

## Mini Lesson: Save One Life...



**Subject Area:** History, English, Genocide Studies, Film

**Topic:** Schindler's List

**Grade Level:** 10-12

**Duration:** 30 minutes

**Standard Addressed:** CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

**Learning Aim:** As a result of this activity, students will:

- Identify a key theme in the film *Schindler's List*
- Analyze identified theme from *Schindler's List*
- Defend their point of view with evidence from primary and secondary sources

### Description of the Lesson:

To prepare for the viewing of *Schindler's List*, this lesson asks students to consider a key theme embodied in a quote from the film—"Whoever saves one life, saves the world entire." This phrase is dedicated to Schindler towards the end of the film by a group of Jewish men, women and children whom he saved. Providing students a thematic focus to contemplate will frame the viewing of the film. They will analyze the message of the quote and determine to what extent they agree or disagree with its meaning. They will close by composing a persuasive paragraph that includes evidence from primary and secondary sources.

This activity features testimony from Rinah Birnhak.

## Consider

**Opening Discussion:** Begin by displaying the quote "Whoever saves one life, saves the world." Ask students: *What do you think this means?* Have students discuss their ideas with a partner. Then, ask: *To what extent do you agree or disagree with the quote? Why?* Allow them a few minutes to write their response. Call on a few volunteers to share their responses and explanations. Explain that they will exam their stance further throughout the activity.

**Preparation for Film Viewing:** Share with students that the quote points to an important theme presented in the film *Schindler's List* which tells the true story of Oskar Schindler and his wartime efforts saving Jews during WWII. Have students read the brief summary of Oskar Schindler. Answer any clarifying questions students may have.

## Mini Lesson: Save One Life...

### Collect

**Rinah Birnhak Biography:** Explain to students that they will now listen to a clip of testimony from Rinah to identify how she was impacted by Schindler's actions. Display and read her biography.

**Clip Viewing:** Inform students that they will watch her clip twice.

**First viewing:** The first time they will listen and watch with pencils down. Afterwards, ask a student to summarize her story. Allow other students to add to the summary. Answer any questions students have about the narrative.

**Second viewing:** Prior to watching the clip again, instruct students to focus on how her life was impacted by Schindler then and after the war.

**Discussion:** Have students share their observations. Provide the following guiding questions:

*How does the quote "Whoever saves one life, saves the world" apply to Rinah Birnhak? How can it apply to the other individuals whom Schindler saved?*

### Construct

**Persuasive Writing:** Students will now revisit their initial response to the quote and determine if their ideas have changed. They will then respond to the prompt: "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the quote? Why?"

Have them write a paragraph that includes the following:

- Answer to the question
- Analysis of the quote
- Evidence from the clip of testimony or from the biographies to support their analysis
- Analysis of the example
- Closing statement

### Communicate

**Partner/Share/Discuss:** Once students complete their paragraphs, have them exchange their ideas with a partner. Then, ask for volunteers to share their ideas.

**Additional Note to Teacher:** The quote, "Whoever saves one life, saves the world entire," comes from the Talmud—a collection of writings containing Jewish laws and traditions. It helps explain the commandments and rules of Judaism that are in the Torah (the five books of Moses). Talmud means learning in Hebrew.

## Mini Lesson: Save One Life...

### Biography



**Rinah Birnhak** was born January 29, 1927, in Kracow, Poland. She grew up in a religious Jewish household and community. Once the Nazis invaded Poland in September of 1939, Kracow was turned into a ghetto, where she and her family, along with thousands of other Jewish men, women and children, were kept. She was later deported to Krakau-Plaszow, a concentration camp in Poland. When that camp was to be liquidated, she was placed on Schindler's list as an essential worker and was to be sent to Brännlitz, a concentration camp in Bohemia. Due to miscommunication, she was placed on a train to Auschwitz, the death camp. Not long after her arrival, she was placed back on a train, this time headed to Bunnlitz. She became extremely ill and when she arrived, she was unable to move. Schindler boarded her cart and upon spotting her, picked her up and carried her to his car and drove to the hospital. That was how she met Schindler for the first time. She remained in Bunnlitz until it was liberated by the Soviet Armed forces on May 9, 1945. After the war, she married and settled in Israel. Her interview was taken on May 23, 1999, in Haifa, Israel.



**Oskar Schindler** was born in the Sudetenland to Louisa and Hans Schindler on April 28, 1908. He married Emilie Pelzl in 1927. After the Nazi rise to power, Oskar Schindler joined the Heinlen Party, a pro-Nazi party in the Sudeten. He joined the Nazi Party in 1938 as a member of the Abwehr (German military intelligence). Schindler cultivated friendships with Nazi leaders that would later aid his business and personal pursuits. The Schindlers moved to Kraków in late 1939, where Schindler became a trustee

(Treuhänder) of two Jewish businesses. He operated these enamel kitchenware companies for the benefit of the Germans. In December 1939 Schindler purchased his own enamel works firm in Zablocie (December 1939) and employed Jewish workers. Schindler's firm, Deutsche Emailwaren Fabrik, opened in January 1940. The Jews working for Schindler were declared "essential" and were thereby exempt from deportations. On March 14, 1943, Schindler set up a Plaszow sub-camp in his factory to protect his workers from Nazi brutality. In October 1944, Schindler moved his firm, now an armaments factory, to Brännlitz and transferred his workers, as well as 700-800 Jewish men from the Gross-Rosen camp and approximately 300 Jewish women from Auschwitz. Schindler and his wife also rescued approximately one hundred Jews that had been stranded in a railway car after their evacuation from the Goleszow camp. All the Jews under Schindler's protection received food and medical care. In 1949, the Jewish Distribution Committee gave Schindler \$15,000 in appreciation of his wartime efforts saving Jews. He also received 100,000 marks from the West German government to compensate for confiscated land. The Schindlers moved to Argentina in 1949, but Oskar returned to West Germany alone in 1958. On April 28, 1962 Yad Vashem named Oskar Schindler a Righteous Gentile. He died in Frankfurt on October 9, 1974 and was buried in Israel.