



INTRODUCTION TO THE LESSONS

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If you are preparing to teach the Holocaust and wonder how to begin, these lessons may help you. Culled from eight years' experience teaching Holocaust Studies to middle and high school students, the lessons are a direct result of the invaluable support I've received from the Washington State Holocaust Education Resource Center. Since 2000, WSHERC has provided the materials, speakers, and Professional Development opportunities that have made my teaching—and these lessons—possible.

Teachers know there is no single way to teach any curriculum. Indeed thousands of books and journals and Internet sites publish Holocaust lessons. What makes these lessons different is simply that I can vouch for them. They have worked in my classroom of urban, multi-ethnic students. My students know what the Holocaust is, why we must study it, and how we can prevent future genocide.

Teachers do not need experience in teaching the Holocaust to know it is an enormous, controversial, and wrenching topic. But it is also a subject that can deepen student empathy and spark activism. In my experience, the Holocaust has emerged as the definitive Humanities class. Students of the Holocaust—when they are taught well--learn what it is to be human, and humane.

The lessons comprise a basic, introductory unit that is unconventional in a couple of ways. First, the lessons are highly scripted in order to assist teachers who worry about what to say when they introduce the Holocaust. Second, the lessons emphasize group work, peer teaching, and activities that get students out of their seats. In my experience, students don't always recall what they've read or heard, but they have a hard time forgetting what they've *done*. So, a focus on active learning drives the unit.

The lessons are presented in the order in which I teach them over the first few weeks of a semester-long course. You may want to change the sequence, or eliminate some lessons, or radically cut them in the interest of time. Feel free to rearrange, pick and choose, or do whatever works for your particular students. Teach to *them*. Make this unit theirs, and yours.

--Josephine Cripps