# Unit of Study: The Holocaust

Trinity Santaolaya

Rationale: Why The Holocaust?

The Holocaust survivors that are still alive today are quickly aging, and soon there will be no first-hand, verbal accounts from them. However, literature is an imperative avenue that can retain the emotional pertinance of the Holocaust; the real, written accounts of Holocaust survivors allow for the window of opportunity for students to not only empathize and acknowledge the gravity of The Holocaust's impact on Jewish people, but to meditate upon the very unsettling truth that such atrocities can and will happen again so long as bigotry and hatred overcomes humanity.

Centerpiece: <u>Night</u> by Elie Wiesel

★ Night is a memoir that follows the real experience of Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor in the Auschwitz concentration camp during the Nazi regime.

★ Its poignant, haunting prose is emotionally appealing.

★ The themes of *Night*, such as Wiesel's wavering faith in his religion, are universal.

WINNER OF THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

'Through his eyes, we witness the depths of both human cruelty and human grace. I gain courage from his courage'
OPRAH WINFREY

ELIE WIESEL
NIGHT
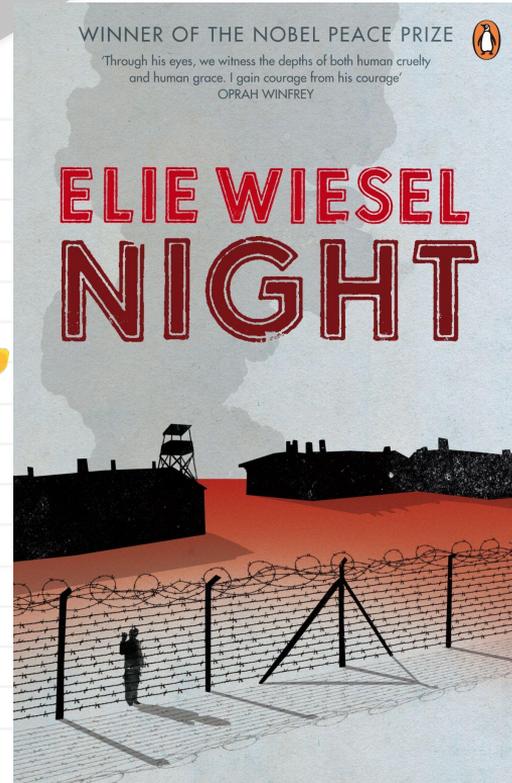
Companion Text: <u>Maus 1</u> by Art Spiegelman

* <u>Maus 1</u> is a graphic novel that recounts the real, chilling experiences of Spiegelman's father as a Jewish victim during the Holocaust
* Incorporates both fictional elements and nonfictional elements very effectively to depict the psychological scars of Holocaust survivors
* Appealing to young students because of its fictional, artistic (and ominous) depiction of people as different animals
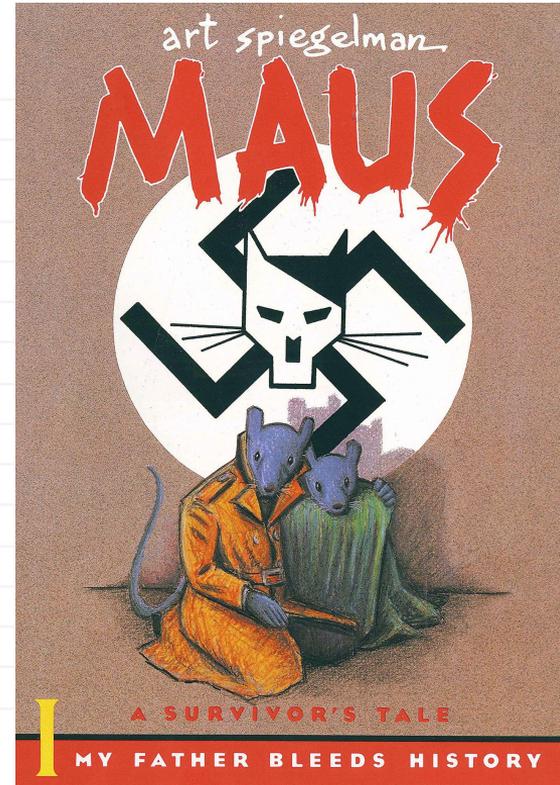
LESSON PLAN

Powerpoint Presentation

Students will take notes in their journal and write any questions they have on an index card

Timeline Activity

As a class, we will draw a timeline on the whiteboard

Film: "The Path to Nazi Genocide"

During their watching of "The Path to Nazi Gencoide," students will take cornell notes. We will have a class discussion about the film.

02

WEEK

"INTO" HOLOCAUST
LITERATURE - SONG AND
POETRY

SONG LYRIC ANALYSIS ON

"By the Ghetto Gate" and "We Long for a Home"

What messages can you interpret from these song lyrics? What diction (word choice) or phrases help create your interpretation? Consider the voice being expressed through these song lyrics and interpret the meaning behind this song.	How does your hearing of the song transform or add to your interpretation of the song lyrics? Are there any sections of the song that stick out to you?

- Print and pass out an English translation of these song lyrics
- Have students independently read and annotate the song lyrics as they would with a poem.
- Pass out the following worksheet which they will first fill out the right column with their desk partner.
- Play the songs out loud.

POETRY ANALYSIS ON

"Refugee Blues" by W. H. Auden and

"The Survivor" by Primo Levi

Once more he sees his companions' faces
Livid in the first faint light,
Gray with cement dust,
Nebulous in the mist,
Tinged with death in their uneasy sleep.
At night, under the heavy burden
Of their dreams, their jaws move,
Chewing a non-existant turnip.
'Stand back, leave me alone, submerged people,
Go away. I haven't dispossessed anyone,
Haven't usurped anyone's bread.
No one died in my place. No one.
Go back into your mist.
It's not my fault if I live and breathe,
Eat, drink, sleep and put on clothes.

- **Read independently and play an video recording of someone reading the poem.**

- **Worksheet: Asks the students to explain the central idea of the poem, to infer the author's purpose, and to interpret ways the poem creates meaning**

- **Discussion time!**

- **Homework: assign students to write their own poem or song lyrics to commemorate the Holocaust.**
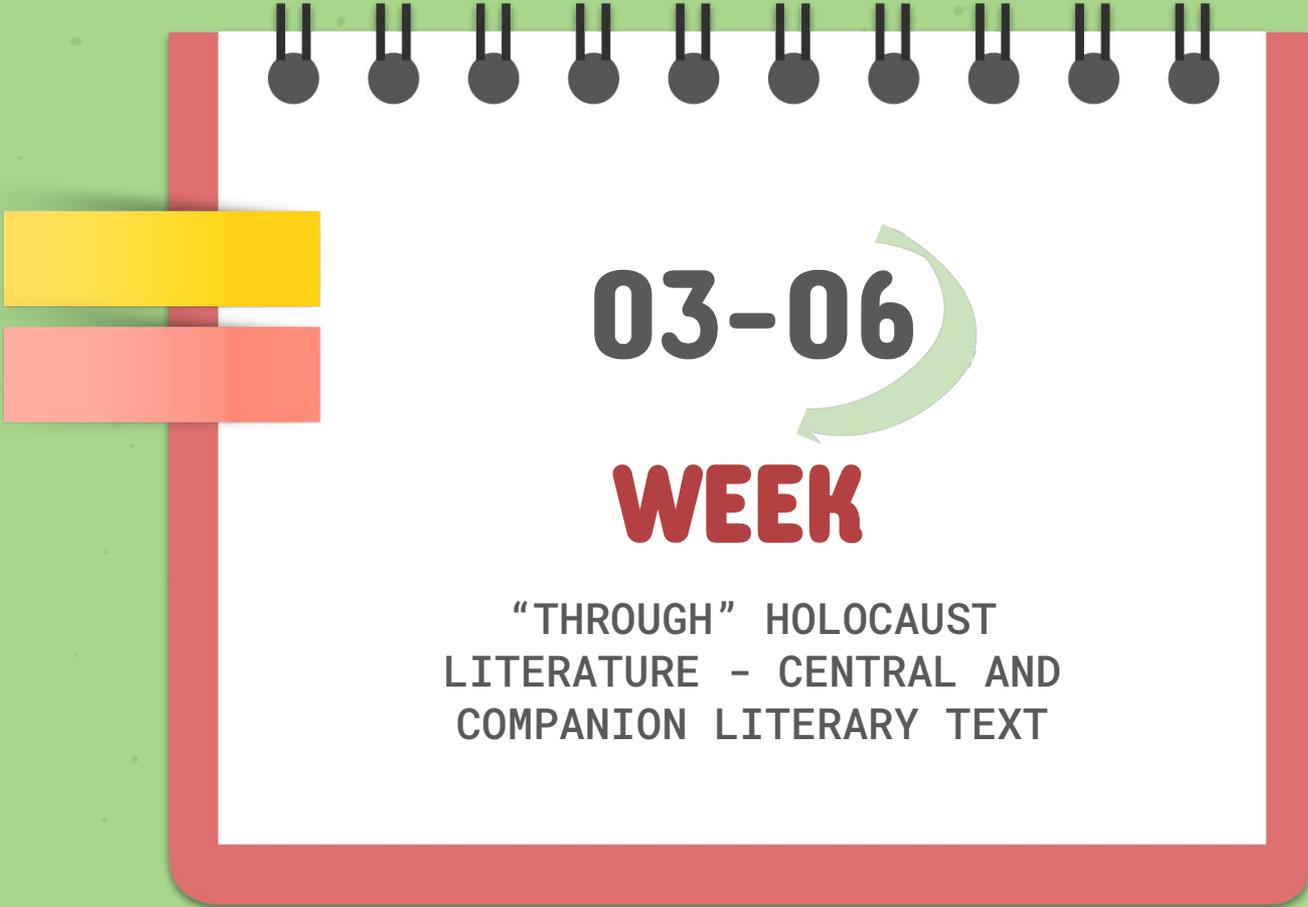
03-06

WEEK

"THROUGH" HOLOCAUST LITERATURE - CENTRAL AND COMPANION LITERARY TEXT

INTRO TO MEMOIRS
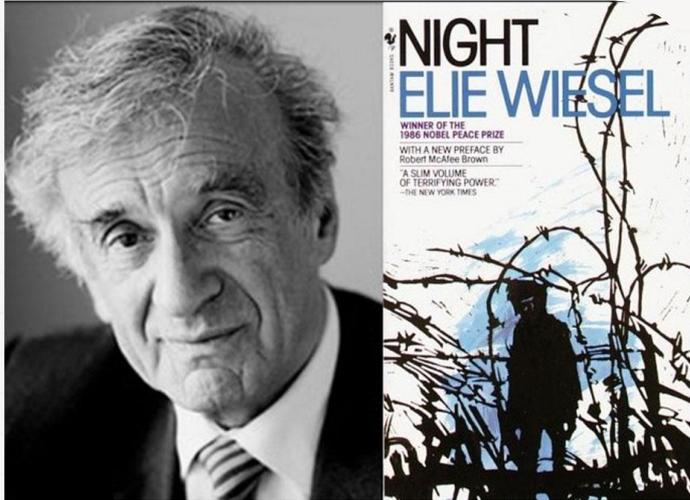
- Lecture on memoirs
- Background information on Elie Wiesel and Art Spiegelman
- Group brainstorm idea for homework assignment
- Homework: Write a two-page memoir on your earliest memory. This memoir must have a visual component.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Reading Independently

Students will read *Maus 1* independently; we will read *Night* together as a class.

Tracing Themes

Students will draw a column on their writing journals. They will log in: a summary, key themes, and significant quotes after every reading session for *Night*.

Timeline

After reading *Night*, we will, as a class, draw a timeline contextualizing the Holocaust as it is experience in *Night*.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES <u>MAUS 1</u>

Dr. Warner's Brown Bag activity

Every day after their assigned reading of Maus 1, students will write on an index card with (1) brown bag item. I will randomly choose a few students to share their brown bag item and explain its significance to the text.

Compare and Contrast

Students are asked to identify a scene, image, or quote that encompasses the theme of identity, family, faith, grief, death or survival on a worksheet I will hand out. They are also asked to write a brief paragraph on how their chosen scene, image, or quote encompasses this theme.

name	*Night*	*Maus I*
What is the author's purpose?		
How does the format play into the narrative of the literary texts?		
In what ways does one of the six themes we are tracing (identity, family, grief, death, survival, and religion) play into the literary texts?		
What perspective is either literary text in? How does perspective contribute to the story's narrative?		

FINAL TASK: ESSAY!

I will have my students write an essay based on one of the six themes they traced throughout their readings of both texts (identity, family, faith, grief, death or survival). The prompt involves them incorporating both *Night* and *Maus 1* in their essay, and it also should focus on one theme. They can use their compare/contrast chart to make connections between the theme and the central and companion text.

"BEYOND" HOLOCAUST LITERATURE/SUGGESTED TEXTS:
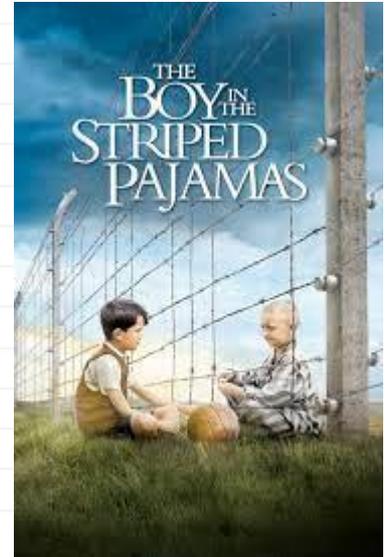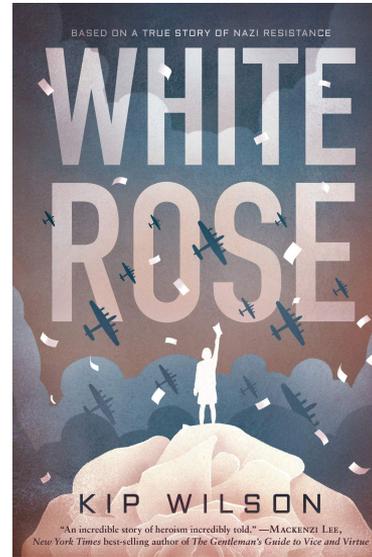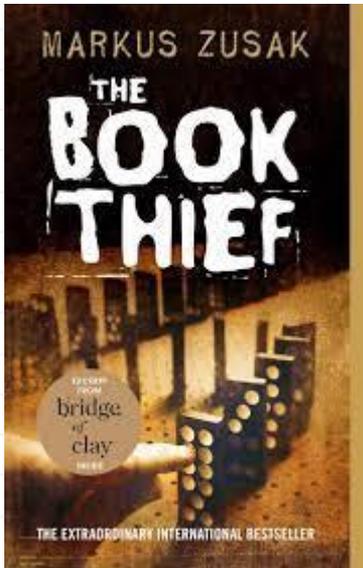
References

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RG‑91.0145, "Eksodus 1947" courtesy of Lillian Gewirtzman, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC.

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