

Introductory Mini Lesson: Reflections on Prejudice

Subject Area: History/Social Studies, English Language Arts

Grade Level: 5 – 7 (ages 10 – 12)

Duration: 30 minutes

Standards Addressed:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Description: Through guided viewing of audiovisual testimony of survivors of the Holocaust, students reflect on the impact of prejudice on individuals and the capacity for resilience in the face of oppression. This lesson is designed as preparation for viewing *Lala*, the virtual reality film based on a story from the testimony of Holocaust survivor, Roman Kent.

Learning Aims: Reflect on the impact of prejudice and individual capacity for resilience in the face of oppression, demonstrate understanding and synthesis of information drawn from audiovisual testimony and draw connections to their own lives.



Part I: Prejudice and Its Impact on Individuals

- Tell students that they will explore the topics of **prejudice** and **exclusion** and their impact on individuals through the experiences of survivors of the Holocaust. Explain why you are using survivor stories as a way to learn about prejudice. Ensure students have the appropriate background knowledge about the Holocaust. Consult the Additional Information links on the third page of this Mini Lesson.
- To begin, share with students the essential questions this lesson will address:
Essential Questions (select those most appropriate for your students and teaching context):
 - ◇ *What can we learn from the past?*
 - ◇ *What is the impact of prejudice and hate on individuals and societies?*
 - ◇ *What is resilience and how can we develop it?*
 - ◇ *What kind of information can audiovisual testimony of those who experienced history, such as the Holocaust, provide us about the time period that other primary sources cannot?*
- When ready, write or project the word “prejudice” on the board. Tell students to quietly think about what comes to mind when they read the word. Then, discuss and record student responses by using a word web. Briefly discuss the words on the web as a class, and define “prejudice.” Share a definition of “prejudice” from a preferred dictionary or reference and share with students. Further discuss the similarities and differences between students’ experiences with and knowledge of prejudice.

Part I (continued)

- Now, ask students to reflect on a time when they (or someone they know) experienced prejudice or were made to feel different and excluded because of a personal characteristic, a group they belong to or because of their beliefs.
 - ◊ *If you have had or observed an experience with prejudice, how did it make you or the person feel?*
 - ◊ *If you have not had or observed an experience with prejudice, how do you think it would make you feel?*
 - Allow students to describe the experience and its impact on them to a partner. When they are done, engage students in a whole group discussion:
 - ◊ *Why do you think you (they) were targeted? How did the experience with prejudice affect you (them)?*
 - ◊ *What do you think helped you (them) get through the experience or to cope? Did someone or something help you (them)?*
 - Allow students to share and if able, record students' responses. Students' responses will demonstrate the various ways students and individuals cope with prejudice and exclusion - which is at the heart of resilience.
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- Next, explain to students that they will watch clips of testimony of survivors of the Holocaust who speak of their experiences with antisemitism, or hatred of Jews, in Europe during the time of Nazi rule.
 - Ensure students understand the meaning of antisemitism. Consult the Additional Information links on the third page.
 - First, share the biographies of the survivors featured in the clips. Ensure students' comprehension. When done, begin playing each clip as directed.
 - Viewing 1: play each clip of testimony all the way through. When done, ask students to quietly think about what stood out to them in the stories the survivors tell in the clip.
 - Viewing 2: Play each clip a second time. For this second viewing, direct students to pay attention to body language, facial expressions, voice and tone, as well as the background and date/time period when the testimony was given (date available in biographical details). Noticing these details can help the "reader" obtain information that could help them identify the central idea of the text.
 - ◊ *Show the clips in the following order. This sequence provides students with examples of prejudice and hate in Poland before the war (Roman Kent), Czechoslovakia during the war (Eva Freedman) and an experience in a ghetto in Poland during the war (Helen Fagin).*
 - After the second viewing of each clip, allow students to fill in the boxes on the Student Worksheet that correspond with each clip of testimony.
 - When the clips have been shown and students fill in the corresponding boxes on their worksheet, direct students to write a response to the Essential Question you introduced at the beginning of the lesson.

Part II: *Lala* - A Virtual Reality Experience

- Tell students they will now watch *Lala*, a six-minute-long virtual reality film that uses both live action and animation to tell the true story of Roman Kent's pet, Lala, and how Lala gave the Kent family a sense of continuity in their lives and ultimately, strengthened the family's resilience in the face of terrible conditions in the ghetto. An important message in the story is Roman's belief that love is stronger than hate.
- Viewing (6 min): Tell students to think about the Essential Question(s) of the lesson they reflected on at the beginning (i.e. those selected based on your teaching context). When students are done, direct them to pair/share their reactions to *Lala*. Then, direct students to respond to the Essential Question on the second page of the worksheet.



Part III: Reflections on Prejudice

- When all students have finished watching *Lala* and completed their worksheets, engage them in a discussion of the following questions or assign them as homework:
 - ◇ *What do you think is the meaning of "love is stronger than hate?"*
 - ◇ *Have the stories you heard and watched in this lesson helped you to think differently or somehow changed your views about prejudice? If so, how? If not, why not?*
 - ◇ *Do you think this lesson will influence how you interact with individuals different from yourself in the future? If so, how? If not, why not?*

Additional Information

- Background Information on the Holocaust from the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum: <https://www.ushmm.org/learn/introduction-to-the-holocaust>
- *What is Genocide?* Connections video on IWitness Dashboard (available after log in): <http://iwitness.usc.edu>
- Echoes & Reflections ~ Leaders in Holocaust Education: Professional development and lessons for middle and high school teachers to responsibly and effectively teach the Holocaust: <http://echoesandreflections.org>

Biographies

Roman Kent was born Roman Kniker to Emanuel and Sonia Kniker in Lodz, Poland, on April 18, 1929. In 1939, soon after the Germans invaded Poland, Roman and his family were forced out of their home and had to move into an empty room in the factory that had been confiscated from his father. They were then sent to the Łódź ghetto, where conditions were harsh. In the fall of 1944, the ghetto was liquidated, and the family was deported to Auschwitz–Birkenau. To get transferred, Roman and his brother Leon said they were tradesmen and were sent to Gross–Rosen, and later to Flossenburg. While on a death march en route to Dachau, they were liberated by the U.S. Army. The brothers then traveled to Sweden, where they were reunited with their sisters in a hospital in Lubeck. In June 1946, Roman and Leon immigrated to the United States. After college, the brothers moved to New York and changed their last name to Kent because it was easier to pronounce. Roman met his future wife Hannah in New York, and they were married in 1957. They had two children, Jeffrey and Susan. Roman became involved in Holocaust education and was instrumental in the making of *Children of the Holocaust*, a documentary film dedicated to the memory of the children who died during the Holocaust. At the time of Roman’s interview on April 29, 1996 in New York, he and his wife Hannah had two grandchildren, Eryn and Dara.

Eva Freedman was born on July 2, 1934 in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia. By 1941, all Jews had to leave Bratislava and so Eva and her family moved to a nearby town called Nitra. During 1942–1944, all Jews were deported from Nitra. Eva, her mother, her sister Gertie went into hiding with her mother’s sisters and family. They were kept in hiding within an apartment building, moving between a room upstairs and a cellar in the basement for about eleven months. They were liberated by Soviet soldiers in early 1945. Around 1946, Eva’s eldest sister who had moved to Israel arranged for her family to get permits to live in Israel as well. Years later, she traveled to Ireland, where she learned English and also met her husband, Lennard Freedman, whom she married in December 1959. She had two children, one son, Martin, and one daughter, Allison. She was interviewed in London, England in November 1996.

Helen Fagin was born February 1, 1922 in Radomsko, Poland. In 1939, the German authorities turned the town into a ghetto. Helen, who was seventeen at the time, set up a clandestine school and taught her younger sister and other children. In October 1942, Helen’s parents were taken away in a raid while Helen and her two sisters managed to hide. Soon after, Helen’s sisters escaped from the ghetto with the help of the underground while Helen remained behind. In January 1943, Helen was selected for deportation when the ghetto was being liquidated, but she managed to escape on the march. With the help of the underground, Helen was able to secure false identity papers. After months of living under a false identity, Helen traveled in Busko, Poland where she was liberated by the Russian Army. After liberation, Helen returned to Radomsko and eventually went to Bad Gastein, Austria, a displaced persons’ camp. On May 15, 1947, Helen went to a dance in New York City where she met her future husband, Sidney Fagin. Helen and Sidney got married on November 14, 1948, and had two children, Judith and Gary. Helen received a number of awards for her work promoting tolerance and in 1994, President Clinton invited her to be on the advisory board for the World War II Memorial in Washington D.C. At the time of her interview in 1996, Helen and Sidney lived in Sarasota, Florida.