

The Importance of Holocaust Remembrance

Overview

“With the passage of time, the Rescuers, the Liberators, and the Survivors ...are naturally dwindling in numbers...We are transitioning from living memory to historical memory, and that places a great burden of responsibility on the rest of us. As the witnesses to the witnesses, we carry the moral obligation of memory.” In this lesson, students will explore why it is important to keep remembrance of the Holocaust alive and convey their thoughts as they simulate participating in the “Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust.”

Grade

7

North Carolina Essential Standards for 7th Grade

- 7.H.1.1 - Construct charts, graphs, and historical narratives to explain particular events or issues over time.
- 7.H.1.2 - Summarize the literal meaning of historical documents in order to establish context.
- 7.H.1.3 - Use primary and secondary sources to interpret various historical perspectives.
- 7.H.2.1 - Analyze the effects of social, economic, military and political conflict among nations, regions, and groups (e.g. war, genocide, imperialism and colonization).

Essential Questions

- What are the lessons to be drawn from the Holocaust?
- Why is it important to keep Holocaust remembrance alive?
- What is the best way to pass on the lessons from the Holocaust to future generations?

Materials

- Holocaust Monument image, attached
- Stockholm Forum image, attached
- Excerpt from Joshua B. Bolten Speech & Discussion Questions, attached
- Speech for the International Stockholm Forum on the Holocaust & Speech Rubric, attached
- Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust, attached for teacher reference

Duration

Varies based on amount of class time given for working on speeches

Student Preparation

This lesson is recommended as a culminating activity, best used at the end of a unit on the Holocaust when students have a firm understanding of the causes and effects of this tragic period.

Procedure

Exploring Remembrance

1. As a warm-up, project the attached image for students to examine. (Do not tell them that the image is of a Holocaust monument yet). Give students several silent minutes considering the image then discuss:
 - When viewing this image, what words pop into your mind? (Encourage students to brainstorm words that describe their initial reaction, explaining there is no right or wrong. Chart student responses on the board.)

- What part of this image did you notice first? (As students discuss particular details in the artwork, allow them to walk to the projected image and point to the areas they are referring to.)
- What message do you think the artist is trying to convey?
- Why do you think she/he chose this particular medium?
- What do you think the purpose and/or intended audience of this structure is?
 - Explain to students that they are viewing a piece of art by Yugoslav sculptor Glid Nandor. The monument is located on the site of the former Dachau prison camp. Nador himself spent time in a forced labor camp during the war.
- Why do you think Nandor and other survivors want us to be educated about and remember the Holocaust?

2. Next, project the following quote and have a volunteer read it aloud:

- “...few people want to read about the Holocaust. Such depressing subject matter. But we cannot indefinitely avoid depressing subject matter, particularly if it is true, and in the subsequent quarter century the world has had to hear a story it would have preferred not to hear—the story of how a cultured people turned to genocide, and how the rest of the world, also composed of cultured people, remained silent in the face of genocide. [We must] accept responsibility for our past and learn from that past for the sake of our future.” Robert McAfee Brown, in his preface to *Night* by Ellie Wiesel.
- Further discuss:
 - What point is Brown trying to make? Do you agree or disagree and why?
 - What does Brown mean when he says “the world has had to hear a story it would have preferred not to hear?”
 - Why do you think he specifically points out that the story involves a “cultured people” turning to genocide and remaining silent regarding genocide?
 - How can we illustrate that we are learning from the past? (Discuss with students that anytime they stand up to hate, prejudice, racism, anti-Semitism, etc., they are learning from the past and ensuring a better future. This might be as basic as standing up for someone at school who is shunned because they are viewed as “different,” or pointing out to someone when they make a racist joke.)
 - Whose responsibility is it to ensure we keep the memory of the Holocaust alive and that we learn from those mistakes for the sake of our future? What role should government officials, educators, citizens, etc. play?

3. Tell students that the United States Congress established the “Days of Remembrance” as our nation's annual commemoration of the victims of the Holocaust and created the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum as a permanent living memorial to those victims. Hand out the attached speech excerpt by Joshua Bolten, Chief of Staff to the President. The speech was delivered on May 1, 2008 as part of the “Days of Remembrance 2008.” Instruct students to read the speech and answer the attached discussion questions. (Teachers may also choose to have students read and discuss in partners or groups, or read and discuss the speech as an entire class.)

Simulation: The Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust

4. Explain to students that there have been other movements to ensure the Holocaust is not forgotten. In January of 2000, the first Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust was held in Stockholm, Sweden. The Forum brought together presidents, prime ministers and other high-ranking ministers and officials from 40 countries to discuss how to keep Holocaust remembrance alive; the lessons to be drawn; and how best to pass on the knowledge of the fact to future generations. The conference adopted a Declaration now known as *The Stockholm Declaration*, which has come to be regarded as a milestone in international support for combating racism, anti-Semitism, ethnic hatred and ignorance of history.

5. Hand out the attached assignment, “Speech for the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust” and tell students that they will be recreating the forum in class. Explain that each of them is to assume the role of a president, ambassador, or prime minister and to write a speech to deliver at the forum. Go over the assignment sheet with students, accepting questions as needed. Let students know the date on which the Forum will be held (this is the date students should have their speech completed and ready to be presented to the class).
6. Depending on how much time can be devoted to this activity, teachers may want to have students write their first draft of the speech individually, then meet in partners or small groups for feedback on how to make the written speech better. After these revisions, teachers may also want to allow students to practice their speeches in partners or small groups in preparation for presenting them to class (a.k.a. “The Forum.”) If class time will be provided for practice, students may need specific guidelines for assisting one another. For example, have students monitor their partner for effective public speaking traits such as the following:
 - Speak clearly and at an appropriate volume.
 - Make eye contact when possible (don’t look at the paper and read your speech).
 - Vary your voice to try and put emphasis on particular parts (don’t speak in a monotone)
 - Stand still (don’t shift on your feet)
7. On the day of the “Forum,” before students deliver their speeches, go over the expectations of a respectful audience member. Teachers may want to project the attached photo from the actual Forum as a reminder that the event they are recreating actually took place. Let students know what the format of the Forum will be:
 - The teacher should assume the persona of a world leader and open the Forum with a review of the day’s purpose and a presentation of his/her own speech or an appropriate speech written by a world leader on the Holocaust. (Teachers may also select a student to open the Forum.)
 - After the opening remarks, students should volunteer one by one to give their speech to the Forum.
 - After each speech, audience members should clap then offer positive comments regarding “What I liked about your speech” or “What I learned from your speech.”

➤ **Note:** If class time is limited, students can present in small groups, or, teachers can ask for volunteers to present. Also, on the day of the “Forum” teachers may want to encourage students to dress their part, remembering that they are assuming the persona of a world leader.
8. After speeches have been presented, the same person who delivered the opening to the Forum should lead a round-table discussion. (This can also be done in small groups of approximately 5 students, with one student in each group selected to lead the discussion.) Sample questions to discuss include:
 - Based on the speeches you heard today, what do you feel is the most important lesson to be drawn from the Holocaust?
 - What were the most compelling reasons you heard regarding why the Holocaust should continually be remembered?
 - Based on what you heard, or based on your own ideas, what are the best ways to ensure future generations learn about the Holocaust? How can we be responsible “witnesses to the witnesses?”

Stockholm Declaration

9. After students have discussed, explain that one of the outcomes of the actual Stockholm Forum was a Declaration, a document created and approved by the Forum participants that contained statements of commitment/goals regarding the Holocaust. Share an example statement from the Declaration, such as the one below (the entire Declaration is attached for teacher reference):

- “We share a commitment to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust and to honor those who stood against it. We will encourage appropriate forms of Holocaust remembrance, including an annual Day of Holocaust Remembrance, in our countries.”
10. In their small groups, tell students to come up with their own statement describing a commitment or goal regarding the Holocaust. This commitment/goal may be based on the group’s answers to their round-table discussion, or may be based on new ideas posed by the students. The statement should be as specific as possible and should not be more than 3 sentences.
 11. Once all groups have completed a final version of their statement, have them write it neatly at the top of a sheet of white paper. Teachers should then facilitate an organized changing of statements, so that each group gets another group’s statement to review. (For example, instruct each group to pass their statement clockwise to the group to their right.) Once each group has received another group’s statement, they should carefully review it and note any improvements they may have. They should write their improved statement underneath the group’s original work. If they have no recommendations or improvements they should leave the statement as is. Give groups approximately 2-3 minutes to review the statement then repeat this process, again switching statements. This time, groups will be reviewing the original statement as well as the revised statement where applicable. Again, groups will write out a new statement with any additional revisions, or leave the statement alone. Continue this process until all groups have reviewed all statements and received the statement they originally created. Allow groups 2-3 minutes to note any improvements made to their work and to make any of their own last minute changes. Finally, teachers should have each group read their final statement out loud to the class. On a sheet of chart paper, teachers should write the final statement from each group, forming an official class “Declaration on the Holocaust.” Once all statements have been read and written, allow students to comment on then sign the Declaration.

Holocaust Monument



<http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/holocaust/art.htm>

A view of the International monument by Yugoslav sculptor Glid Nandor, 1968. Nandor spent time in a forced labor camp during the war and later fought with the Yugoslav partisans.

Picture from International Stockholm Forum on the Holocaust, 2000



Source: http://www.dccam.org/Projects/Affinity/SIF/DATA/2000/conference_2000.html

Excerpt from a speech by Joshua B. Bolten, Chief of Staff to the President
Delivered for “Days of Remembrance”, an annual commemoration of the Holocaust
May 1, 2008, U.S. Capitol Rotunda, Washington, D.C.

I am deeply honored to be at this podium today, to speak about anniversaries and the moral obligation of memory...

With the passage of time, the Rescuers, the Liberators, and the Survivors – like those whom we’re blessed to have with us today – are naturally dwindling in numbers... We are transitioning from living memory to historical memory, and that places a great burden of responsibility on the rest of us. As the witnesses to the witnesses, we carry the moral obligation of memory.

And what is that obligation? Surely it is more than fixing blame – for just as the generation of Survivors, Rescuers and Liberators dwindles, so must the Perpetrators, Collaborators and Bystanders. But why must we remember in such painful detail?

In his introduction to the presidential commission report that my father helped shepherd, Elie Wiesel gave an eloquent answer: First, Wiesel wrote, “we cannot grant the killers a posthumous victory. Not only did they humiliate and assassinate their victims, they wanted also to destroy their memory. They killed them twice, reducing them to ashes and then denying their deed.”

A Nazi guard once told Simon Wiesenthal* that, in time, no one would believe his account of what he saw. Many in this room have devoted a lifetime to proving that prediction wrong. Yet there are still those who challenge the facts surrounding the Holocaust, or even brazenly deny its reality. Whatever form it takes... we must stand against every attempt at denial. We have an obligation to condemn these lies for what they are – and remind people of the truth.

Wiesel’s second explanation for the moral obligation of memory is that “we cannot deny the victims the fulfillment of their last wish . . . to bear witness.” This wish is captured in Emanuel Ringelblum’s “Oneg Shabbat” project*... When we read the victims’ stories in those long-buried milk cans, we relive their suffering. We honor their defiance. And we fulfill their request never to be forgotten.

Third, and most important, Wiesel wrote, “we must remember . . . for the sake of our own humanity,” because “indifference to the victims would result, inevitably, in indifference to ourselves.”

... Tragically, the international community has repeated this indifference in the decades since the Holocaust. In Rwanda and elsewhere, the innocent have paid the price.

Our generation has an opportunity – and a moral obligation – to be different. When we say, “Never again,” we must mean it. Not in our moment of history and responsibility. We must call evil by its name, and confront it with purpose and courage. We in government service especially must challenge those who have become enamored with process that substitutes for action and who shrink from the hard choices.

This commitment is being tested in Darfur. President Bush is the only world leader to call the killing there “genocide.” He has ordered sanctions on those responsible for violence. And he has pledged to provide training and equipment to help African troops deploy to Darfur. Yet America remains too lonely in this effort. In the past three years, the United Nations Human Rights Council has passed more than six times as many resolutions against Israel as it has against Sudan. And despite repeated urging, the UN peacekeeping force has yet to deploy. It is not too late to set this right.

In answering Wiesel’s three calls – to deny the killers a posthumous victory ... to fulfill the last wishes of the victims ... and to affirm our own humanity – we uphold the moral obligation of memory. And in our

responsibility as witnesses to the witnesses, we are blessed to have remarkable assets.

First, of course, are the Survivors themselves, who comprehend evil with a clarity that comes only from direct experience. As they share their stories, they do more than deepen our knowledge of history – they advance the cause of justice.

We are also blessed with the efforts of individuals like Father Patrick Debois. Going door to door, Father Debois has collected the testimony of more than 700 witnesses and bystanders to the Nazi terror in Ukraine. He has identified the burial sites of countless victims shot execution-style in what has been called the “holocaust of bullets.” Thanks to this good priest’s work, names and stories are replacing the cold anonymity of mass graves. And witnesses who have held these memories in their hearts for 60 years are finding healing. Father Debois, we are honored by your presence today.

For generations to come, a lasting source of learning and memory will be the museums. In the past year, I have had the privilege to visit three with the President – Yad Vashem in Israel, the Kigali Genocide Memorial Center in Rwanda, and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum here in Washington. These museums commemorate loss in distinct ways. Yet they all recognize that genocide is possible only by the denial of individuality. And they recognize that the best way to restore humanity is to retell the victims’ stories, one by one.

At Yad Vashem, exhibits commemorate not only the victims lost – but also the lives lived. They show loving homes and cherished possessions – reminders of the richness of humanity stolen away.

At the Kigali Center, a communal grave holds nearly a quarter million victims, and that number continues to grow as Rwandan authorities gather remains from the 1994 genocide. God only knows – literally, only God knows – the identities of those who rest on the site. Yet inside the museum, exhibits display vivid Polaroid photographs of individual victims, most of them children. Beneath the photos are descriptions of simple things like a favorite sport or food – personal details that capture the uniqueness of each unfinished life.

At the U.S. Holocaust Museum, each visitor receives the identity card of a victim – the tragedy of the Holocaust on a personal scale. Already, 27 million visitors there have pursued their obligation of memory. Now and always, the witnesses will far outnumber the victims.

... The Holocaust shows that evil is real – but hope, goodness, and courage are eternal. When we carry this truth in our hearts, we uphold the moral obligation of memory. And we summon the strength to meet our solemn pledge: Never again. Not in our moment of history and responsibility.

Source: <https://www.ushmm.org/remember/days-of-remembrance/past-days-of-remembrance/2008-days-of-remembrance/remarks-by-joshua-b.-bolten>

Name: _____

Discussion Questions

1. Based on your initial thoughts and feelings after reading this speech, choose a word or phrase from the text above that you feel would make a good title for this speech.
2. What does Bolten mean when he says, “As the witnesses to the witnesses, we have a moral obligation to memory?”
3. Even though remembering the Holocaust may be “painful,” why is it still important to do so?
4. Why is placing blame regarding the Holocaust ineffective?
5. What did Elie Wiesel (Holocaust survivor and author) mean when he said victims of the Holocaust were “killed twice?”
6. What do you think it means to “bear witness?” In your opinion, what are the most important ways we can “bear witness?”
7. Elie Wiesel claimed that “indifference to the victims would result, inevitably, to indifference to ourselves.” What message was he trying to convey?
8. Bolten said, “Our generation has an opportunity – and a moral obligation – to be different. When we say, ‘Never again,’ we must mean it. Not in our moment of history and responsibility. We must call evil by its name, and confront it with purpose and courage.” Cite specific examples of how we might follow his advice today.
9. Why does Bolten specifically commend the work of Rather Patrick Debois, Yad Vashem, and the Kigali Center? In what way has each of these examples “commemorated not only the victims lost, but also the lives lived?” Why is this crucial to Holocaust remembrance?
10. “The Holocaust shows that evil is real – but hope, goodness, and courage are eternal. When we carry this truth in our hearts, we uphold the moral obligation of memory. And we summon the strength to meet our solemn pledge: Never again. Not in our moment of history and responsibility.” Based on this quote, what message is Bolten hoping to leave us with?

Speech for the International Stockholm Forum on the Holocaust



Imagine that you are an ambassador, a president, or a prime minister who is scheduled to attend and speak at the **2008 Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust**. Consider everything you have learned about the Holocaust thus far, including the themes of witness and remembrance.

Specially consider:

- **What are the lessons to be drawn from this period of history?**
- **Why is it important to keep Holocaust remembrance alive?**
- **What is the best way to pass on the lessons from the Holocaust to future generations?**

Write a speech to deliver at the Stockholm Forum in which you share your opinion regarding each of the above questions. Your speech must address the importance of not forgetting and continuing to learn about the Holocaust. Your speech should:

- Contain at least 5 facts you have learned regarding Holocaust history
- Contain at least 2 quotes about the Holocaust from historians, survivors, or other prominent voices (*consider the way Joshua Bolten quoted Elie Wiesel, for example*)
- Be factual, creative, and inspirational.
- Address the three guiding questions above, offering specific ideas when applicable.
- Your final speech should have an introduction, details, and a conclusion.
- Be 2-3 minutes when delivered to the Forum (the remainder of class)

You will write a draft of your speech then work with a partner in a peer editing workshop to revise and improve it. Once complete, you will also work with a partner to practice delivering your speech.

The Stockholm Forum will be held in class on _____ (due date.)

Aspect	SPEECH RUBRIC	Points Possible	Score
Topic	Speech is on topic and appropriately addressed questions and guidelines posed on the assignment sheet		
Introduction	(1) Gains the attention of the audience, (2) Clearly identifies the topic, (3) Establishes credibility, (4) Previews the rest of the speech		
Details	(1) Answers questions posed on assignment sheet: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the lessons to be drawn from this period of history? • Why is it important to keep Holocaust remembrance alive? • What is the best way to pass on the lessons from the Holocaust to future generations? (2) Contains 5 facts (3) Contains 2 quotes		
Conclusion	(1) Cues the audience that the end of the speech is at hand (2) Brings closure (3) Memorable		
Preparation	Has obviously rehearsed the speech; takes speech seriously when presenting		
Voice	Appropriate volume and pace; spoke clearly; did not vocalize pauses (“um”, “uh”, etc.)		
Body language	Confident stance; made eye contact with audience; did not fidget		
Creativity	Speech is unique, inspirational, and creative		
Time	Speech is an appropriate length (2-3 min.)		

**DECLARATION OF THE STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON THE HOLOCAUST
JANUARY 2000**

The members of the Task Force are committed to the Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust, which reads as follows:

1. The Holocaust (Shoah) fundamentally challenged the foundations of civilization. The unprecedented character of the Holocaust will always hold universal meaning. After half a century, it remains an event close enough in time that survivors can still bear witness to the horrors that engulfed the Jewish people. The terrible suffering of the many millions of other victims of the Nazis has left an indelible scar across Europe as well.
2. The magnitude of the Holocaust, planned and carried out by the Nazis, must be forever seared in our collective memory. The selfless sacrifices of those who defied the Nazis, and sometimes gave their own lives to protect or rescue the Holocaust's victims, must also be inscribed in our hearts. The depths of that horror, and the heights of their heroism, can be touchstones in our understanding of the human capacity for evil and for good.
3. With humanity still scarred by genocide, ethnic cleansing, racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia, the international community shares a solemn responsibility to fight those evils. Together we must uphold the terrible truth of the Holocaust against those who deny it. We must strengthen the moral commitment of our peoples, and the political commitment of our governments, to ensure that future generations can understand the causes of the Holocaust and reflect upon its consequences.
4. We pledge to strengthen our efforts to promote education, remembrance and research about the Holocaust, both in those of our countries that have already done much and those that choose to join this effort.
5. We share a commitment to encourage the study of the Holocaust in all its dimensions. We will promote education about the Holocaust in our schools and universities, in our communities and encourage it in other institutions.
6. We share a commitment to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust and to honour those who stood against it. We will encourage appropriate forms of Holocaust remembrance, including an annual Day of Holocaust Remembrance, in our countries.
7. We share a commitment to throw light on the still obscured shadows of the Holocaust. We will take all necessary steps to facilitate the opening of archives in order to ensure that all documents bearing on the Holocaust are available to researchers.
8. It is appropriate that this, the first major international conference of the new millennium, declares its commitment to plant the seeds of a better future amidst the soil of a bitter past. We empathize with the victims' suffering and draw inspiration from their struggle. Our commitment must be to remember the victims who perished, respect the survivors still with us, and reaffirm humanity's common aspiration for mutual understanding and justice.

Source: <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/about-us/stockholm-declaration>