

From the Holocaust to Darfur: A Recipe for Genocide

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All too often, social studies teachers present the cruelty of the Holocaust as an isolated event. These units focus on Hitler, gas chambers, and war crimes and end with a defiant and honorable “Never again!” While covering mass murder in this way is laudable, it ultimately might not go as far as it could. For as teaches if we really want to empower our students to prevent genocide, we must look beyond the facts alone to the larger lessons these horrific events can teach us. It is with this background in mind that we wrote this chapter; that in order to teach our students to be good, we have the obligation to help them develop their own understandings of where and why society has fallen off the tracks. The idea of a recipe provided us with a way to help students understand the early warning signs of mass murder such that they would be better equipped to prevent them in the future. Doing so would hopefully inspire them not to bystanders to any similar cruelty, both in the world and in their daily lives. After all, Rwandan President Paul Kagame notes, “people can be made to be bad, and they can also taught to be good.”

My responsibility as a teacher is to try to help my students to be good people. And good people work to make the right choices and work against evil. *Paul Tobias*

Of all the big ideas that can be taught in social studies, one could argue that teaching students to value each other as human beings is perhaps the most important. Whether it is in appreciating diversity, understanding our shared humanity, or seeing that civilization is fragile, this concept is at the heart of who we are as a society and as educators.

Although man’s inhumanity to man is as old as Cain and Abel, the technology of the twentieth century has made it more widespread and potent, allowing our time to be labeled an *Age of Genocide*. From Armenia to Darfur, the track record of humanity’s darker impulses is painfully evident. The task for us as educators is how to teach it, and to use its lessons for the betterment of all. It is with this background in mind that we wrote this chapter; that in order to teach our students to be good, we have the obligation to help them develop their own understandings of where and why society has fallen off the tracks.

As noble as these goals are, however, they are difficult to put into practice. We teach, after all, in an imperfect world that is rife with obstacles, roadblocks, and constraints. Standardized assessments, teacher in-service, and snow days all chip away at the time we have with our students.

Given that our readers likely face similar circumstances, our intent is not to pretend that these obstacles don't exist, but instead to acknowledge, understand, and even embrace them as a ways of advancing our profession. In short, no worthy goal is ever reached without working around challenges that emerge; teachers are no different. In fact, knowing that these impediments exist is important, for that knowledge allows us to prepare and react accordingly.

With these several points in mind, we share our story of teaching about the Holocaust to 8th grade students in New York state. And while, on one level, we will offer lesson ideas and our experiences, on another, we will describe the challenges and setbacks that surfaced as we worked towards our big idea goal of teaching students how to recognize the causes of genocide.

The Elephant in the Living Room: The NYS Assessment

Although our motivation for genocide education is clear, the constraints created by the New York State curriculum cannot be ignored. In teaching any unit, one must consider the guidelines created through state standards and curriculum. These standards include five core social studies areas:

- History of the United States and New York
- World History
- Geography
- Economics
- Civics, Citizenship, and Government

For each of these standards, the state curriculum developers created learning outcomes that students should master throughout their social studies career, along with a core curriculum guide which details the major people, places, and events on which students can be tested. This core curriculum is ultimately assessed with a statewide test that, at grades seven and eight, measures how well our students have learned U.S. History and Geography at the end of eighth grade.

The state assessments are comprised of multiple-choice questions and a Document-Based Question essay, as well as a number of constructed-response questions. The topics of the essay

and multiple-choice items can be on anything from the 7th and 8th grade curriculum—which is a challenge in itself considering the significant amount of possible content which totals 51 single-spaced pages.

Although the scores from this assessment do not determine if students pass the course, they are used to evaluate the effectiveness of the social studies program at a school. Consequently, administrators and many teachers create significant pressure on themselves and on students to produce high test scores. Additionally, instructional time becomes an issue because many teachers spend anywhere from two to eight weeks at the end of the 8th grade year in test preparation.

Because anything from the state curriculum can be on the exam, many teachers feel they need to cover everything, and so feel limited in examining topics in greater detail. One such topic is the Holocaust. The NYS curriculum for 8th grade social studies includes only a 25 word list of topics related to the Holocaust and the study of genocide:

The Nazi Holocaust—Hitler’s “Final Solution”; worldwide horror; human rights violations; United States Response to the Holocaust: the displaced persons camp at Fort Ontario, Oswego, New York; the Nuremberg Trials

This document is not designed to be all-inclusive, but it seems strange to us that an event which can teach students so much about life is given only cursory attention. This brief mention—coupled with the pressure of the state assessment—results in many teachers spending less than one day on the Holocaust in their race to cover everything else.

Of course, teachers can adjust their schedules and customize their curriculum based on their areas of strength. But with the increased emphasis on state assessments, the flexibility once enjoyed by teachers seems to be diminishing. It can become difficult justifying spending two weeks on a topic that might yield one multiple-choice question on the assessment. However, teachers do have a responsibility to be more than assessment robots and to teach lessons that will impact students’ view of the world.

During our first years of teaching, we were fortunate to have a curriculum director who encouraged the practice of “courageous deletion.” She always said that we should cover a little less content in more detail rather than try to skim everything. In essence, her point was that teaching students to have a deeper understanding of the essential topics would more than compensate for them missing an occasional question on a minute detail.

Still concerned that our test scores might be impacted, our faculty went on to analyze the patterns of the multiple-choice questions on the previous years' exams. We found that the pattern reinforced her thesis; specifically, that we could feel comfortable not covering parts of our curriculum because the state test developers consistently ignored certain sections of the course curriculum. We concluded that, if the test questions emphasized certain items over others, we had the liberty to focus on big ideas that would impact students in a significant way. One such case is our study of the Holocaust and genocide.

A Recipe for Genocide: Why Does Mass Murder Occur and How Can It Be Stopped?

All too often, social studies teachers present the cruelty of the Holocaust as an isolated event. These units focus on Hitler, gas chambers, and war crimes, and they end for with a defiant "Never Again!" Covering mass murder in this way is laudable but, ultimately, might not go as far as it could. For if we really want to empower our students to prevent future genocides, we must look beyond the facts alone to the larger lessons these horrific events can teach us.

As an initial caution, it goes without saying that the Holocaust is an event like few others in human history, one that educators and the general public should understand and value. Most cursory analogies to the Holocaust—or Hitler—typically are inaccurate and should be attempted with a great deal of care. The Holocaust and other genocides are uniquely specific historical events yet, when looked at as a whole, similarities can surface. More importantly, when these shared characteristics are understood, they can make significant and lasting differences in how students approach the world.

So with this unit, we wanted to expand the topic of the Holocaust to include a comparative study of other genocides, and thus examine their similarities and differences. The Holocaust, after all, is unfortunately not a singular event. In nearly every decade of the twentieth century, there have been mass killings around the world claiming millions of lives. Ignoring these other genocides borders on educational malpractice for there is much to be learned from studying them. The situations in Armenia, Rwanda, Cambodia, and Darfur have similarities that should not be ignored.

This approach, of course, opens up a massive area of analysis, one that is not necessarily student friendly. We therefore wanted to create a means for our students to comprehend these

shared characteristics in a way that was age appropriate. The result: Our big idea of constructing a “recipe” for genocide.

The idea of a *recipe* provided us with a way to help students understand the early warning signs of mass murder such that they would be better equipped to prevent them in the future. Doing so would hopefully inspire them not to be bystanders to any similar cruelty, both in the world and in their daily lives. After all, Rwandan President Paul Kagame notes, “people can be made to be bad, and they can also be taught to be good.”

Our Students and Ourselves

The Holocaust has always been an area of interest and focus during our collective twenty years of teaching 8th grade social studies. During this time, we have experimented with various approaches, leading to the evolution of the *recipe* concept. Implemented over a two-week period in the spring of 2007, we taught the unit to 160 eighth-grade students in a rural school district located in western New York. The student population is 99 percent European American, with a majority of students falling into a middle or lower socioeconomic category; roughly 15 percent of our students are classified as needing special education services.

We both teach five eighth-grade classes, with an average of 19 students in each. Each class went through the same sequence of activities. We created this unit together and implemented it on a similar schedule so we could better understand what was happening in our classrooms. Of course, since every teacher and class is unique, there were minor differences in the lessons when they were implemented. As we both have integrated schedules, our special education colleague assisted by helping our students focus and understand important concepts.

Our Challenges

Outside the constraints of the state assessment, teaching about genocide had a whole different set of challenges that most regular units do not, namely, a very sensitive subject matter coupled with imagery and symbolism that could disturb some students or, worse, could be darkly appealing to a few. Specifically, we dealt with challenges involving the need to account for the emotional shock value of genocide, the need to physically involve students with the lessons, and the need to help our students make sense of the sheer numbers involved.

We never try to hook our students with a horrific image from a Nazi death camp or spend too much time sharing images of Hitler or swastikas. Obviously, teaching *any* portion of the Holocaust involves introducing our students to these things, but to dwell on them prevents learners from going beyond being horrified to understanding why the event happened.

Another initial problem is the difficulty of getting students physically involved with this topic. The dominant thrust of our teaching has always been to dramatically engage students in what they are studying. For example, when we study immigration, our students spend a day at a fictitious Ellis Island. When we teach the Great Depression, students dress up as hobos at an outdoor soup kitchen. Based upon Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, this student-centered, active approach capitalizes on the many different strengths our students bring to the classroom.

But to teach the Holocaust in such an active way poses some immediate and possibly repugnant concerns. To dress up some of our students as Jews and others as Nazis not only violates the dignity of the victims, but it puts our students in a difficult situation. Moreover, the teacher may be liable for disciplinary action or dismissal—as has happened in several districts around North America.

Likewise, to assemble a group of students in an imaginary railcar is too sensitive a scenario to replicate. So how, then, can one teach the Holocaust in ways that involve students in what they are learning? The answer is that, like anything else, one must be careful. *Not* teaching about this event is unthinkable, so we have found that, with a little planning and creativity, we can advance our big idea without putting ourselves or our students at risk.

To deal with these challenges, we began our unit with an event that set the stage for the Holocaust, but is without any of the concerns described above: *The Treaty of Versailles*.

Our Unit

We started our unit with an active hook centering on our treaty of Versailles simulation. On days one through six, we attempted to create a sense of empathy in our students as well as give them a basic understanding of the causes of the Holocaust. In the remaining lessons, we concentrated on the questions, “why did this happen?” and “what can we learn from the Holocaust?” The unit culminated at the “Recipe for Genocide” and a Genocide project.

Days One and Two: The Treaty of Versailles

Seeing that one of the most significant “ingredients” for a recipe for creating genocide is a society in turmoil, it is difficult to understand the Holocaust without going back to the 1919 Treaty of Versailles. Following World War I, the victorious Allied Powers promised Germany a fair treatment. At Versailles, however, the Allies set a fine of \$33 billion and took all Germany’s colonies, valuable lands, and armaments. These actions triggered the vengeful rise of Hitler and the Nazi party, who blamed Germany’s depression on the “Jews and international back-stabbers” at Versailles. Given that the Holocaust is hard to imagine without this backdrop, it is important to assist our students in understanding the treaty and its ramifications.

Because a peace conference is an event that lends itself nicely to an active learning situation, we divided our students into groups representing the “big four” countries at Versailles: Italy, Great Britain, the United States, and France. In order to involve all our students, we then set up several tables in which the treaty negotiations would take place. (We actually do three separate treaty negotiations at the same time depending on class size.) After studying what their respective countries wanted from Germany on Day One, each bargaining team divided Germany’s possessions up in Day Two. One student in each class role-played an angry Kaiser Wilhelm. Asked about how he felt about the ensuing peace treaty, the student-Kaiser invariably said, “I am outraged, and this will set the stage for another war!”

In setting the stage for the rise of World War II, we like this simulation because it introduces the students to the prevailing German perspective on Versailles—without putting them in the situation of impersonating a Nazi. Likewise, this lesson also provides a much needed hook into the unit. More importantly, if the students can understand why the Germans were angry at Versailles, they can better understand their need for a scapegoat in the Jewish people and others twenty years later. In doing so, students identify a key psychological part of the recipe for genocide.

At the end of the period, the students responded to the question of how Versailles might be connected to World War II. Although it was clear the majority of their responses indicated a deeper understanding of the role that revenge and national humiliation played in the rise of Hitler, like any class with any subject, there were a few students who seemed unable to understand that connection. However, the majority of the class offered thoughtful answers such as, “the Germans were mad at the Allies and wanted to get even” and “they (the Germans) were

looking for someone to blame for their problems.” To further assess these comments, we asked students complete a homework worksheet on Versailles that analyzed the impact of the Treaty on the German society and economy.

Day Three: Introduction to the Holocaust

Now that students were beginning to understand the psyche of the German people, we thought about how to get them to understand how the victims felt, without having to persecute them in class. To do so requires some obvious sensitivity, especially if there are students of Jewish ancestry present.

So to start Day Three—the actual introduction to the Holocaust—we began our class by handing out three-by-five cards to students as they walked in. Before discussing any Holocaust-related details, we asked them to imagine that they had to leave their house on a day’s notice taking with them only a single suitcase full of items and clothing. What sentimental item of theirs (not iPods, cell phones, etc.), we asked, would they bring? They wrote that item down on the cards and placed them in a 10 by 5 foot taped-off rectangle that we had marked on the floor. What they did not know was that shape replicated the outline of a cattle car, the preferred transport Nazis victims.

Once they completed this task, we introduced the situation in Germany in 1939: Twenty years after the Treaty of Versailles, Adolph Hitler and the Nazi Party have mobilized the anger of the German people and have begun deporting their enemies to concentration camps in cattle cars. Although six million of these victims were Jews, roughly five million more were other enemies of the Nazi state—Poles, trade unionists, Gypsies, homosexuals, religious leaders, and prisoners of war. The event, known as the *Holocaust*, occurred between 1933-45.

After explaining this scenario, we played the brief railcar scene from the movie *Escape from Sobibor*. By putting the students’ three-by-five cards in the rectangle—rather than on their persons—we mitigated some of our concern about active learning and the Holocaust. For after the movie clip ended, the students realized that something important of theirs was in the cattle car en route to a concentration camp, without them actually *being* in the rectangle. And while one to two cards per class were off-topic or sarcastic, (and were quietly ignored,) the majority of the students made some thoughtful connections. One commented that, “the cards made me see that they (the deported victims) were real people just like me.” With this realization, we finished the lesson with some notes and readings on the basic facts and geography of the Holocaust.

Combined with the lesson on the Treaty of Versailles, the experience of the deportations introduced our students to another key component of the recipe for genocide, namely, that the technology of the 20th century—such as railroads—enhanced the ability of the perpetrators to inflict harm. The students were also physically and psychologically hooked on what they were studying, though in a manner that was neither insensitive nor inflammatory. We make these claims based upon our observations of how focused our students were and on the number of questions each class asked. To further assess these reactions, we asked our students to write a one-page essay reflecting on what the activity meant to them for homework.

From this point on, we found it important to connect our daily lessons with the big idea. Now that our students were hooked both emotionally and physically, we felt it was time to encourage them to think about what they were learning and how it was linked to the recipe for genocide. To do this, we utilized a list that we put on the front board in order to begin compiling the causes of the Holocaust. Some of the students' responses included recipe items of "a weak government," "people looking for a scapegoat," and "railroads and poison gas made it easier to kill more people." Throughout the unit, we added to this list after each lesson. Eventually, we used this list as the basis for our comparative study of other genocides.

Day Four: The Causes of the Holocaust

Given the student interest created in the first three days, we were able to spend Day Four focusing on notes, video, and readings on the causes of the Holocaust. To engage the students in this lesson, we started with an account of a survivor's testimony which included many of the key terms which we wanted to emphasize—crematorium, gas chamber, Final Solution, deportation. After a discussion of these ideas, we transitioned into some notes, which were presented in an outlined, closed format, concentrating on basic terminology, vocabulary, and geography. We ended this lesson with a visual reinforcement from the ABC News video series *The Century*, which reiterated some of these basic facts. While very factual in nature, using such media allowed the material to be retaught in a manner more appealing for visual learners.

Day Five: The Numbers of the Holocaust

We also found that teaching about genocide involves another major concern--the numbers of the event—that is, how to introduce eleven million victims such that a thirteen-year-old might take their deaths to heart. For in order to care about the causes of genocide and our big idea, students need to have a personal understanding of its scope.

So to teach the numbers of the Holocaust, we had to scale that big number down to one—in other words, *one* student relating to *one* victim, thus making the incomprehensible tangible. It was Joseph Stalin, after all, who approached this problem with the cynical observation that “a million deaths is a statistic—but a single death is a tragedy.” We have to admit that, from a teaching perspective, he was right: It is impossible to learn about the Holocaust or any genocide without making it personal.

It was at this point that our big idea of teaching the recipe for genocide collided head-on with the event itself. How could we get an adolescent to care about an event that happened sixty years ago, in black and white, to victims he or she will never meet? The answer was to introduce each of our students to a victim.

We found a lesson through the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum that focused on the same theme. Printing 25 victim profiles from their website, we asked each of our students to retrieve one of these sheets from an empty container, symbolizing the inhumanity of the Nazi death machine.

With poignant music playing in the background and eleven candles lit, the students read the brief biography of one of the Holocaust’s victims to themselves, then completed a short worksheet focusing on the victims’ lives. The stories contained brief life histories of the Holocaust victims, including family information, personal stories, and how they were eventually killed. (These victims profiles can be found at the Holocaust Museum’s website at <http://www.ushmm.org/education/foreducators/resource/pdf/idcards.pdf>). Afterwards, we asked the students to “introduce” their victims to a person sitting next to them.

The students reacted in serious and somber ways, seeming to internalize the power of the activity. “What we did today made me see that they were people too,” said a student. Later, another student noted, “class was very sad today—how could this have happened?”

We continued the activity by asking students to compute how many of their middle school peers would have to be involved in such a death count by having them divide the figure of eleven million by the 600 students at our school. In doing so, we laid the psychological framework for caring about genocide, which we found paid educational dividends when we introduced more of the recipe.

We ended the numbers lesson with some images of Auschwitz, and then helped our students prepare questions for the Auschwitz survivor, Mr. Joseph Diamond, scheduled to visit

the next day. Our purpose for combining the numbers with a survivor was to help students understand and care about the causes of genocide and, by extension, our instructional activity around the recipe for genocide.

Day Six: Holocaust Survivor—Joseph Diamond

Due to Mr. Diamond's age, it was imperative that he make only one presentation to our 8th graders. Doing so, however, presented some scheduling problems. Although almost no one would argue against the educational value of hearing a Holocaust survivor, fitting our speaker into the schedule of our middle school was an obstacle we did not anticipate. After all, squeezing any speaker or assembly into a busy school is like introducing a bill in Congress! Our colleagues were for it as long as it did not take *their* class time. After some creative scheduling, cajoling, and deal making, we finally found a way to fit Mr. Diamond's one-hour speech into the 8th grade schedule.

Our efforts were rewarded by seeing the wonderful effect that his speech had on our students. "Mr. Diamond made the Holocaust real to me. It's one thing to read about it in a book—another to hear about it firsthand," said one. Another remarked, "he made me realize that I shouldn't be a bystander here at school." Mr. Diamond's testimony also reinforced several key ingredients of the recipe, such as ethnic hatred and economic instability. Just as importantly, he raised the interest level of our students so that we could more easily teach the topic in greater detail. There were times at the beginning of this unit when students displayed some nervous and childish laughter. The power of Mr. Diamond's testimony, however, made for a very emotional and engaging experience, one that seemed to embrace all of our students.

Day Seven: Bystanders and Resisters, the Holocaust and Bullying

Equally important elements of the recipe for genocide are the actions of bystanders, who know that what is happening is wrong and do nothing, and resisters, who attempt to help those being victimized. Mr. Diamond's presentation set the stage for a discussion of bystanders, resisters, and how the Holocaust relates to our students' own lives. For this lesson, we asked the school counselors to join us for the day to help us connect the idea of Holocaust bystanders and resisters to the issue of bullying in school. We felt it important to make immediate and real-world connections to the students' lives.

This lesson began with a debriefing of the survivor presentation and the question of what we could add to our recipe for genocide list. Typically students focused on the role of bystanders,

adding insights such as, “genocides can happen when good people do nothing,” and “there are always people who ignore what is happening.”

After the idea of “don’t be a bystander” was identified by the students, we transitioned to role of bystanders and resisters during the Holocaust. We briefly introduced resisters like Irena Sendler and Oskar Schindler and we asked the students to analyze the famous poem by the German priest Martin Niemoller:

They came for the Communists, and I didn't object – For I wasn't a Communist;
They came for the Socialists, and I didn't object - For I wasn't a Socialist;
They came for the labor leaders, and I didn't object - For I wasn't a labor leader;
They came for the Jews, and I didn't object - For I wasn't a Jew;
Then they came for me - And there was no one left to object.

Reflecting on the poem, we asked students how the idea of bystander and resister is related to their own lives in school. In other words, we inquired, were there situations where they found themselves remaining silent while something bad was happening to someone else and/or were there times when they actively helped a fellow student in need. The students very quickly gave the example of bullying, which we anticipated given that Mr. Diamond mentioned this in his speech. We then turned the class over to the counselor who discussed bullying with students, linking it to the Holocaust through the following questions:

- What were the characteristics of bullies, bystanders, and resisters during the Holocaust?
- What are the characteristics of bullies, bystanders, and resisters at school?
- What are some strategies to prevent and stop bullying when it occurs?

We then discussed the question, “will we ever really know the impact a resister can have?” The idea of preventing suicide, changing a life, and preventing future violence was discussed. Students developed a number of hypothetical “what if” questions that highlighted the importance of being a bystander.

At the end of class, we watched the last few minutes of *Schindler’s List*, in which Schindler Jews and their descendents placed a memory stone on Oskar Schindler’s grave. The reaction of the students was moving; one could hear a pin drop in the room and a number of students had tears in their eyes. Before the students left class, we asked them to write on a three-by-five card one thing we can learn from the Holocaust. All relevant, they included:

- “Don’t always follow the crowd”

- “Stand up for people”
- “No matter how you were treated have compassion”
- “Only we can prevent another Holocaust”
- “Don’t be a bystander. If someone is fighting or doing drugs you should stop them before they get hurt.”

This lesson created a connection between the Holocaust and what goes on in the hallways of a typical school. With this lesson, we encouraged students to resist cruelty in any form. By making the term *bystander* a part of their vocabulary, our lesson was able to extend the lessons of the Holocaust into their day-to-day lives.

Days Eight and Nine: Genocide Learning Stations

Thus far, each class of students had created a list of what they believed should be included in the *Recipe for Genocide* based on their study of the Holocaust. The lists included a variety of items and ranged from 10-12 items including hatred of a group, discrimination, scapegoating, economic depression, perpetrators, propaganda, transportation, and communication network. Although each item was discussed when it was placed on the list, we had not discussed the lists as a whole. Therefore, on the following day, we asked the students to discuss and compare the differences between class lists. Some recipes tended to focus on items we expected—such as the perpetrator’s use of technology—while others concentrated on the role of bystanders.

Over the next two days, students worked in small groups and visiting genocide learning stations on Armenia, Cambodia, Rwanda, and Darfur. Each learning station featured a poster with basic information and photographs and a short video or radio story. Students visited each station for 10-15 minutes during which they used the *Recipe for Genocide* list to look for similarities and differences between genocides. The end product for each group was a revised *Recipe for Genocide* that included at least five conditions that seemed to be present during most genocides. Students had to support their choices based on information gleaned from the learning stations and were assigned a short presentation which asked them to describe the major causes—or ingredients—of the genocides they studied.

Day Ten: Genocide Project

Given the classroom activities over the past two weeks, we felt it was important to allow the students to dig deeper into an area of this unit in which they had a special interest. In doing

so, we offered them an opportunity to reflect upon what they learned and to take advantage of a creative outlet to express their new understandings.

Reflecting the theory of multiple intelligences, we felt it was important to provide the students with options that utilized their inherent strengths. Some of these options are listed in the appendix to this chapter.

Day Eleven: Unit Test Review Day

To prepare for the final assessment, students used this class to review the material on the Holocaust and the key components of the recipe. They completed review sheets, saw a summary video, and wrote down their reactions to the following questions on a three-by-five card: “Why is studying the Holocaust important and what are the warning signs that genocide might happen?”

As a teacher, the responses from this brief activity were especially gratifying. One student wrote, “studying the Holocaust and other genocides made me realize that it can happen again and that it’s important for all of us to know what to look for.” This response captured the essence of our instructional plan, one that indicates that the student understood the material but, more importantly, is on the path to understanding the warning signs of mass murder.

Day Twelve: Unit Test on the Holocaust and Genocide Studies

Students took a traditional multiple choice, fill-in-the blanks unit test that had a short essay that asked them to discuss the following question: “What are the warning signs of genocide that you learned from the Holocaust—in other words, what are the “ingredients” to genocide—and why is important that they are understood?”

Conclusion

We found the students’ answers to the essay question to be very satisfying, with many of them eagerly describing several of the ingredients of genocide. Their responses also indicated a broader understanding of why studying the Holocaust is important, one that reflects the social awareness and moral leadership so important to our pluralistic society. And while our teaching of this big idea unit was not easy, perfect, or complete, we hope that it offered an opportunity for our students to see their world differently, appreciate that it is fragile, and, most importantly, to speak up when it is at risk.

Appendix

Holocaust Project Options

For students who like to write:

Option A: Essay

Write an essay that discusses the following:

- What was the Holocaust?
- When, why, and where did it happen?
- What were its causes?
- Who did it involve?
- What can it teach us about how to live today?
- Why is it important that the world remembers?

Length: At least seven paragraphs, preferably typed.

Option B: Short Story

Create a fictional story that depicts one or more aspects of the Holocaust. This story should:

- Be original--not a retelling of another story or testimony that you have heard
- Have interesting and realistic characters and plot
- Prove a point or teach a lesson about what the Holocaust was about.

Length: At least three sides typed, with a title, cover page, and maybe even some pictures.

Option C: Poetry

Write a poem that:

- Discusses the basics of the Holocaust and its lessons for the world today, or focuses on a certain aspect that learners are interested in
- Proves a point--relate it to the Holocaust and express emotions

Length: At least 40 lines. It should also be typed and decorated—maybe even with some pictures.

Note: A line is made up of at least four words. It does not have to rhyme.

Option D: Research Paper

Write a short research paper (2-3 pages typed) on the genocide that is happening today in Darfur, a part of the African country called Sudan. Your paper should discuss what has happened in the past five years, why it should be considered a genocide, and what potentially can be done to stop it. Go to <http://www.ushmm.org/conscience/alert/darfur/> for more details and links. This report should also include some pictures of Darfur as well.

For students who like to use their artistic talents:

Option E: Drawing

Draw or create a serious work of art that describes the Holocaust. This picture should:

- Be at least 10 by 20 inches in size.
- Use watercolor, charcoal, or pastels—but no markers or colored pencils!
- Have a brief, one paragraph description of what point you are trying to make about the Holocaust.
- Be moving and artistically done.

Please note: Drawings of Hitler or swastikas are not recommended.

Option F: A Poster Memorial (dedicated to life)

After studying the Holocaust, most people are moved to better appreciate the things they have, such as their life, family, friends, or even a warm meal or bed. This poster/collage should:

- Be completed on a large piece of poster board.
- Use your own drawings and/or pictures from magazines or Internet, some of which could deal with the Holocaust, but not necessarily.
- Have a title.
- Make its viewer appreciate life more.
- Be dedicated to the victims of the Holocaust.
- Be neatly done and loaded with pictures and words, such as “Life,” “Love,” “Appreciation,” and the like.

Option G: A Poster Memorial (dedicated to tolerance)

Because that a major cause of the Holocaust was stereotyping, create a poster that encourages your viewers to be more tolerant of those who are different. It should follow all the guidelines outlined in Option F above.

For students who like to express their creativity in different kinds of ways:

Option H: A Memorial Book to Kristallnacht

Kristallnacht was the destruction of hundreds of Jewish businesses and over 1,500 synagogues in 1938. Known as “the night of broken glass,” it occurred when the Nazi’s Final Solution went from bad to worse in a large, nation-wide pogrom.

In this project, students should make a poster or memory book that describes Kristallnacht and prints up and describes at least ten of the synagogues before they were burned. These buildings were not only sacred, but beautiful examples of architecture that were around for generations. Google *Kristallnacht* to get started. This booklet should have a title and have a professional appearance.

Option I: A Holocaust Memory Book

Using the Internet, create a small memory book with words and pictures of victims and their experiences *before* they went into the camps. Go to <http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/phistories/> for some very moving pictures. Include a title and create a professional-looking product.

Option J: Poster (the triangles of the Holocaust)

Make a poster/creation that shows and explains the many triangles that the Nazis used to identify their victims. Make sure to discuss why labeling people then—and now—is dangerous. There are many sites on the web that describe these triangles. This poster should have a title and have a professional appearance.

For the daring student:

Option K: A Memorial to the Holocaust (using geometric shapes)

Using clay, wood, metal, computer graphics, construction paper, and/or poster board, create a memorial to the Holocaust which tells a story through its shapes. Make sure the shapes that are used are symbolic of what happened. See the following website for details and pictures of other memorials around the world: <http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/Holocaust/activity/68plan/monument.htm>. This memorial should remember the victims or attempt to encourage tolerance in our world.

Option L: Student's Choice

A project option of the student's choice—please see instructor for approval. Out of respect for the victims of the Holocaust, refrain from the following:

- Diorama or Lego models of concentration camps
- Any stick figure drawings of *any* type
- Any easy, “print off the internet and paste” type posters
- Swastikas or pictures of Hitler.