

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES FOR CLASSROOM USE

The following activities provide ideas for using the Echoes & Reflections poster series in the classroom and as part of distance learning. The exercises were originally developed with input from the Echoes & Reflections Educator Advisory Committee and updated to reflect today's need for blended learning materials. Suggested grade level, subject area, and time needed for completion can be modified to meet the needs of your students and the time available.

Activity #1

Summary: As an introduction to learning about the Holocaust, students will analyze and evaluate a quotation and make personal, historical, and world connections through journal writing and sharing with classmates.

Grade Level: Middle or High School

Subject Area: Any

Estimated Time: 20-30 minutes

Directions:

- 1 Have students view the posters and select one that resonates most for them. This can be done by displaying them in the classroom or sharing with students online.
- 2 Have students engage in reflective writing about the quotation they have chosen using the prompts below.
 - What drew you to this particular poster?
 - How do you personally relate to the quote or how does it remind you of events happening in your school, community, or society today?
 - How does the poster you selected capture why we study, or should study, the Holocaust?
- 3 Create small groups of students who have selected the same poster and have them share their thoughts, identifying similarities and differences in their responses. This can be done in person or via online chat or breakout rooms.

Activity #2

Summary: Students will write a real or imagined narrative using one of the poster quotations as the theme from the story.

Grade Level: Middle or High School

Subject Area: English/Language Arts

Estimated Time: 30 minutes + time to draft stories

Directions:

- 1 Display the posters and ask students what, if anything, they know about the context of each. Provide additional information as needed and check for understanding.

Incorporate some of these online tools and platforms to make the most of distance learning:

- For journaling, blogging, and creative writing:
 - *Penzu*
 - *Boomwriter*
 - *Edublogs*
- For discussions and chat rooms:
 - *Backchannel Chat*
 - *Kialo Edu*
- For creating multimedia posters and presentations:
 - *Glogster*
 - *Canva*
 - *Emaze*
- For creating videos:
 - *Screencast-O-Matic*
 - *WeVideo*
 - *Flipgrid*
- Other:
 - *Popplet* (for creating lists, timelines, and webs)
 - *Twiducate* (for controlled social networking and discussion)

- 2 Assign students to write a narrative using one of the quotations as the theme. The story can be fictional or based on an actual event that happened to them or someone they know.
- 3 Have students draft the narratives during class time and/or for homework, either in their notebooks or using one of the online writing tools above.
- 4 Place students into small groups to share their stories and discuss connections to their study of the Holocaust, either in person or via online chat or breakout rooms. Form groups of students in one of two ways: (a) Group those who wrote about the same quote in order to compare different approaches to a single theme; or (b) Group those who explored different quotes in order to expose students to diverse themes.

Activity #3

Summary: Students will reflect on their role and responsibility as “witness” after reading Elie Wiesel’s *Night* or another Holocaust memoir.

Grade Level: High School

Subject Area: History/Social Studies or English/Language Arts

Estimated Time: 30-45 minutes

Directions:

- 1 After students have read *Night* (or another Holocaust memoir), display the Elie Wiesel poster or share with students online. As a class, discuss what Wiesel meant when he said, “When you listen to a witness you become a witness.”
- 2 Assign students to create a poem or a short-form video, using one of the online tools above, in response to one of these prompts:
 - In what way(s) have you become a witness by reading Elie Wiesel’s memoir, viewing Echoes & Reflections visual history testimonies, or learning about the Holocaust in other ways?
 - How has becoming a witness influenced your attitudes or behavior?
- 3 Have students share their work in small groups, in person or using online chat or breakout rooms.

Activity #4

Summary: After learning about the *Kristallnacht Pogrom*, students will analyze possible reasons why atrocities and injustice occur.

Grade Level: High School

Subject Area: History/Social Studies

Estimated Time: 30-40 minutes

Directions:

- 1 Display the Kurt Messerschmidt poster or share with students online. If students have not viewed Kurt’s testimony, in which he shares the story behind the quote, have them watch it (the relevant anecdote is at 2:04-4:25).
- 2 Have students prepare a grid with four quadrants. Direct them to react to Kurt’s quote in the first quadrant, recording words or phrases that the quote brings up for them.
- 3 Place students into groups of four, in person or using online chat or breakout rooms. Direct them to physically or electronically trade grids with another student and build on the words or phrases in the first quadrant by adding thoughts in the second quadrant. Have students continue until they have had a chance to add a response to all four grids, and each student has retrieved the grid with which they started.
- 4 Direct students to read the responses on their grid and then to engage in a discussion with their small group about the role that silence plays in incidences of injustice, using some of the following prompts:
 - Does it matter whether bystanders disapprove of an action if their “disapproval is only silence”?
 - What other examples of “silent disapproval” have you learned about or experienced? What caused the silence?

- What qualities or conditions do you think it takes to overcome the silence when injustice occurs? How can ordinary people break the silence in response to small or large injustices they witness?

Extension: Assign students to reflect in their journals about the dangers of silence. Have them compare Kurt's quote to these words from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends." Encourage them to consider the responsibility we all have to speak out in the face of injustice.

Activity #5

Summary: Students will be introduced to "Righteous Among the Nations" and examine the characteristics and attributes of "heroic" behavior.

Grade Level: High School

Subject Area: History/Social Studies

Estimated Time: 60-75 minutes

Directions:

- 1 Direct students to view the Miep Gies poster and read the [background information about Miep Gies](#). Assign them to journal in response to the prompts below, and then to discuss their responses in small groups.
 - What is your reaction to the quote? Do you agree with Miep Gies' outlook? Why?
 - Do you think that elevating people to the status of "hero" is helpful or harmful in our society? Why?
 - What is your personal definition of moral courage? Identify at least three attributes of a person who is courageous or "heroic" in your opinion.
- 2 Share that Miep Gies was recognized as "Righteous Among the Nations" and direct students to read the first three paragraphs of [FAQs: The Righteous Among the Nations Program](#).
- 3 Have students choose one story from [Featured Stories: The Righteous Among the Nations](#). Independently or with a partner, direct them to create a poster or slide that summarizes and reacts to their subject's courageous actions. Gather students' finished work into one slide show that the class can view.
- 4 Emphasize that while not everyone will take dramatic action like the "Righteous Among the Nations", everyone can do something to help others and stand up to injustice. Post this quote from Miep Gies: "...Even an ordinary...teenager can, within their own small ways, turn on a small light in a dark room." Conclude the activity by having students write a response paragraph to the quote in which they discuss ways they have (in the past) or can (in the future) 'turn on their small light'.

Extension: Have students read and construct a 1-2 paragraph response to one of these readings: [Anne Frank's Legacy](#) or [Complexities of Courage](#).

Activity #6

Summary: Prior to beginning their study of the Holocaust, students will engage in close reading of photographs and text and consider important themes associated with the Holocaust.

Grade Level: High School

Subject Area: Any

Estimated Time: 20-30 minutes

Directions:

- 1 Display the three posters and allow students time to read and reflect on each.
- 2 Challenge students to think of the two photographs in each poster as two ends of a timeline. As a class or in small groups – either in person or via online chat or breakout rooms – have students discuss some of the following questions:
 - How did the events depicted in the photo at the right (the beginning of the timeline) affect the speaker depicted on the left (the end of the timeline)?

- What is the connection between each quotation and the photo at the beginning of the timeline?
- What word would you use to title each poster? Explain your choices. [Examples include “Duty,” “Indifference,” and “Vigilance.”] How do the words you chose relate to each other?

Extensions: Assign students to complete one of the following projects in class or for homework:

- Using one of the online tools above, have students create a timeline that plots two to three key events in the lives of each of the poster subjects (Miep Gies, Kurt Messerschmidt, and Elie Wiesel). The timeline of events should reflect the images shown on the posters. Students are encouraged to consult the [Echoes & Reflections Timeline of the Holocaust](#) and plot additional related events.
- Using one of the online tools above, have students create a poster following the model presented in the Echoes & Reflections posters. Students should research a quote from a historical figure related to the Holocaust and depict using photographs or their own illustrations. In addition, they should include a caption or brief commentary with their interpretation of the quote or significance of the historical figure.