About the Lessons

Character Education is increasingly emphasized and incorporated into middle and high school curricula across the United States. To meet the resulting need for quality materials that explore the value of positive character development, the USC Shoah Foundation Institute developed *Creating Character*. This online resource consists of eight multi-media lessons, each of which includes user-friendly classroom procedures and downloadable video consisting of testimony clips from the Institute's Visual History Archive.

Six of the lessons are organized around the following traits: *Courage, Responsibility, Respect, Citizenship, Justice and Fairness*, and *Perseverance*. Two additional lessons provide a general introductory activity and concluding activity.

Every lesson in *Creating Character* contains a written lesson plan and accompanying video. The video consists usually of three testimony clips, and each clip is excerpted from one full-length interview in the USC Shoah Foundation Institute's Visual History Archive, giving a face and a voice to the sometimes abstract values explored in *Creating Character*. The lesson plans include student objectives, key concepts, independent practice, discussion questions, student handouts, writing prompts, and suggested extension activities.

The lessons in *Creating Character* are modular and may be used individually, collectively, and in any order. However, it is strongly recommended that the testimony clips not be used separately or apart from the written material. The context that is important and necessary in order to understand the clips is included in the corresponding lesson plans.

When using the lessons in *Creating Character*, students will be asked to examine and recount their own personal experiences or observations concerning character development. This may be challenging for some students, particularly in the company of their peers; therefore, it is important to create a respectful and safe classroom environment. Creating ground rules for discussion together as a class may provide a sense of security and safety in the classroom. It may also be helpful for students to use journaling as a way to explore their own personal experiences comfortably. Teachers can then use these entries as an accountability instrument to ensure participation in class activities.

Some background knowledge of the Holocaust is necessary for students to understand the context of the visual history testimony clips. Some general resources are available on the USC Shoah Foundation Institute website at www.usc.edu/vhi or in the bibliography listed in the Additional Resources section. In addition, comprehensive classroom lessons that provide historical context on the Holocaust are included in *Echoes and Reflections – a multimedia curriculum on the Holocaust*, available at www.echoesandreflections.org.