resource.
- present a biographical resource relating to a Holocaust survivor.

LESSON PLAN

LESSON 1

Stage 1. Introduction, contextualisation and activating prior knowledge

- Provide students with a short biography of the survivor, including key aspects of their life, such as: where and when they were born; the nature of their life before the Holocaust; how and where they survived (ghettos, camps, hiding, etc); when they came to Australia.
- Enhance where possible with photographs of the survivor and maps showing places where they lived and survived during the Holocaust. Include an image of the memoir's cover page.
- Provide context and activate prior knowledge by explaining key historical events that intersect with the survivor's experiences (eg: Kristallnacht; Nazi invasion of Poland; establishment of Lodz Ghetto; Nazi occupation of the Netherlands).
- When available, show survivor video testimony. [This can be accessed via MHM.](#)

Stage 2. Analysing text

Allocate individual students an extract from the selected memoir and provide the corresponding worksheet. Students read their extract and provide written responses to the questions, which progress from surface level to those requiring increasingly sophisticated, analytical thinking.

Stage 3. Revising in groups

Students form groups with partners who have been allocated the same extract. Students discuss and refine their written responses.

Stage 4. Creating a resource

In their groups, students produce a poster or digital resource reflecting their extract. The resource for each extract should include:

- a headline
- a one or two sentence summary
- a key quote
- something they discovered that was new or surprising
- an image or symbol that best represents their extract

LESSON 2

Stage 5. Story circle

The class forms a circle, with groups organised in chronological order as determined by their extract. Each group presents its resource, explaining each element, thus creating an interpretive chronology of the survivor based on the chosen extracts.

Stage 6. Reflection

Ask students:

- To make connections between the survivor's experiences and their prior knowledge of key themes or events of the Holocaust
- What most surprised them about the survivor's experiences
- What questions they would ask the survivor if they had the opportunity

Stage 7. Creating a visual display

Combine resources to create a visual, chronological display of the survivor's experiences. This could be a hard copy classroom display or a digital artefact.

Support

Teachers can support students by:

- Allocating shorter extracts to accommodate diverse literacy levels
- Asking students to provide verbal rather than written responses
- Providing sentence starters for higher order questions

Extension

Teachers can extend students by:

- Providing longer or multiple extracts