

Mini Lesson: Hiding



Subject Area: CIJE

Topic: Hiding During the Holocaust

Grade Level: 7-8

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials: Observations on Being a Hidden Child (PDF)

Clip: Aaron Elster

Standard Addressed: CIJE

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

- Understand the nature of audiovisual testimony as a primary source of information
- Draw evidence from testimony to support analysis and reflection

Description of the Lesson:

This activity focuses on hiding during the Holocaust. Students will be introduced to Holocaust survivor Aaron Elster. After reading Aarons's biography and Aaron's clip of testimony, students will create a one page response focused on what it was like for Aaron to hide.

Consider

Before starting this activity, ensure students have background knowledge about the Holocaust. This activity requires students to think critically, listen closely, and speak with one another.

Share the following passage with your students:

During the Holocaust, thousands of Jews – adults and children alike – went into hiding. Sometimes, families hid together. Other times, families hid in separate places. Some people hid their identity and lived out in the open; they moved to different cities, used false identity cards, and pretended to be another person. Some people hid in wooded areas, attics, barns, sewers or under the floorboards. Most people who hid had help from non-Jewish strangers, friends, or acquaintances. Sometimes, these friends and acquaintances took money to help hide the Jewish people. Other times, no money was exchanged. Going into hiding did not guarantee your safety. If you were caught in hiding, you could be sent to a concentration camp or killed. If you were caught helping or hiding a Jewish person, you could be arrested or killed.

Ask your students the following questions:

- Why do you think families stayed together in hiding?
- Why do you think families hid in separate places?
- What challenges do you think small children would have faced while in hiding?

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Collect

Explain to your students that they will now watch a clip testimony from Aaron Elster, a Holocaust survivor. Provide students with Aaron's biography, and have a volunteer read the biography aloud.

Play Aaron's testimony twice:

- During the first viewing, have students watch the clip with their "pencils down." Ask them to pay particular attention to the way Aaron describes his interactions with other people. Hand out "Observations on being a Hidden Child."
- During the second viewing: have students fill out the "Observations on being a Hidden Child" (PDF).

Construct

Using the notes your students took on the "Observations on being a Hidden Child" (PDF), have them construct a one-pager that demonstrates what it was like for Aaron to hide. This one pager can include images, symbols, phrases or words that help illustrate the answer to the question: *What was it like for Aaron to hide?*

Communicate

Have your students break up into pairs or groups and share their one pagers. Bring the students back together and ask if anyone wants to share their observations with the group.

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Biography



Aaron Elster, son of Chaim and Cywia (née Scherb), was born on February 4, 1933, in Sokołów Podlaski, Poland. Aaron had an older sister, Irene, and a younger sister, Sara. Before the war, Chaim and Cywia worked at their family owned a butcher shop. After the German invasion of Sokolow-Podlaski, the Elster's were sent to a ghetto in their town; Chaim and Cywia sent Irene to live with a Christian family. The day the ghetto was liquidated, Chaim urged Aaron to run away. This saved Aaron's life – his father, mother, and younger

sister were all killed during the Holocaust. Aaron spent the next two and a half years hiding in the attic of the Christian family who was hiding his sister. Of the 5,000 Jewish people who lived in Sokołów Podlaski before the war, only 29 survived. Aaron and Irene were the only children from their town who survived the war. After liberation, Aaron spent the next two years moving between orphanages and displaced person's camps. Aaron and Irene immigrated to the United States in 1947. After graduating high school, Aaron served in the Army during the Korean War. In 1954, Aaron married Jackie (née Kozin). The couple had two sons. Aaron was very active in the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, and was re-interviewed by USC Shoah Foundation's Dimensions in Testimony program. Aaron passed away in April 2018. This interview took place on November 10, 1995, in Lincolnshire, Illinois.