The Holocaust: In Memory of Millions: Teacher’s Guide

**Grade Level:** 9-12  
**Curriculum Focus:** World History  
**Lesson Duration:** Three class periods

**Program Description**
Students will peer into WWII history as never before. Give them a rare moment with Walter Cronkite as he shares personal photographs from his coverage of the Holocaust. Students hear interviews with concentration camp survivors and the soldiers who liberated them. Archival film footage and memorabilia let students witness the war, and determine for themselves its lasting impact.

**Onscreen Questions and Activities**

Segment 1, The Holocaust: In Memory of Millions: Part One

- **Pre-viewing questions:**
  - Discuss what you already know about the Nazis and their persecution of millions.
  - Have you ever met a survivor of the Holocaust? What were some of his or her memories of the experience?
  - As you watch, note the personal accounts of World War II and think about how their stories affect your understanding of the Holocaust.

- **Post-viewing questions:**
  - According to the program it took less than three months for Hitler to seize total power. What allowed Hitler and the Nazi party to obtain power in Germany so quickly?
  - Describe the role that propaganda played in manipulating the thoughts and actions of the German people.

- **Activity:** Imagine that you have just avoided persecution by the Nazi army. Write a short story detailing your narrow escape. Include descriptions of your secret hiding places, the food you ate, and the people who helped pave your path to freedom.

Segment 2, The Holocaust: In Memory of Millions: Part Two

- **Pre-viewing questions:**
  - Just over half a century has passed since Allied troops began to liberate the Nazi concentration camps. Wounds still run deep and the threat of similar tragedies
The Holocaust: In Memory of Millions

Lesson Plan

Student Objectives

Students will understand:

- More than half a century after the Holocaust, people are still studying it and forming opinions about it.
- Hate among human beings did not fade away with the end of the Holocaust.

Materials

- The Holocaust: In Memory of Millions video and VCR, or DVD and DVD player
- Computer with Internet access
- Books, articles, and editorials concerning freedom of speech and hate groups in the United States
- Index cards for note taking

Procedures

1. Tell students that despite the atrocities committed during World War II by the Nazis in Germany, there are still people today who support the Nazi Party and its beliefs. Further acknowledge that many observers argue that the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protects the actions and speech of hate groups.

Tell the class that they will be taking part in a two-part assignment. In the first part, they will work in groups to investigate contemporary hate groups. In the second part, they will participate in a debate on tolerating the existence of hate groups.

2. Divide the class into small groups. Explain that in the debate, half of the groups will support the premise that hate groups must have freedom of speech, and the other half will support the
premise that hate groups should not have freedom of speech. During the research phase, they should not know what side they will be asked to argue. That is, they should collect arguments on both sides of the question.

3. Have students use print and Web resources to identify one or more contemporary hate groups. They may share strategies for locating resources about hate groups.

4. Direct students, working in their groups, to find answers to the questions listed below. One significant source of information is the Web site of the Anti-Defamation League: http://www.adl.org.

Suggest that students use index cards to take notes as they research. When they come across an opinion or argument in favor of or against granting hate groups the freedom of speech, they should write that argument on a note card and identify the source of the argument. Tell them to keep index cards in support of tolerance in one pile and cards in opposition to tolerance in another pile.

Here are some of the questions students should research individually. When they’ve completed their research, have students share answers with other members of their group:

- What kinds of beliefs are espoused by the hate groups you located in your research?
- What kinds of actions have these hate groups been known to take? What kinds of public statements have they made?
- What are some landmark court cases that have involved these hate groups?
- What arguments have you come across for and against tolerating the existence of hate groups in the United States?

5. When their research is complete, students may want to go to friends, relatives, and even Holocaust survivors to solicit opinions about tolerating hate groups today.

6. After students have finished collecting arguments for and against tolerating hate groups in the United States, review with them the following points regarding the nature of a debate:

- Debaters on each side will alternate presenting arguments to support their case.
- After all students on both sides have spoken, any member of the group may offer arguments in rebuttal, or in opposition, to the argument made by a debater on the opposite side. The side that has been rebutted gets another chance to defend its position.
- At the end of the debate, one person from each side will present a summary of that side’s argument.
- After the summaries, each member of the audience will vote for the side he or she thinks has presented the most convincing argument.

7. Pair groups, and tell them which group will argue for and which group will argue against tolerance for hate groups. Give each side time to review its notes and determine what specifics each person on that side will present to the audience and who will present the summary.
8. Allow time for each pair of groups to debate each other. After the debate, ask the audience to vote on which side gave the most convincing argument.

9. Lead a class discussion on the strengths and weaknesses of students’ research and debates.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What factors led to Hitler and the Nazi Party taking power in Germany? Why do you think the German people supported their actions?

2. The Holocaust was a human tragedy on a global scale. Millions of lives were exterminated by Hitler and the Nazis, and many more people died trying to stop them. Do you believe it’s possible that a similar tragedy could still happen in the world today, even though the human race has already experienced it before? Why or why not? Are similar, smaller events going on right now (and in the recent past)? If so, why do you think they are happening?

3. Imagine what it would have been like to be a German person your age during World War II. Do you think you would have been able to resist the propaganda and not join one of the many Hitler youth programs? Explain your response.

4. Anne Frank is famous for her statement that, despite her experiences during World War II, she still believed in the goodness of people. Knowing what you know about the events that transpired in Nazi concentration camps, do you have the same belief? Discuss the argument that the Nazi soldiers “were following orders” when they committed these war crimes. Discuss other factors that might also have contributed to their behaviors, such as propaganda and mob psychology.

5. Which do you think is a more effective way to learn about the Holocaust—through a careful analysis of historical facts or through listening to a wide selection of stories told by survivors? Does one of these methods offer a more realistic portrait of history? Explain your response.

6. It is said that we must learn about the past in order not to relive it. At the same time, however, we are told not to dwell in the past. How do you think these adages should or should not be applied to the Holocaust? Is one of them more applicable than the other? Can they both be true? Explain and defend your answers.

**Assessment**

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- 3 points: Students present logical, persuasive arguments, based on substantial facts; well-organized presentation.

- 2 points: Students present clear arguments, but more research needed; well-organized presentation.

- 1 point: Students present weak arguments with few facts, disorganized presentation.
Vocabulary

cognizant
*Definition:* Knowledgeable of something, especially through personal experience.
*Context:* The people who designed the Nazi death camps were cognizant of the intended use of the facilities.

demoralize
*Definition:* To weaken the morale of; to upset or destroy the normal functioning of.
*Context:* Concentration camp prisoners were forced to complete difficult and pointless tasks in order to discourage and demoralize them.

fascism
*Definition:* A political philosophy, movement, or regime that stands for a centralized autocratic government headed by a dictatorial leader, severe economic and social regimentation, and forcible suppression of opposition.
*Context:* Fascists believe in placing one’s nation and race before oneself.

ghetto
*Definition:* A quarter of a city in which members of a minority group live especially because of social, legal, or economic pressure.
*Context:* Jews in Nazi Germany were forced to live in ghettos.

Nazi
*Definition:* A member of a German fascist party controlling Germany from 1933 to 1945 under Adolf Hitler.
*Context:* The fascists who ruled Germany under Hitler were known as the Nazi Party.

propaganda
*Definition:* The spreading of ideas, information, or rumor for the purpose of helping or injuring an institution, a cause, or a person.
*Context:* Propaganda convinced many Germans that Hitler’s lies about Jews were reality.

Academic Standards

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)
McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp.

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:
• World History – A Half-Century of Crisis and Achievement: Understands the causes and global consequences of World War II.

• Historical Understanding: Understands the historical perspective.

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)
The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has developed national standards to provide guidelines for teaching social studies. To view the standards online, go to http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands/.

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

• Time, Continuity, and Change

Support Materials
Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the Discoveryschool.com Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

• http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html