

Daily Choices, Lasting Effects

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LESSON

Target Audience:

Grades 11-12 English, Community College Freshman Composition (transfer-level English)

Time Required:

3 hours in class plus additional out of class time (lesson can be split over three class periods)

Content Standards Addressed:

California State Standards
English Language Arts

1. Writing Strategies, Research and Technology 1.6

Develop presentations by using clear research questions and creative and critical research strategies (e.g., field studies, oral histories, interviews, experiments, electronic sources).

2. Writing Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics) Write responses to literature 2.2 (a-c):

a. Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the significant ideas in works or passages.

b. Analyze the use of imagery, language, universal themes, and unique aspects of the text.

c. Support important ideas and viewpoints through accurate and detailed references to the text and to other works.

Lesson Overview

Daily Choices, Lasting Effects supports the theme of personal responsibility, specifically the choices we make on a daily basis that can have lasting effects, whether or not we initially realize their implications. Four clips of Holocaust survivor testimony from USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive reflect on another person's actions that had a tremendous effect, either positively or negatively on his/her life. Students will be guided with questions: *What are our roles in society with regards to personal responsibility? How can our choices and decisions (no matter how small or large) affect others as well as our own lives?*

Student Objectives

- To encourage a depth of understanding of one's responsibility to self and others on a daily basis.
- To help students become familiar with survivor testimony as a primary source for research and documentation.
- To identify an important personal topic (for each student) related to personal or societal responsibility in which to write a 5-8 page research paper with sources in MLA style.

Materials

- Four testimony clips of Holocaust survivors from USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive, listed in order of presentation:
 1. Klara Aardewerk, Jewish Survivor (1:23)
 2. Agnes Sereni, Jewish Survivor (3:11)
 3. Lisa Derman, Jewish Survivor (6:28)
 4. Philip Markowicz, Jewish Survivor (2:24)
- Biographical Profiles handout that includes still photos for each of the survivors
- Transcripts of the testimony clips
- *Daily Choices, Lasting Effects* PowerPoint
- Martin Niemöller's biography from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's *Holocaust Encyclopedia* at <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007391>
- "First They Came," quotation by Martin Niemöller available through the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's website at: <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007392>

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Content Standards (cont'd)

3. Write reflective compositions 2.3:

c. Maintain a balance in describing individual incidents and relate those incidents to more general and abstract ideas.

Prior Knowledge/Background Information

This lesson *Daily Choices, Lasting Effects* is designed to be a key component of a unit on Viktor Frankl's novel, *Man's Search for Meaning*. Besides the topic of personal meaning, the greater theme is personal responsibility and daily choices with lasting effects. This lesson is intended for use with students who are familiar with prior discussions about personal responsibility as well as a basic understanding of Holocaust history.

Pre-Viewing Focus

Prior to showing the clips, students should have an understanding of the Holocaust and the incredible loss of life. It is suggested that the instructor have students write a short piece reflecting on Frankl's story and the importance of remembrance. Then, have the students share their writings in small groups and participate in a class discussion about their thoughts related to the text and to the Holocaust, in general.

Procedure

1. Provide students with general information on the Holocaust and necessary historical background. For more information, the instructor may want to review the article, "Introduction to the Holocaust," from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's (USHMM) *Holocaust Encyclopedia* <<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005143>> and "The Holocaust and World War II: Timeline" also from USHMM's *Holocaust Encyclopedia* <<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007653>>.
2. Have students write and complete an essay within one week related to the content of Frankl's book with the following prompt:
Explain how Frankl's theory of Logotherapy helped him survive.
3. In small groups, have students share their writings on remembrance and 'meaning'. Instructors may also ask students to discuss their knowledge of 'survivors' and their previous experiences with video testimony or hearing survivors share their stories.
4. Before showing the *Daily Choices, Lasting Effects* PowerPoint presentation and testimony clips, ask students to respond to the following two questions in their journals for 10 minutes. Then, follow-up with a class discussion about their responses.
 - *What are some choices that you have made today?*
 - *What is an example of a choice you made that affected another person?*
5. Distribute the Biographical Profiles handout and point out the pictures for Klara Aardewerk.
6. Give students an overview of the clip from Klara Aardewerk's testimony: *The interviewer asks Klara how her neighbors and the non-Jewish population reacted in Amsterdam during the war and the beginning of the Jews being deported. Klara explains that her husband was going to a work camp in Westerbork and she was already in Westerbork.*

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Procedure (cont'd)

7. Show the clip of Klara's testimony. After viewing the clip, have students respond in their journals to the following questions and share their responses in small groups:
 - *Within Klara's testimony, she spoke about choices that were made by others? What were these choices?*
8. On the Biographical Profiles handout point out the two still photos of Agnes and her husband.
9. Before viewing Agnes' testimony, give the students the following information: *The interviewer asks whether any of the non-Jewish people surrounding the Jewish houses had any contact with her or her family; she also asks if Agnes was able to get food at that time.*
10. Play the clip of Agnes Sereni's testimony. After students view Agnes' testimony, ask them to respond in their journals to the following questions and then share their reflections in small groups:
 - *What choices were made by those whom Agnes mentions in her testimony?*
 - *Why was Agnes not helped by the neighbors?*
 - *Were Agnes and her family helped by anyone else? Why or why not?*
11. Before viewing the next testimony clip, refer students to the information and photos for Lisa Derman on the Biographical Profile handout.
12. Prior to playing Lisa's testimony, give the students the following information: *She describes what happens during the massacre of the Jews in the forest, near a meadow. She and her sister are trying to find someone to help them escape the massacre.*
13. Play Lisa Derman's testimony in four parts: First, show students the clip up to "It was cold and it was winter" (beginning to 00:50). Then ask students to respond in their journals to the following question: *What kinds of behavior do you see thus far with regards to bystanders or perpetrators?*
14. Play the next section in Lisa's testimony on the *Einsatzgruppen* that ends with "ran, ran, ran" (00:50 to 04:23). Then, have students respond in their journal to the following question: *Who are the perpetrators (e.g. both a bystander in this instance who turns perpetrator and the perpetrators themselves—Einsatzgruppen)?*
15. Show students the next section of the clip through "Where would we disappear?" (04:23 to 4:55). Then, ask students to respond to the following questions in their journals:
 - *What do you think about the behavior of the people who wouldn't let Lisa and her sister in?*
 - *What do you think about the children in the street?*

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Procedure (cont'd)

16. Play the fourth and final section of Lisa's testimony about the 'angel of mercy' (04:55 to 06:28). Then, have students respond in their journal to the following questions:
 - *What choice does the 'angel of mercy' make?*
 - *What are the potential risks to this Christian woman?*
17. After viewing Lisa's testimony, ask students to respond in their journals to the following questions and then share their reflections to the clip with small groups:
 - *Who chose not to help Lisa and her sister? Why?*
 - *Who chose to help Lisa and her sister? Why?*
18. Before playing the final testimony clip, refer students to the information and photos for Philip Markowicz on the Biographical Profile handout.
19. Prior to showing the clip, give students the following information: *He describes how he made a knife so he could cut a hole in the wooden door of the cattle car.*
20. Play the clip from Philip's testimony and then ask the students to respond in their journals to the following questions and share their reflections within their small groups:
 - *What are the implications of this simple act of kindness and personal choice with regards to other survivors?*
 - *Have you ever made a decision to help someone when you thought your act was 'not really important'?*
21. Provide students with Martin Niemöller's biography from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Holocaust Encyclopedia <<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007391>> and introduce them to his quotation, "First They Came..." Then, have students respond in their journals to the following question and share their reflections with the entire class:

How does the quotation from Niemöller relate to the testimonies you have just heard? Explain.
22. Finally, after viewing all of the testimony clips, ask students to respond in their journals to two final questions and share their entries aloud:
 - *How do each of these clips of testimonies relate to the theme of "Daily Choices, Lasting Effects"?*
 - *What are the most powerful comments within the four clips of testimonies? Why?*
23. Following the final writing exercise, ask students to turn in their journals.

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Post-Viewing Focus

The objectives of the assignment are directly related to the focus of the post-viewing of the clips. As a suggested concluding assignment, have students write a research paper related to personal or societal responsibility as well as an in-depth understanding of their own responsibility to themselves and others. Encourage students to incorporate their own testimony clips as part of the utilization of survivor testimony as primary sources. Possible topics can be related to genocide, World War II, and the importance of remembrance (e.g. researching sites of the Museum of Tolerance, Holocaust Museum, etc.)

Closure

Conclude the lesson with the quotation by Martin Niemöller, “First They Came.” This quotation clearly provides a summation for the idea of personal responsibility and the importance of everyone ‘speaking up’ for injustice no matter who is affected.

Assessment

- Students have the opportunity to provide response journals as a result of viewing the testimonies that they share first with their small groups and then with the class at large. Students then submit these journals to the instructor to be graded.
- Students complete a “Quick-Write” (small group assignment related to the testimonies and Frankl’s book).
- Students will be submitting the following throughout the lesson:
 - Essay on incorporating elements of the survivor testimonies with their understanding of *Man’s Search for Meaning*.
 - Research paper on an area of the Holocaust that incorporates survivor testimonies.