

Rebecca Lee

Professor Warner

Engl 112b

December 3, 2019

Remembering the Holocaust through YA Literature

Rationale:

History continues every moment, so learning what has happened in the past and how it shapes the present is often glossed over. The curriculum centering around history is often survey and doesn't connect different fields. References to major world events in books and movies make more sense once studied and explained, so they should be explained in conjunction. The fields of humanities and history are combined to give students a better idea of what the time was like. Through the art projects that symbolized entire civilizations in kindergarten to high school, students learn about how those civilizations and time periods are meant to be perceived. Even if the events are recent, such as 9/11, they can seem disconnected to students because of a lack of relatability. During the world wars, identities were shaped around nationalities and pride. The attack on 9/11 is an event that molded the mindset of everyone affected, and continues to affect people today. Even generations afterward feel the effects of the reaction of the Holocaust. My overall theme in this project is to showcase moments of high relevance to the Holocaust in the works that are discussed. The Holocaust is a big topic that should be explored with teens so that they have a basis for their own understandings of the event. This is a topic that is widely discussed but often left alone after a cursory summary. This unit includes the ways that survivors of trauma and important events deal with the memories of these events. People remember and

deal with past trauma and situations differently. Seeing the effects that historical events have and exploring how people today can act similarly is meant to connect events in the past to the present.

My centerpiece work is *Night* by Elie Wiesel.

Launching the Unit:

Any of these activities can help the introduction of the unit and what it is about.

1. Discussion- ask about what shaped their identities
 - a. Parallel their developing identities with the characters in *Night*
 - b. What would you need to survive?
 - c. What do you consider important to survival?
2. Play “What Would You Do?” from “Cabaret: the musical”
 - a. Song about a woman who broke off her engagement with a Jewish man during the rise of the Nazis. Since it is a context-driven story, there can be an accompanying handout with background on the musical and the song. The students can follow along and mark what they think is important. Eg: underline new words, highlight aha moments
 - b. Songs from the musical can also be played throughout the unit to move through the story.
3. Show a video of Jane Elliott’s “Blue Eyes-Brown Eyes experiment”
 - a. Jane Elliott, a teacher and anti-racism activist, did an experiment where she told her class that brown eyed people were better than blue eyed people. She said that

there were more brown eyed people, the brown eyed people got more privileges, and they were smarter than the blue eyed students. The blue eyed students had to wear paper armbands. During the course of the day the blue eyed students were discriminated against through isolation, name-calling (blue-eyes), and harassed. The next day Mrs. Elliott repeated the experiment with reversed groups. The blue-eyed students were the 'better' group and the brown eyed students were inferior. The same thing happened as the day before with the superior group holding it over the inferior group.

Through Activities

1. Track characters with a handout
 - a. Night has a lot of passing characters and returns to them. Students should track when the characters appear, what they are mentioned with, the feelings towards the characters, and how the students believe they will influence the story.

Character Name	Appearances	Appearance/influence on to other characters	General opinions?
Moishe the Beadle	At the beginning when Elie is a child	He teaches Elie about his beliefs	He's not welcomed

2. Listen to the audiobook

- a. This is something that Noor Hussein did in her classroom to bring in a new perspective on how each character is meant to be read. Being able to listen to the emotions portrayed through the reader provides a lense to view the changes in the novel through.

- b. Students could choose to create their own recorded reading of the novel, or a similar work that is introduced in class. The recording does not have to be complete and will be accompanied with a title slide. The student will have to explain their reasoning on why they used those emotions in contrast to the ones used in the audiobook recording.
 3. Poetry - analyze poetry that relates to the unit
 - a. "The Lorelei" is a poem authored by Heinrich Heine, a Jewish man, about a German legend. It is very famous and has been adapted into songs by famous composers such as Franz Liszt. After the Holocaust, the poem was still known in Germany but it was labeled as "Author unknown" because of the stigma against Jewish people.
 - i. Ask students to translate a memory or an event into poetry in this style
 - ii. Connect the poem to moments in *Night* that they remember, strengthen synthesis skills and practice finding similar ideas in different works
 - b. "Pigtail" by Tadeusz Różewicz The author was born in Radomsko, Poland in 1921 and lived until 2014. The poem was translated by Adam Czerniawski from Polish. The poem describes women in a transport, presumably to the camps, getting their hair cut off. The hair takes the place of things that they have lost and experiences that they are cut off from.

"The Lorelei" - Heinrich Heine	"The Lorelei" - Heinrich Heine	"Pigtail" - Tadeusz Różewicz
German	English translation	English translation

<p>Ich weiss nicht, was soll es bedeuten,</p> <p>Dass ich so traurig bin;</p> <p>Ein Märchen aus alten Zeiten,</p> <p>Das kommt mir nicht aus dem Sinn.</p> <p>Die Luft ist kühl, und es dunkelt,</p> <p>Und ruhig fliesst der Rhein;</p> <p>Der Gipfel des Berges funkelt</p> <p>Im Abendsonnenschein.</p> <p>Die schönste Jungfrau sitzet</p> <p>Dort oben wunderbar,</p> <p>Ihr goldenes Geschmeide blitzet, Sie kämmt ihr goldenes Haar.</p> <p>Sie kämmt es mit goldenem Kamme</p> <p>Und singt ein Lied dabei;</p> <p>Das hat eine wundersame,</p> <p>Gewaltige Melodei.</p>	<p>I don't know what it means</p> <p>That I am so sad</p> <p>A legend of bygone days</p> <p>That I cannot keep out of my mind.</p> <p>The air is cool and night is coming.</p> <p>The calm Rhine courses its way.</p> <p>The peak of the mountain dazzles</p> <p>With evening's final ray.</p> <p>The fairest of maidens is sitting</p> <p>Up there, a beautiful delight,</p> <p>Her golden jewels are shining,</p> <p>She's combing her golden hair.</p> <p>She holds a golden comb,</p> <p>Singing along, as well</p> <p>An enthralling</p> <p>And spellbinding melody.</p>	<p>When all the women in the transport</p> <p>had their heads shaved</p> <p>four workmen with brooms made of birch twigs</p> <p>swept up</p> <p>and gathered up the hair</p> <p>Behind clean glass</p> <p>the stiff hair lies</p> <p>of those suffocated in gas chambers</p> <p>there are pins and side combs</p> <p>in this hair</p> <p>The hair is not shot through with light</p> <p>is not parted by the breeze</p> <p>is not touched by any hand</p> <p>or rain or lips</p> <p>In huge chests</p> <p>clouds of dry hair</p>
--	---	--

Den Schiffer im kleinen Schiffe	In his little boat, the boatman	of those suffocated and a faded plait
Ergreift es mit wildem Weh;	Is seized by it with a savage woe.	a pigtail with a ribbon
Er schaut nicht die Felsenriffe,	He does not look upon the rocky ledge	pulled at school
Er schat nur hinauf in die Höh.	But rather high up into the heavens.	by naughty boys.
Ich glaube, die Wellen verschlingen	I think that the waves will devour	
Am Ende Schiffer und Kahn;	The boatman and boat in the end	
Und das hat mit ihrem Singen	And this by her song's sheer power	
Die Lorelei getan.	Fair Loreley has done.	

4. Conduct a class experiment

- a. Similar to the child's game Mafia, tell the class that roles of traitor and citizen will be assigned. When they close their eyes, tell the students that traitors are being chosen. Ask them to open their eyes and tell them the object of the game is to be in the biggest group without a traitor. The traitors try to infiltrate the groups. At the end of the experiment (10 minutes or less) tell the class that none of them were assigned to be traitors. This experiment illustrates how being suspicious of your peers can lead to a defensive mindset and the drive for self-preservation.

5. Brown Bag Activity

- a. Ask the students to sum up one of the main characters through an item or an idea.

- b. Ask the students to sum up a different main character through their main moral
- c. These activities clarify what the students are taking from the works and how they think the character would react and would need in different environments.

Extending the Unit past the classroom

1. Watch a related tv show or movie to understand how filmmakers or directors see the Holocaust and portray it for audiences
 - a. “The Boy in the Striped Pajamas” movie, and the “Schindler’s List” movie are examples of related media that students can watch to bring other perspectives on the Holocaust. The movies provide a historical visual that may not be clear through the books. As *Night*’s main character is a young boy living through the camps, the movie’s choices to portray the Holocaust may differ.
 - b. A short write-up about the related media would be assigned as well. The students should compare and contrast the way that the Holocaust is portrayed in each type of media. Who are the heroes? What is something that they could not live without? Name a choice that they made to ensure their own survival. Name a choice they made for their own survival.
2. Listen to a musical related to the topic with the option to perform an appropriate related song or scene from a chosen musical with or without a group
 - a. “Cabaret” is an example of a musical that is heavily intertwined with the Holocaust and its’ effects. Most of the songs tie in closely to the themes and ideas of the unit.

- b. This is an extension of one of the introductory activities. If a student finds listening to a story to be more effective for them, they can explore the musical genre further as a way to connect with the unit. There are a great many Holocaust plays and musicals which can be offered for this project.

Young Adult Literature chosen to supplement *Night*

Maus is a book that directly deals with the holocaust and how the main character survived. We do examine mental shifts in the characters and how their experiences have changed them. The graphic novel format of *Maus* engages students in a new way while still dealing directly with the Holocaust.

We Were Here is a good book to add to this unit because it features how traumatic events affect everyday functionality. Each of the main characters has a past that affects their current actions, and they work through the issues that plague them. Not every character has a happy ending which mirrors the themes of death in *Night*.

After the First Death is a book that introduces a sudden event that changes how each of the characters thinks and deals with their situation. Kate's actions in the book illustrate her own actions in a time of stress, even though she thinks that she would never be tested in this way. Her ideals of courage and what it means to be courageous are challenged when the children are hurt without her control.

To Kill A Mockingbird is another work that I would choose to show how people interact with the world and remember their traumas. Boo Radley and how his circumstances shaped his interactions with the world can be analyzed for . While it does not deal with the Holocaust directly, this book deals with the effects of traumatic events on small communities.

Anna and the Swallow Man is a book that features strongly in my recommendations for Holocaust literature. The perspective of a young girl who does not understand the weight of what is happening around her is one that is not often considered. This was my Book Talk book, and the themes in the book of having to cope with an unfamiliar situation can be found in *Night* as well.

Closing/Wrap up activities

1. Discussion questions/ socratic seminar
 - a. How has your thinking on what you would need to survive changed?
 - b. Did your thinking evolve as we went through this unit?
 - c. Explain actions that people during the Holocaust took and why.
2. Draft an extension of one of the projects that they completed during the unit
 - a. Performed a scene from a musical/movie/play - Extend the scene by performing more of it, write a longer scene
 - b. Recorded part of the readings - Extend by reading more, incorporating more voices, create a presentation

Works Cited

- Bauer, Ingrid. "What Is the Translation of Heinrich Heines Poem, Die Lorelei?" *ThoughtCo*, ThoughtCo, 29 Apr. 2019, <https://www.thoughtco.com/heinrich-heine-german-author-1444575>.
- Cormier, Robert de. *After the First Death*. Penguin Books, 2016.
- Fordham, Fred, and Harper Lee. *To Kill a Mockingbird*. William Heinemann, 2018.
- Frank, Anne. *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Pendulum Press, 1979.
- Herman, Mark, director. *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*. *IMDb*, Amazon, 2008, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0914798/>.
- Peña Matt de la. *We Were Here*. Ember, an Imprint of Random House Children's Books, 2019.
- Ròzewicz, Tadeusz, and Nelly Sachs.
- Savit, Gavriel. *Anna and the Swallow Man*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2017.
- Steinbeck, John. *Of Mice and Men*. Penguin, 1986.
- Spiegelman, Art. *Maus*. Penguin, 1992.
- Spielberg, Steven, director. *Schindlers List*. *IMDb*, Amazon, 1993, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0108052/?ref_=nv_sr_srsg_0.
- Warner, Mary L. *Adolescents in the Search for Meaning: Tapping the Powerful Resource of Story*. Scarecrow Press, 2006.
- Warner, Mary L., et al. *Literature for Today's Young Adults*. Pearson, 2006.
- "What Would You Do?"