

VOICES AND ACTS OF RESISTANCE

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LESSON

Target Audience:

Grades: 9-12, Classes: World History, Psychology, Ethics, Sociology

Time Requirement:

1 to 2 class period (55 minutes each)

(I would suggest 2 class periods because the testimonies are so rich and interesting, as well as a bit challenging for students to understand everything that is going on. Each testimony took about 5-10 minutes to watch and discuss.)

Content Standards Addressed:

Freshman Seminar standards at Santa Monica High School

9.5.1.1 Apply identification of "perpetrators," "victims," "bystanders," and "upstanders" to the case study

9.5.1.2 Evaluate risks taken and how individuals evaluated choices within the case study

9.3.2.4 Describe the role of a responsible citizen

Goal/Concept

Addressing the theme of resistance (defiance) by discussing small, big, spiritual, nonviolent, etc., examples of resistance during the Holocaust. Students should begin to understand that resistance can take many forms and can happen despite the most oppressive situations.

Student Objectives

- To define and describe resistance.
- To explain examples of resistance and why one would choose to resist.
- To begin to look for examples and ways that students can apply the idea of resistance in their own lives.

Materials

- Testimony clips
 - Vera Laska clips (01:03; 00:59; 01:40; 02:41)
 - Mordechai Glatstein clip (00:49)
 - Ruth Crane clip (00:48)
 - Pinchas Bleier clip (05:10)
 - Kitty Fisher clip (02:02)
 - Samuel Oliner clip (01:19)
- Resistance testimony handout

Context

The students will study issues within the Holocaust unit, which was designed specifically for Santa Monica High School. The Freshman Seminar class uses the *Facing History and Ourselves* materials, including their *Holocaust and Human Behavior* resource book. Within this semester-long study of the Holocaust, the students read excerpts and view videos that illustrate *Facing History's* scope and sequence. This scope and sequence focuses on identity, "we versus they" behaviors, the "Rise of the Nazis," "Nazis in Power," the "Holocaust," "Judgment, Memory & Legacy," and "Choosing to Participate." While the students are uncovering the "Nazis in Power" section through the "Choosing to Participate" aspects, they are specifically discussing the ideas of obedience, conformity, bystanding, and upstanding. Ideally, this lesson will build on the context and history that

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Context (cont'd)

the students are already learning. This lesson will shed light on the ways that normal, average people resisted the Nazis and how that affected not only them but also others around them.

Pre-Viewing Focus

—Quick write: Define resistance and give 3-5 examples of ways you can resist someone or something. Why do you resist these people or things?

—Write on the board a working definition of resistance. Be mindful not to offer examples as a way to define the word.

—Discuss students' examples

(Examples from students about what they resist: ignoring someone they don't like or want to talk to; getting out of bed in the morning; not cleaning their room/chores when their parents ask them to; not putting cell phones away during school; peer pressure to do drugs, cut classes, have sex, eating junk food.)

(Examples from students about why they resist: It is more fun to hang out with friends, or be on the phone or on the computer instead of doing what their parents/teachers have asked; they don't like/trust/know the person asking them to do something; they could get into trouble if they are caught doing something illegal/bad.)

—Discuss their examples and ask them to speculate about how Jews and others resisted during the war. Who resisted and why did they resist? *(Scribe these on the board)*

(Examples: armed resistance, Warsaw uprising was mentioned, blowing up train lines, practicing their religion. Because Santa Monica has a large Jewish population, I tried not to call on students who I knew had a lot of prior background. I told a couple of them that I would not be relying on them today for answers. Some students felt that nobody resisted, which is why the Holocaust was so bad. Others thought that some must have resisted in order to survive, but they did not know examples of what they did.)

Viewing Focus

(Transition: We are going to use testimony from survivors to illustrate ways people resisted during the Holocaust.)

—While viewing the testimonies, students will write down on the handout provided the examples they understand as resistance and quotes that affected them.

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- Complete together the first one from Vera Laska so students understand what they were looking/listening for.
- There is a natural pause that happens after each testimony. This allows the students to fill in and ask questions about each testimony. It takes longer to get through each testimony, but it is time well spent.

Post-Viewing Focus/Assessment/Closure

- The class will discuss each example, allowing students to comment and/or talk about how they feel and what they are thinking regarding each example.

(Many students were openly moved after Kitty Fischer's testimony after it was explained. They also loved discussing the plot to blow up the railroad. It is good to remind them that not everyone had access to such activities and that people did what they could where they were.)

- Make sure to discuss what each survivor said (if anything) regarding how and why they became involved in organized resistance or personal resistance.
- Discuss the consequences of being caught for doing any of these activities. Since the consequences would have been severe, what would a resister's identity chart look like?
- Using the survivors' testimonies as an example, have students offer suggestions for other examples of ways to resist, and begin discussing how they can apply this lesson to their own lives.

Assessment/closure/homework

HW: On the handout, have students answer the following questions:
How can you apply this lesson to your own life?

Follow-up Activities

Research another example of resistance from survivor testimony (using 1939 Club website <www.1939club.com> and USC Shoah Foundation Institute, when it becomes available)