



Guidance for Bringing Students “Safely in and Safely out” of Holocaust Learning

When students are studying the Holocaust virtually and also experiencing greater stress and uncertainty in the world, it is paramount to ensure that we bring them “safely in and safely out” of their learning.

The Holocaust illustrates the depths to which humanity can sink, but it also illustrates the heights to which we can soar. This is an important time to focus on human stories of “**light in the darkness**” instead of on the darkness alone. By **changing your emphasis**, focusing on life instead of death, students will encounter stories of human spirit that can inspire them, especially in these difficult times.

Here are some practical examples for areas of emphasis with select Echoes & Reflections resources:

Ghettos: If teaching this subject, spend less time on the details of the misery, and accentuate the struggle for life in the escalating chaos. The [Video Toolbox on the Ghettos](#) highlights the resilience of those in the ghettos, spotlighting [poetry](#) and diaries written in the ghettos. *Beginning at 11:55, the focus turns to the choice to maintain humanity despite deprivation.*

Jewish Resistance: The [unit on Jewish Resistance](#) contains excellent examples of how Jews in the ghettos resisted their fate, whether spiritually or by [armed resistance](#). Additional focus areas:

- Testimonies by survivors like [Roman Kent](#) and [Helen Fagin](#) will challenge students to see resistance that was cultural, like having a symphony orchestra or a school in the ghetto.
- The Video Toolbox, [Jewish Resistance in the Holocaust](#), contains a 15-minute discussion of spiritual and armed resistance, and how they relate to each other.
- Finally, the often untold [story of the partisans](#) offers powerful stories of bravery and courage. For example, introduce your students to [Mira Shelub](#), a woman who fought in the forests.



Final Solution: If you are teaching about the Final Solution, focus less on the death camps and the perpetrators, and more on the resilience of human beings struggling to survive. A few areas of focus:

- The Video Toolbox for the Final Solution unit, [Jewish Life on the Brink of Death](#), emphasizes life instead of death, *especially from 11:55-16:00*.
- [Itka Zygmuntowicz's](#) inspirational testimony about writing poetry in Auschwitz.
- [Stories based on artifacts](#) that helped Jews in their struggle to survive (these are also featured in the toolbox).

Rescuers and Non-Jewish Resistance: These [lessons](#) include stories of the “[Righteous Among the Nations](#)”, who risked their lives to try to save Jews. Stories of bravery like that of [Miep Gies](#) and [Denmark's rescue of Jews](#) emphasize solidarity between people and our ability to stand up for what is right.

Survivors and Liberators: This [Unit](#) is replete with moving resources to illustrate that the human spirit was not broken after the tragedy of the Holocaust, highlighting Jewish survivors who managed to make the choice to return to life. The [video toolbox](#) on this topic is another good resource for students.

Our current circumstances make it more important than ever to help students reflect on their emotional reactions to this history. Encourage them to debrief after lessons by structuring text-to-self and text-to-world connections either independently or in online group settings.