



Inspiring the Human Story Poster Series **Suggested Activities for Classroom Use**

The following activities provide ideas for using this poster series in the classroom. 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 studying 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. Display the posters in three different parts of the classroom and conduct a 5-minute gallery walk, whereby students decide which poster and accompanying quotation resonates most for them.
2. Have students write a journal entry about the quotation they have chosen and what it means to them. Prompt questions could include: what drew you to this particular poster; is there something about the quotation that you personally relate to or that speaks to events happening in your school, community, or society today; does the poster you selected capture why you feel we study, or should study, the Holocaust?
3. Have students meet in small groups in front of the poster they selected and share their thoughts, identifying similarities and differences in their responses.

Activity #2

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

Grade Level: Middle School

Subject Area: English/Language Arts

Estimated Time: 60-90 minutes

Directions:

1. Display posters and have students share what, if anything, they know about the context of each. Provide additional information as needed.
2. Tell students they will be writing a narrative (story) using one of the quotations as the theme of the story. The story can be a true story that has happened to them or someone they know or imagined.

3. Have students share their drafts as appropriate.
4. Narratives can be finished for homework.
5. Extension: Have students work this narrative through the writing process including a peer conference, revisions, and final version.

Activity #3

Summary: Students will reflect on the meaning of the poster quotations and prepare journal entries prior to reading Holocaust literature.

Grade Level: Middle School

Subject Area: English/Language Arts

Estimated Time: 10-12 minutes

Directions:

1. Display one or more of the posters and have students share what, if anything, they know about the speaker/s or scenario/s depicted based on prior knowledge. Provide additional information as needed.
2. Have students select one of the posters and prepare a journal entry sharing their interpretation of the quotation and whether they agree or disagree with the sentiment expressed by the speaker.
3. Extension: Have students revisit and reflect on what they wrote or add to the entry after reading assigned pieces of Holocaust literature.

Activity #4

Summary: Students will reflect on the meaning of heroism prior to reading *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*.

Grade Level: Middle School

Subject Area: English/Language Arts

Estimated Time: 10-15 minutes

Directions:

1. Display the Miep Gies poster and read the quotation and background information together.
2. In a 5-10 minute “quick write,” have students reflect on what they think it means to be a hero and whether they would consider Miep a hero for her efforts to hide Anne Frank and her family and friends. Encourage students to write for the entire time and craft at least one paragraph, if not more.
3. Once the writing time is over, have students share their reflections on what it means to be a hero, how the definition of “hero” can be influenced by time and place, and what circumstances might lead an otherwise “ordinary” person to display heroic qualities.
4. Extension: Return to this “quick write” after reading *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* and add additional thoughts about what it meant to be a hero during the Holocaust and what it means to be a hero today.

Activity #5

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

Grade Level: High School

Subject Area: English

Estimated Time: 30 minutes or longer

Directions:

1. After students have read *Night* (or another memoir) and completed all assignments associated with the text, show them the Elie Wiesel poster and have them look at it in silence.
2. Continuing in silence, have students respond in writing to the following questions:
 - a) What do you think Elie Wiesel meant when he said, “When you listen to a witness you become a witness”?
 - b) In what way(s) have you become a “witness” as a result of learning about the Holocaust and reading Elie Wiesel’s memoir?
 - c) Has becoming a “witness” caused you to think about your own attitudes and actions in new ways? Explain how, if at all, this experience may influence you in the future.
3. Once students have completed the writing assignment, have them share their responses in a pair-share, small group, or class discussion.
4. Extension: Using this activity as a starting point, have students write a persuasive argument on why the Holocaust should be studied.

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: 60 minutes

Directions:

1. Display posters around the classroom and provide students ample time to engage in a gallery walk to study each.
2. Encourage students to think of the two photographs in each poster as two ends of a timeline and consider the following questions:
 - a) How did the events depicted in the photo at the right (the beginning of the timeline) affect the speaker (Miep, Kurt, Elie) as depicted in the left-hand photo of the timeline?
 - b) What is the connection between each quotation and the photo at the beginning of the timeline?
 - c) Which word would you use to title each poster: “Duty,” “Indifference,” and “Vigilance”?
 - d) How do these three words relate to each other?
 - e) Are there three different words that you would use to describe the poster series in place of “Duty,” “Indifference,” and “Vigilance”? Explain your word choices.

3. Upon completion of the gallery walk, have a class discussion about the themes these three posters represent as well as other important themes associated with studying the people and events of the Holocaust.
4. Extension: Following their Holocaust unit, have students create their own posters following the model presented in the Echoes & Reflections posters.

Activity #7

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: 15-20 minutes

Directions:

1. Write the word “inevitable” on the board and have students brainstorm words or definitions associated with the term.
2. Display the Kurt Messerschmidt poster and have students view the poster individually or in pairs and record key ideas.
3. If time permits, instruct students to look at the poster again, this time using the four-quadrant approach, and add anything they missed to their list of ideas.
4. Have a class discussion about the meaning of Kurt’s words and whether the quotation suggests a possible reason why atrocities and injustices occur.
5. Make connections back to the word “inevitable” and have students discuss whether they believe Kurt would have said that the Holocaust was inevitable.
6. Extension: Have students write in their journals about the dangers of silence. Encourage them to reflect on how Kurt’s quotation and the words of Dr. Martin Luther King: “In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends” remind us that everyone has a responsibility to speak out when they witness injustice.

Activity #8

Summary: As a culminating activity following a Holocaust unit, students will participate in a Socratic seminar to share and support key learnings.

Grade Level: Middle or High School

Subject Area: Any

Estimated Time: 50 minutes

Directions:

1. Display the posters in the classroom and have students participate in a gallery walk. Allow ample time for students to examine each poster.
2. Set the stage for a Socratic seminar with those actively participating in the discussion strategically positioned in a circle facing each other, while those students who are “observers” will

sit outside the circle and tally the number of times that the participating students speak. The remainder of the class will serve as the “quiet audience.”

3. Each of the discussion participants receives a card with the following questions:
 - a) Based on your examination of the posters, which one would serve as an overall lesson or message that you personally learned from our Holocaust unit?
 - b) How can you connect any stories of bystanders or rescuers during the Holocaust with one of the poster messages?
 - c) Which historical event during the Holocaust could you connect with one of the poster messages?
4. Students in the circle take turns engaging in “intellectual discourse,” offering personal reflections based on the questions and adding respectful comments to other participants’ reflections.
5. At the completion of the discussion, “observers” tally the number of times each student spoke. All students are then invited to make comments or ask questions about the discussion they just listened to and add their own reflections on the poster messages.

Activity #9

Summary: Students will prepare to meet a Holocaust survivor or listen to the visual history testimony of a survivor or other witness to the Holocaust.

Grade Level: Middle or High School

Subject Area: Any

Estimated Time: 30-40 minutes

Directions:

1. Display the Elie Wiesel poster and review the text and photographs as a whole group. Provide additional information about Elie Wiesel as needed.
2. In a 5-10 minute “quick write” or journal entry, have students reflect on the Elie Wiesel quotation.
3. After students have completed their writing, have them share what they wrote with a partner.
4. Follow with a class discussion about what they think it means to be a witness or to bear witness and what is important to remember as we listen to a survivor speak about his/her experiences.
5. Extension: Refer back to the poster, writing assignment, and class discussion after meeting with a survivor or watching visual history testimony and decide if there is additional information that can be added to the meaning of Elie Wiesel’s quotation.

Activity #10

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. Divide students into small groups and have them examine the Miep Gies poster. Provide additional information about Miep Gies beyond what is on the poster as needed.
2. In their groups, have students discuss how they feel about Miep rejecting the notion that she was a hero and whether they believe she is being too humble.
3. Have students unpack the meaning of “hero” by brainstorming a list of characteristics and attributes of what it means to be “heroic.” Students then list as many people as they can think of who are—or who have been—considered “heroes.” Encourage students to consider whether all of the individuals they listed meet all of the characteristics and attributes they identified and draw conclusions about the difficulty of defining a hero.
4. Introduce the class to the “Righteous Among the Nations” information available in the [Rescue and Righteous Among the Nations Unit](#) and discuss the differences and similarities between the Yad Vashem criteria and the criteria developed by groups. How are the criteria/characteristics different and how are they similar?
5. Have students consider whether there is a continuum to ally behavior, i.e., while not everyone will rise to the definition of “hero,” everyone can do something to help others and stand up to injustice.
6. Close the activity with a discussion about the risks associated with helping others not only during the Holocaust, but in students’ everyday lives.
7. *Extension:* Have students read and construct a 1-2 paragraph response to the blog “[The Complexities of Courage.](#)”