



LESSON PLAN: The Memorialization of the Holocaust

INTRODUCTION

In this lesson, students are asked to investigate the aspects of memory and memorialization. Specifically, why and how the Holocaust has been remembered and memorialized. They should be challenged to ponder how the way we as a society remember an event in history impacts the way we understand that history, provides information on the society that created memorials to an event in history, and impacts the way society functions in the present and in the future.

1 Students engage with this quote from Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks that is posted: “There is a profound difference between history and memory. History is his story – an event that happened sometime else to someone else. Memory is my story – something that happened to me and is part of who I am. History is information. Memory, by contrast, is part of identity.”

- a) In small groups or as a class, students discuss the following questions to think more deeply and philosophically about the nature of memory and building memorials:
 - i. Why do communities/states/nations build memorials?
 - ii. What is accomplished by constructing a memorial?
 - iii. How does a memorial inform us about the people who built it and the time period in which it was constructed?
 - iv. What roles do memory, museums, and memorials play in our world today?
 - v. How do memorials seek to inform future generations' understanding of a particular history or event?

2 In small groups, students analyze one or more of the memorials in the *Holocaust Memorials in Europe* handout. Students consider these questions for each memorial¹:

- a) What do you see in the memorial? What is understated, ignored, or perhaps missing from it? Why do you think the creator made those decisions?
- b) What thoughts / emotions / feelings are evoked by viewing the memorial? Do you think that was its intent?
- c) What does the memorial teach you about the Holocaust? What can you infer about the memorial's message to its citizens?
- d) How does this memorial impact the way we remember the Holocaust?

¹ Some of the memorials presented do not center the Holocaust in its representation for various reasons. For more information on Holocaust distortion, refer to the Gringlas Unit on Contemporary Antisemitism.

Holocaust Denial and Distortion handout

3

As a summative task, students create a poster or other visual representation that addresses how we should remember and memorialize the Holocaust. What message do they hope to convey in their artwork? Students view and/or present their artwork to the class and discuss the following questions as a final reflection:

- a) How will memory be affected once survivors of the Holocaust are gone?
- b) Why do we have to remember or understand the past in order to move into the present/future, and what does it mean to confront history?
- c) Does actively remembering the Holocaust and working to improve society for the better provide justice for the victims?

ESTIMATED COMPLETION TIME: 60 MINUTES