



Mindful Exploration

Community Connections – Building Relationships



Designed by Freepik

TOPIC

Community Connections –
Building Relationships (Mindful
Explorations)

GRADE LEVEL

6th-8th grade

DURATION

40 minutes (10 min per lesson)

SUBJECT AREA

Character Development, ELA,
Homeroom, Advisory

DESCRIPTION OF THE LESSON

In this Mindful Exploration, students will contemplate the value of protecting and maintaining cultural, ethnic, and religious heritage and the role this heritage plays in identity. Students will recognize that an individual's cultural, ethnic, and religious heritage leads to important perspectives that should be valued, respected, and protected. Students will listen to testimony from individuals describing instances of considering or sharing unique perspectives and experiences to or of community members in order to strengthen community bonds. By the end of this activity, students will reflect on how they can respect and value their own and others' unique perspectives to strengthen community connection and contribute to their own and the community's well being in their own lives

This activity contains testimony from USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive of Jewish survivor Margaret Lambert, Cambodian genocide survivor Theary Seng, and Liron Velleman, witness to contemporary antisemitism.

This curriculum is a project of the California Teachers Collaborative for Holocaust and Genocide Education. Established by the JFCS Holocaust Center, with support from a grant from the Marin County Office of Education and the State of California.

STANDARDS ADDRESSED

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.10.

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.9.

Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

MATERIALS

- *Student Handout: Mindful Exploration – Community Connections: Building Relationships*
- Clips of testimony: Margaret Lambert (1:40 min), Theary Seng (2:10 min), and Liron Velleman (1:02 min)

LEARNING AIMS

Students will:

- Recognize the importance of being connected to a community and valuing and respecting community members.
- Analyze audiovisual testimony and draw conclusions supported with evidence about valuing and respecting community connections and community members leads to sense of well being for oneself and others
- Reflect on how they can practice and apply appreciation and respect for a variety of community members that may practice various cultural/religious/ethnic traditions in their own lives



Mindful Exploration

Community Connections – Building Relationships Consider

1. **ME Purpose** Explain to students that over the course of four days they will complete three mindful explorations and one final reflection that assesses their understanding of the importance of community connections. By the end of the lesson, students will have considered ways in which their community connections enhance and benefit themselves and others in their own lives.
2. **Mindful Exploration Handout** Pass out the *Student Handout Mindful Exploration – Community Connections: Building Relationships*. Read the brief introduction and focus question together. Explain that over the course of three lessons the class will listen to clips of testimony that will help them reflect on this topic.

Student Handout Question:

Focus Question: *How does the community you are part of develop your understanding of yourself and your relationships with others?*

Psychology Today contributor psychologist Samantha Stein notes that community “Being a part of a healthy community can help us feel connected to others, as well as feel we’re part of something larger than ourselves.” As we interact with our community members we come to value and respect both ourselves and others.

The following three individuals—Margaret Lambert, Theary Seng, and Liron Velleman — all share stories of how being a member of a community helped to support them in developing a strong sense of self or gave them inner strength in difficult times. As you listen to each of their testimonies, consider the ways their communities contribute to their mental well being, give them strength, or build understanding.

Collect

3. **Clips of Testimony** Each day, play one of the three clips of testimony twice. Begin by providing a brief introduction of each individual and the content of the clip... (see clip information and biographies below).
4. **First Viewing** Have students listen to the clip of testimony and answer any clarifying questions they may have. Then, have students read and respond to the first connected question on the *Student Handout Mindful Exploration – Community Connections: Building Relationships*. To encourage collaboration, have students pair with a partner to discuss their response to the first connected question. Then, have them share key takeaways from their discussion with the whole group.
Supportive sentence starters:
 - *X shared the ways they were connected to their community by _____. This is important to note because _____*
 - *X’s community connections contributed to their well being or sense of self by _____.*
5. **Second Viewing** After this viewing, have students respond to the second connected question on the *Student Handout Mindful Exploration – Building Relationships*. To encourage collaboration, have students share their responses to the second connected question with their partner. Then, have them share key takeaways from their discussion with the whole group.
Supportive sentence starters:
 - *A lesson I could take away to help me recognize and value my community connections in my own life is..*
6. **Repeat** Follow the same format for each clip of testimony. Display the content of the clip and the biography (all biographies available below). As a way for students to demonstrate what they have learned about the individual in the testimony, you may ask students to share what they find most interesting about the individual based on the information provided or what they might be more curious about.

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Community Connections – Building Relationships

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Exploration 1

Clip 1: Margaret Lambert

In this clip, Margaret discusses her Jewish identity in relation to the diverse community in the city where she grew up. She shares what interacting with diverse community members taught her about how to interact with others. She notes that even though she was the only Jewish student in class, she felt connected to her classmates and it never interfered with their interactions.

Margaret Lambert (née Margaretha Bergmann) was born to Edwin and Paula Bergmann on April 12, 1914, in Laupheim, Germany. Margaret first attended a Jewish school, then a public high school followed by preparatory school. Margaret's love and mastery of sports, which included skiing, skating, running, and climbing, led to her acceptance to study physical education at a German university in 1933. However, due to the rapidly changing political climate, she was advised to postpone her studies. Soon after came a devastating chain of events for Margaret: the anti-Jewish legislation, a dramatic change in her non-Jewish friends' behavior and attitudes, and her exclusion from sports clubs. She was interviewed on May 3, 1995 in Jamaica, NY, USA.

Student Handout Questions:

- How did Margaret's community demonstrate respect and appreciation for her? How did Margaret show respect and appreciation in return? How does it strengthen her connections?
- What does Margaret's clip of testimony help you understand about how to show respect and appreciation for members of your school or local community? How can this build stronger community bonds?

Exploration 2

Clip 2: Theary Seng

In this clip, Theary shared her family's experience moving into a Christian religious community in Grand Rapids, Michigan after her time in a refugee camp. She speaks of the important role the community members played in her family's lives in their new home.

Theary Seng was born in January of 1971 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. When the Khmer Rouge took control of Phnom Penh and the genocide began, Theary's family was forced to leave the capital city. Her father and mother were both murdered. Theary and her siblings were forced to work in agriculture and were later arrested. They were freed by the prison guards and made their way to refugee camps in Thailand. Then, they immigrated to the United States and lived first in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and later in southern California. After completing a law degree in the U.S. and writing her memoir, *Daughter of the Killing Fields*, she returned to Cambodia and became a key figure in human rights and international justice initiatives. Her testimony was taken on July 13, 2011, in Los Angeles, California.

Student Handout Questions:

- How does Theary describe the role the local community played during her early days in the United States? How did the community make her feel and why was this important for her and her family?
- What does Theary's clip of testimony help you understand about how to show respect and appreciation for members of your school or local community? How can this build stronger community bonds?

Exploration 3

Clip 3: Liron Velleman

In this clip, Liron was raised in a close-knit Jewish community for most of his childhood. He speaks of reaching out to members of other communities and the impact this had on his perspectives.

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Liron Velleman was born into a traditional Jewish home on March 11, 1995, in London, England. Liron is deeply involved in his Jewish community, assuming numerous leadership roles. He was interviewed about his experiences of contemporary antisemitism on September 29, 2017, in London, United Kingdom.

Student Handout Questions:

- *Liron makes an effort to engage with and work with others beyond his immediate community. How does Liron's experience with other community groups expand his perspectives? How does he benefit from this interaction?*
- *What does Liron's clip of testimony help you understand about how to show respect and appreciation for members of your school or local community? How can this build stronger community bonds?*

Construct

7. **Final Reflection (Exploration 4)** After viewing and answering questions related to the third clip, direct students to the Final Reflection section of the *Student Handout Mindful Exploration – Building Relationships*. Encourage students to work quietly and respond on their paper.

Student Handout Questions:

- *Final Reflection: Margaret, Theary, and Liron all share stories of how community connections influence them and give them strength. A strong connection to one's community creates a stronger sense of self and leads one to be more inclusive and tolerant of appreciating and accepting and respecting others.*
- *Consider the various communities you are part of. These may include your cultural, religious, school, or local communities. In what ways does your community support you? How do you support others in your community? Choose one of the communities you feel most connected to. In the space below, write a paragraph about your connection to this community. How does this connection make you respect, value, and appreciate the unique members of your community? Why are these connections important? Be prepared to share your paragraph with a partner.*

Communicate

8. **Discuss** To close this Mindful Exploration, ask volunteers to reflect on their responses to the final reflection.

Additional Note to Teacher

If assigning the Mindful Exploration activity series to students, we recommend asking students to keep a Mindful Explorations reflection journal. Using a reflection journal or folder to maintain their responses will provide them a compilation of their thoughts, enabling them to see how their thinking develops.

Mindful Explorations serve as short daily activities that develop introspection and social-emotional learning. Students are asked to reflect on the challenges they may face, the goals they have for themselves and the relationships they aspire to have in their lives. Each lesson is designed to be completed over the course of the week and includes an opening focus question, three 10-minute activities with clips of testimony, and a closing self-reflection question.