

WE SHARE THE SAME SKY COMPANION EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE

Introduction

In 1938, Hana Dubova sat in history class wondering why she had to learn about the “Great World War.” From her vantage point as a 13-year-old in Prague, the lesson felt ancient and irrelevant—after all, it happened before she was born. Less than a year later, Germany had annexed Czechoslovakia’s Sudetenland and Hana was to Denmark. She never saw her family again.

USC Shoah Foundation’s *We Share the Same Sky*, created by Hana’s granddaughter, Rachael Cerrotti, compels students to feel the relevance of “ancient history” in their lives. Cerrotti joins Hana’s journey of survival during the Holocaust with her own quest for understanding. Along the way, listeners will meet individuals directly connected to Hana and Rachael’s stories, as well as Moudi, a 27-year-old Syrian refugee rebuilding his life in Copenhagen, Denmark. Alternatingly, these stories use history and current events to help students delve deeply into themes including discrimination and dehumanization, the importance of being an ally, the impact of physical and metaphorical walls, and how to find hope and redemption in tragic circumstances. The podcast’s episodes deliver important historical accounts and life lessons that are significant beyond the classroom.

As Cerrotti probes her grandmother’s story, she discovers that it is not just a “redemptive tale buried in the shadows of the past,” but a forewarning and a symbol of enduring struggles over hate and acceptance, passivity and righteous action. As she crosses bridges long ago burned by her grandmother, Cerrotti reminds us of the importance of remembering, of passing memories from one generation to the next.

We Share the Same Sky honors the memory of the millions killed in the Holocaust through the power of a single story, and it raises timely questions about how humanity will apply that memory as we contend with the largest migrant crisis since World War II.

Podcast Essential Questions

- What role did the “kindness of strangers,” or being an upstander, play in the Holocaust and other world events?
- How do issues of statelessness and citizenship, exclusion and belonging, resonate in our public and personal lives?
- What is the significance of personal stories and shared memory in our understanding of history and the world?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES, THOUGHT QUESTIONS, RESOURCES, AND KEY VOCABULARY FOR INDIVIDUAL EPISODES

LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS FOR EACH EPISODE	KEY VOCABULARY
<p style="text-align: center;">EPISODE 1: LIKE AN OAK TREE</p> <p>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</p> <p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appreciate the intergenerational impact of the Holocaust. - Consider the role of upstanders during the Holocaust. - Articulate how the lessons of the Holocaust are significant today. <p>QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, WRITING, AND REFLECTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The opening voice observes, “mankind had suffered so much [during the Holocaust] that they would understand war was not the answer.” Do you think this hope for a more peaceful future has been realized? - Hana’s maiden name, Dubova, means “oak tree.” From what you’ve learned so far, how was Hana like an oak tree? How might these qualities have served her during the difficult war years? - Rachael talks about the guilt that her grandmother carried and that she herself experienced while working on the podcast. Why do you think so many survivors of genocide and their families struggle with feelings of guilt? - Rachael shares that Hana was saved by the “kindness of strangers.” What do you think she means? What do you know about the role upstanders played during the Holocaust? - Hana comments that her family knew things were bad at the onset of the war, but that what was yet to come was beyond comprehension. How do you think her family’s outlook might have affected their decisions? What can we learn from hindsight that can help us with how we approach problems in today’s world? - Hana describes the Holocaust as “an indescribable black page of history” and Rachael tells us that this podcast is about what happens when you “turn the page.” What do you think Rachael hopes to achieve through telling her grandmother’s story? <p>RESOURCES AND LINKS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explore Echoes & Reflections’ Holocaust Definitions and Timeline of the Holocaust to ensure common understanding of the historical period. - Explore the historical background of the Jewish community in the Czech Republic (Czechoslovakia) and review Flight from Prague from Yad Vashem’s Shoah Resource Center. 	<p>Concentration camp Deport Extermination camp Genocide Holocaust Perpetrator Refugee Stateless</p>

EPISODE 2: DON'T MAKE WAVES

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will

- Understand how the Nazis enacted laws that stripped citizens of their civil liberties and set the stage for war between 1933 and 1938.
- Recognize how upstanders saved Jewish lives.
- Reflect on how people maintain normalcy and hope during dangerous times.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, WRITING, AND REFLECTION

- How does Rachael cross bridges long ago burned by Hana? How are memories passed from one generation to the next?
- How did Hitler consolidate power and erode civil liberties during the Nazis' first five years in power?
- How did Zionism provide hope to Hana and other Jews? How did they prepare for emigration to a Jewish homeland?
- What do you think Rachael means when she says, "In the cases of some countries, like Czechoslovakia, the walls kept people in. And in other places, like America, the walls were built to keep people out." What role did walls play literally and symbolically during World War II?
- How did Hana and others maintain normalcy and hope during a time of great upheaval?

RESOURCES AND LINKS

- Explore Echoes & Reflections' [Timeline of the Holocaust](#), to learn more about the [Anschluss](#) and [The Munich Agreement](#).
- Watch [Antisemitism](#), part of Echoes & Reflections Video Toolbox, which provides historical context on racial antisemitic ideology.
- Read the [Summary of Antisemitism](#) for an overview of the history of antisemitism.
- Review [Nazi Germany and Anti-Jewish Policy](#), a timeline of Nazi actions that affected the social and economic life of Jews.
- Examine the [photo](#) of Hitler saluting soldiers at the entrance to the city of Prague, Czechoslovakia, in March 1939, from Yad Vashem's [Online Photo Archive](#).
- Explore the [Jewish Youth Movements](#) in Europe that took a leading role in resisting the Nazis from Yad Vashem's Shoah Resource Center.

Annex
Antisemitism
Ghetto
Munich
Agreement
British Mandate
Persecution
Propaganda
Zionist

EPISODE 3: THIS HOUSE HAS MEMORIES

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will

- Understand how the culture of non-discrimination in Denmark reflected both personal and institutional norms.
- Reflect on what people do to find safety and normalcy in the face of violence and upheaval.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, WRITING, AND REFLECTION

- Why do you think Jensine and her mother were willing to take in Hana when they had a family of their own to care for? What inner qualities do you think they possessed that led them to be upstanders?
- In 1940, Hana writes about her bedroom in her diary, noting “I know I can trust you. I can be safe with you.” Why did Hana draw comfort and safety from this space?
- Rachael notes it was “a point of pride in Danish society to not discriminate against any neighbor” and that this “conviction became even stronger under the Nazi occupation.” Why do you think some societies protect while others discriminate? What factors do you think shape a society’s attitudes toward people who are different?
- Rachael wonders about how Hana created a sense of normalcy in the face of very abnormal circumstances, noting “I guess you can get used to anything.” What do you think it took for Hana and other refugees to adjust to their new lives far from their homes and families?
- Rachael says that she and Sine “bonded over death. How did events that took place before they were born bring these two women together?
- Hana writes that it is best not to think about our vulnerability and better to focus on our strengths, to “pretend we are wearing a soft tailor-made suit of armor” that cannot be pierced. Why would Hana have felt this way? Do you share this view when dealing with adversity?

RESOURCES AND LINKS

- Learn about non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews. Review [Those Who Dared to Rescue](#) and [Rescue in Denmark](#).
- Explore the dates October 1, and 3, 1943, in Echoes & Reflections’ [Timeline of the Holocaust](#), which highlights how the Danish Jews were rescued, and watch the visual history testimony clip of [Hans Moller](#), who recalls how Danish fishermen helped transport Danish Jews to safety in Sweden.
- Read about Yad Vashem’s [“Righteous Among the Nations”](#)

Censor
Nazis
Refugee
Swastika
Vulnerability

EPISODE 4: THE END OF THE WORLD

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will

- Understand how the Nazis conditioned people to accept inhumanity.
- Understand what life was like in concentration camps and how they were designed to demean as well as to exterminate.
- Consider the factors on a society-level that lead to upstander behavior and a culture of inclusion.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, WRITING, AND REFLECTION

- Rachael describes her trip to Sobibor as a journey “to the end of the world” and she wonders what the trees would say if they could talk. In your own mind’s eye, what would the trees tell us?
- Hana describes life during the Holocaust to “slowly being peeled off like an onion.” She says, “You are being conditioned to live a subhuman life...And when you are looked at like subhumans, no one has trouble killing you.” How were layers of humanity slowly peeled away from Jews and other victims during this time?
- The Nazis believed Jews and others – homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses, the mentally ill, Roma – were subhuman. How did this portrayal of these groups of people impact the victims, soldiers, and ordinary citizens?
- How was Sobibor constructed “with intention”? How was life taken from the prisoners there, both literally and figuratively?

RESOURCES AND LINKS

- Read about [the “Final Solution”](#).
- Study the map [Nazi Camps and Sites of Mass Executions](#) in the Echoes & Reflections Unit, [The “Final Solution.”](#) Identify the location of the Sobibor extermination camp in Poland.
- [View May 3, 1942](#), in Echoes & Reflections’ [Timeline of the Holocaust](#), to learn about Sobibor.
- Watch the visual history testimony of [Itka Zygmuntowicz](#), who describes a day in Auschwitz.

Auschwitz
Extinction
Gas chamber
Mass grave
Refuge
Sobibor

EPISODE 5: I DIDN'T ASK HIM HIS NAME

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will

- Understand the factors leading to the Danish rescue of thousands of Jews.
- Reflect on the personal and institutional factors that lead members of a society to act as upstanders.
- Make connections between the behavior of Danish and Swedish people during the Holocaust and the behavior of people today in response to the current migrant crisis.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, WRITING, AND REFLECTION

- Why did Hana prioritize going to school? How was education a form of resistance during the Nazi era?
- Hana's perception of herself as an outsider among her schoolmates turned out to be wrong. Describe an experience you have had where self-perception and reality clashed?
- Rachael comments that even silence was a form of resistance among Danish allies. How can silence be a way of fighting back?
- Rachael calls the behavior of the Danes and Swedes a "spontaneous act of human decency." Do you feel this term be used to describe the response to today's migrant crisis? Why or why not?

RESOURCES AND LINKS

- Explore the dates October 1, and 3, 1943, in Echoes & Reflections' [Timeline of the Holocaust](#) which highlights how the Danish Jews were rescued and watch the visual history testimony clip of [Hans Moller](#), who recalls how Danish fisherman helped transport Danish Jews to safety in Sweden.
- Examine the following photographs from Yad Vashem's [Online Photo Archive](#) and Photo Galleries
 - o [Georg Ferdinand Duckwitz](#), German diplomat and a Righteous Among the Nations, who warned the Jewish Community of the Nazi's plan to deport Jews of Denmark and who helped with rescue efforts.
 - o [Danish boat](#) used in October 1943 to ferry Jews from Gilleleje to fishing boats at sea, which then brought them to safety in Sweden.
 - o [I Am My Brother's Keeper](#) – A Tribute to the Righteous Among the Nations photo gallery, which features a collection of stories and photos of a diverse group of men and women who risked their lives to save Jews.

Final solution
 Martial law
 Protectorate
 Resistance
 Sanctuary
 Stalingrad
 Warsaw ghetto/
 uprising

EPISODE 6: I AM GOING TO JUMP

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will

- Understand some of the factors that led to the end of World War II, including the invasion of Normandy, liberation of concentration camps, and Hitler’s suicide.
- Make connections between the experiences of Jewish refugees after the Holocaust and Syrian refugees today.
- Identify what it means to be an upstander at the community and society levels.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, WRITING, AND REFLECTION

- With so much destruction around her, what personal qualities or mindset Hana have that made her focus on education and her future?
- For Hana and other displaced persons/refugees, what were the practical and existential problems who did not hold any citizenship after the war? How did the country of Denmark address this problem?
- Rachael often returns to the themes of hope and redemption in Hana and Moudi’s stories. Hana and Moudi. Do you share this viewpoint? Why or why not?
- Moudi’s story reminded Rachael that her grandmother’s tale is not “buried in the shadows of the past.” What similarities do you see between Hana and Moudi’s experiences?
- What role did personal, community, and national level factors play in Hana and Moudi’s ability to survive? Do you think any one of these factors was more important than another?
- What does Rabbi Melchior mean when he sings, “all the world is a narrow bridge”? What can we do individually and societally to overcome fear and terror?

RESOURCES AND LINKS

- Examine and analyze the painting “The Refugee” by artist [Felix Nussbaum](#), who completed this work in 1939. The artwork is included in the Echoes & Reflections unit, [Perpetrators, Collaborators, and Bystanders](#). In addition, compare and contrast “The Refugee” with another painting, [“Refugees Towards a Better Life”](#) by Romanian artist Diana-Andreea Bahrin, which is included in the Anti-Defamation League’s online lesson: [“We Were Strangers Too: Learning about Refugees Through Art.”](#) a resource that focuses on the current refugee crisis.
- Learn about today’s refugee crisis by reviewing the Anti-Defamation League’s lesson, [“Refugee Crisis in Europe: How should the World Respond?”](#)

Allied forces
Asylum
Death march
Displaced persons
Migrant
Normandy
Quarantine
Smuggler
Xenophobia

EPISODE 7: A STRANGE WAY OF FEELING ALIVE

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will

- Compare Denmark’s treatment of war victims with that of other countries.
- Contrast the democratic ideals defended abroad during WWII with the culture of racism rampant in the U.S.
- Reflect on the importance of passing memories and stories from one generation to the next.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, WRITING, AND REFLECTION

- How did Denmark’s treatment of returning victims of war and their property differ from most other countries? What do you think accounts for this difference?
- What is survivor guilt? How does Hana reconcile her existence and purpose after losing her family and surviving the Holocaust?
- What was the Displaced Persons Act and how did it help Hana?
- How did Hana’s experiences during the Holocaust shape her response to the racism she encountered in Cincinnati? How does she reconcile the idea that strangers in Denmark saved her during the war, but her own family rejected her for befriending a black man?
- How did segregation and racism in the U.S. conflict with the ideals Americans were fighting for abroad? How do you think it felt for black people serving overseas to return to the U.S. after WWII?
- Rachael says that Hana’s diaries are “literature of the past” that each tell a different story? What are the key messages you take away from Hana’s stories? Why is it important to pass stories and memories from one generation to the next?

RESOURCES AND LINKS

- Review the informational text, [“Displaced Persons”](#) to learn more about the experience of Holocaust survivors after the war in the Echoes & Reflections unit [Survivors and Liberators](#).
- Watch [Liberators and Survivors: The First Moments](#), part of Echoes & Reflections’ Video Toolbox, which interweaves liberators’ and Jewish survivors’ visual history testimonies as they share their experiences of liberation. The video is included in the Echoes & Reflections unit [Survivors and Liberators](#).
- Explore the Yad Vashem lesson [Liberation and Survival](#) that looks at how these individuals tried to put their lives back together after the war.
- Watch the visual history testimony clip of [Paul Parks](#), an African-American liberator who explains how his military service in World War II inspired his civil rights activism in the United States.

Displaced Persons
Act
Permanent
residency
Quota
Segregation
Survivor guilt
Typhus