

SCRIPT FOR GUIDELINES PRESENTATION

SLIDE 1

The USHMM opened in 1993 with education a key aspect of its mission. To help promote the serious, responsible teaching of the Holocaust, the Museum has outlined 14 Guidelines for teachers to use in planning their lessons.

We all know that time is our biggest enemy in teaching about the Holocaust. History teachers are limited by the mere scope of what they need to cover in a semester; language arts teachers are under pressure to help their students perform on standardized tests.

Knowing this, we still feel that if you're going to teach the Holocaust, you must do it well. The Museum doesn't offer a canned curriculum. Rather, it gives teachers these Guidelines to help you think about how to create and deliver your lessons.

Remember, you're the professional, and you know your kids better than we do. Now that you have a clear rationale for teaching this subject, you'll be able to make informed decisions.

SLIDE 2

As an English teacher who taught rhetoric, I was always reminding students to define their terms. They'd throw out words like liberal and conservative without stopping to think whether their audience shared the same definition of those terms.

I'm asked in workshops, "Which Holocaust?" or "What about the Native American Holocaust?" A professor at ASU, Bob Fine, always uses the term "Holocausts."

So when you teach the Holocaust, think about what your students know and how they perceive the Holocaust. Milwaukee has America's Black Holocaust Museum.

Most of us, because of our ages or backgrounds, automatically approach this subject with a certain amount of gravitas, but we can't assume our students share that respect or our definition. So be clear, early on, and reinforce your definition throughout the course/unit.

SLIDE 3

The USHMM definition of the Holocaust. As you read in the Linenthal book, arriving at this definition was an excruciating process. Your challenge as a teacher is to find ways to make the definition concrete for your students.

So we'll focus on three parts of the definition: systematic, European Jews as the primary victims, and those who collaborated with the Nazis in the murder of millions of people. I've broken this into three parts, and you might want to do the same for your students and the teachers you present to in the future, because it clarifies 1) what, when, where, who and how; 2) It focuses on the Jews as the primary victims; 3) it acknowledges other victim groups.

SLIDE 4

Here, trains at the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp illustrate the systematic nature of the Holocaust. In the distance, you can see the belongings of victims. These were stolen from the Nazi's victims, sorted by inmates, and prepared for shipment to Germany where they were resold. So the rail system was part of the mass murder, and the Nazis systematically exploited the belongings, and even the bodies, of their victims.

So here we see that this wasn't some haphazard effort. The Nazis industrialized their methods of killing, and they maximized their profit.

SLIDE 5

We can also make use of maps to illustrate the systematic nature of the Holocaust. This map is available on the USHMM website, and it shows the major deportation routes from all over Europe to the killing centers in Poland. And when we think about getting people to these major deportation sites, loading them onto the trains, and so on, we start to see how systematic it all was. And it involved many people, not just the Nazis. Many of you have heard Raul Hilberg's estimate that just through their connection with the railroad, close to a million Germans would have had some knowledge of what was going on. So this system involved many more than just the people we think of as perpetrators.

SLIDE 6

Not every victim was a Jew, but every Jew was a victim. Jews were persecuted solely because they were Jews. Certainly other people suffered, but our focus has to be on the Jews as the primary victims of Nazi atrocity.

Of the 6 million murdered, 1.5 million were children. These people had families, loves, dreams, and fears, just like our students.

While we need to acknowledge other victim groups, don't lose sight of the major focus of the Nazis' hatred: the Jews.

Hitler's hatred was not rabid anti-Roma or anti-Pole. The extermination of the Jews was his major goal. Other groups define their experience in comparison to the Jews.

SLIDE 7

In every country the Nazis occupied, they found part of the population more than willing to help them do the deed. In many cases, they had a long history of antisemitism and persecution of the Jews.

Many of these countries are just now coming to terms with the truth. Just last January the Romanian government officially acknowledged that there was a Holocaust, but resistance to the truth persists.

When we teach this history to students, don't fall into the trap of simplifying the scope of the collaborators.

SLIDE 8

This Guideline nearly speaks for itself, and yet students and teachers sometimes fall into this "comparison trap."

SLIDE 9

Nomadic Roma (Gypsies). Czechoslovakia, 1939.

The Roma experience came closest to that of the Jews. Persecuted as an inferior race, between 25 – 50 % of their prewar population were murdered by the Nazis, by members of the Einsatzgruppen and in concentration and death camps.

SLIDE 10

Helene Gotthold, a Jehovah's Witness, was beheaded for her religious beliefs on December 8, 1944, in Berlin. She is pictured with her children. Germany, June 25, 1936. Witnesses were persecuted for their beliefs, esp their refusal to recognize the authority of the state. Many witnesses refused to participate in compulsory military service. Though they claimed to be apolitical, many witnesses were incarcerated in concentration camps, and up to 2,000 were killed.

Does this mean their suffering was greater, or less, than that of the Roma? Certainly this woman and her family suffered greatly, as did all of the Nazis' victims. To say that the Roma suffered more than the Witnesses or the homosexuals or the Poles amounts to minimizing the suffering of those groups.

SLIDE 11

Injustice causes suffering, period.

SLIDE 12

We need to help our students see that history is about complexity and nuance. As much as we'd like to cut to the chase, so to speak, we can't allow ourselves, or our students, to take the easy way out.

SLIDE 13

Let's take a look at a question students commonly ask about emigration. This is from the Museum's website.

Another exercise you can have students do is also found on the website under Online Exhibits: Voyage of the St. Louis. Here they can engage in some research about the passengers, adding complexity to the generalization that after the St. Louis returned, "We all know what happened to them."

SLIDE 14

Political cartoon entitled, "Will the Evian Conference guide him to freedom?" published in the Sunday, July 3, 1938, edition of *The New York Times*. [Photograph #71847]

The Evian Conference of June, 1938, sent a message to the Jews that even if they could get out of Germany, most countries didn't want to take on massive immigration during lean economic times.

Notice that the refugee in the cartoon is labeled "non-Aryan."

Issues like these should be examined in depth, not dismissed with simple answers that fail to take into account the historical context. **ACTIVITY - Emigration**

SLIDE 15

Students sometimes feel that history is inevitable. Just because it's been photographed, documented, filmed, and recorded doesn't mean there was no avoiding it.

Help students see that history is the result of the conscious decisions people make. You want to make your students better critical thinkers. Ask, "What if?"

SLIDE 16

As you'll see in "Deadly Medicine" later this week, members of the medical community in Germany were complicit in the murder of people deemed to be useless feeders.

The nurse in this picture, for example, chose not to give comfort to this crying child, but rather to participate in his murder.

The disabled in Germany didn't just die in the so-called T-4 program; doctors, nurses, and orderlies at institutions murdered them.

SLIDE 17

On Thursday evening you'll get a chance to listen to Archivist Stephen Mize talk about the discovery of the papers of James Grover McDonald, a career diplomat who became the first US ambassador to Israel. McDonald spent the war years working to alleviate the plight of Jewish refugees. Had people listened to McDonald, would things have been different?

SLIDE 18

Since the Holocaust was a watershed event in history, we can expect the language to have been affected. We've already talked about defining Holocaust, but there are other terms as well that could give us problems. Be careful in how you use language. For example, if we're talking about the Civil Service Law of 1933, we shouldn't say, "Germans were allowed to keep their jobs, but Jews were not." You see, we've set up a distinction that the Nazis wanted to make --- that Jews weren't Germans. What is a Nazi? A perpetrator? A bystander? Are the lines blurry?

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When we say "resistance," we need to specify armed or spiritual.

SLIDE 20

Discuss these perpetrators' terms. When we use these terms we need to preface them with the phrase "so-called," or use finger quotes.

A good activity would be to take a look at Nazi euphemisms. Film: *Conspiracy*.

SLIDE 21

Here we're helping students interpret sources of information. What's fact, what's opinion? Is the source primary or secondary? When we interpret history, we have to look at the inherent limits of each source. Is it a memoir or diary, court record or field report?

SLIDE 22

Nazi war criminals were concerned with saving their own skins. We have to remember that not everyone tells the truth in a trial.

SLIDE 23

The Germans had planned to liquidate the ghetto in three days, but it took over a month. Perhaps this strong and unexpected resistance influenced the writers of the Stroop report to play fast and loose with the numbers, minimizing German casualties.

SLIDE 24

Beginning in 1939, Emmanuel Ringleblum began gathering documentation about life in the Warsaw ghetto. What are the limitations about a source like this? How does the nature of the ghettos affect the nature of the information?

SLIDE 25

Don't lump groups of people in one category --- all Jews, all Germans, the Catholic Church.

SLIDE 26

Look at the diversity of Jewish life between the wars. Even though it's easy to pop "Fiddler on the Roof" in the VCR, that's only a small part of Jewish life in Europe. Here you have religious and non-religious Jews, families, urban and rural Jews. How many of you have posed with Mickey?
If we fail to do this, we run the risk of making Jews "the other" rather than seeing them as individuals.

SLIDE 27 (Abba Kovner, "sheep to the slaughter" was a call to action, not a description of Jewish behavior.)

There's a popular stereotype that Jews didn't resist. Though we don't want to overplay Jewish armed resistance, we know that revolts took place in ghettos, in camps, and in killing centers, and we know that Jews participated in partisan groups as well. A good activity might be to ask your students what the Jews would have needed to offer armed resistance. Then list the obstacles they'd face. Remember, look at history from the point it happened, not in retrospect.

SLIDE 28

Sometimes we try to put a positive spin on events that are horrific. We have the "Gone with the Wind" image of slave life on plantations, for example. Things weren't so bad, after all.

The Anne Frank quote about the goodness of people. What would she have said in her diary in Bergen-Belsen in 1945?

Don't fall into the "romance trap."

SLIDE 29

Oscar Schindler with SS officials at a party in Krakow in 1943. Schindler made millions using Jews as slave labor before he decided to help rescue them.

Remember too that the documented cases of rescue in Nazi-occupied Europe represent less than one-half of one per cent of the non-Jewish population. With that in mind, how much time should we spend on rescue at the expense of other aspects of Holocaust history?

SLIDE 30

It might be tempting to draw in teen-aged boys with heroic stories of resistance, but don't neglect the rest of the history for the sake of sparking interest. Strive for accuracy and balance. I heard a speaker once say that the Holocaust offered no lessons because during that time the institutions of society failed to protect the most vulnerable citizens, children, and the adults who wanted to protect them, their families, were unable to.

SLIDE 31

Put the events of the Holocaust and the decisions people made in the larger context. For example, why didn't more ghettos offer the kind of armed resistance as Warsaw?

Answer: Many thought it to be irresponsible for the few to put everyone in danger.

Ask When? Ask Why? Look at history FORWARD, not BACKWARD.

SLIDE 32

We'd all agree that alcoholism is a bad thing, and that it ruins lives besides that of the alcoholic, but when we put this poster in the context of the negative eugenics movement, it takes on a sinister aspect. Rather than condemning the alcoholic, we should condemn the ideology that treats the alcoholic as less than human, life unworthy of life. What details in the poster can we call into question?

On top of that, what can we say about the fallacies inherent in this poster?

SLIDE 33

Stories can provide context. Without the story, it's just a badly-made comb. By providing the context of Yona Dickmann's story, the comb becomes an act of spiritual resistance.

SLIDE 34

It's easy to lose individuals when we're looking at the overwhelming tragedy of the Holocaust. Help your students zero in on the experiences of individuals.

SLIDE 35

The eye-shis-kee tower at the Museum gathers 6,000 portraits from one town that disappeared as a result of the Holocaust. Visitors can't help but see themselves in the portraits on the tower's walls.

SLIDE 36 & 37

Survivor testimony, whether live or filmed, is a great way to personalize the history of the Holocaust. Here's a picture of Jews being moved out of their homes and into the ghetto in Grodno. We look at this and say, "So what?" But listen to Nina Kaleska tell in her own words about being turned out of her home. (Play clip)

SLIDE 38

We have an obligation to keep the learning environment safe for our students. This means that when we choose audio and visual materials we need to keep in mind things like age-appropriateness. Don't let people tell you that kids are desensitized, that images don't affect them. Each student brings a different set of assumptions and experiences into a viewing experience. "When I stopped showing the graphic images, I became a better teacher."

SLIDE 39

Would you show this photo to your students? When? Why? Why not?

SLIDE 40

This is from the Calvin College archive of German Propaganda available on the web. What dangers do you see in showing an image like this?

SLIDE 41

We've already looked at analyzing kinds of sources. Now we want to look at the point of view, or perspective.

SLIDE 42

Here is part of a report from one of the mobile killing squads that describes a killing at the Ponary Forest in Lithuania in 1941. How would you describe the point of view? What language leads you to that conclusion?

SLIDE 43

In this account, we have a completely different POV. Dina Beitler survived this mass killing because she was one of the last people shot and fell on top of the other bodies. She was shot in the leg and pretended to be dead. Do you see how this POV brings a perspective that the official report lacks?

SLIDE 44

Can you identify the bystanders in this photo? What about the actor? How is the bystander POV important as we look at the Holocaust? Eric Johnson, *What We Knew*

SLIDE 45

Go back to rationale: What is your rationale? What outcomes can you expect? We want to build activities that help students achieve those outcomes.

SLIDE 46

Here's a photo from the Cortez, Colorado, newspaper this past spring. A survivor talked to the students and described how prisoners were forced to stand on one leg with their arms help out in front of them, for long periods of time. Apparently, this teacher felt that students would better understand the level of suffering if they had a little taste of it themselves. What are the possible negative results of this activity?

SLIDE 47

Be wary of any kind of simulation. Sometimes teachers have students role play in an effort to make students understand how it felt to be a Jew in occupied Europe. This is not only impossible, but unsound pedagogy. Make use of survivor testimonies, diaries (like Salvaged Pages), and give students time for written reflection. What other methods might be more effective than simulations? ACTIVITY - responsibility

SLIDE 48

Your opening and closing lessons are crucial when you're studying the Holocaust. Have the students create a K-W-L-H chart. What do I know? What do I want to know? What did I learn? How do I now know?

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Maybe you want to make a connection to other genocides in history --- Human rights violations are a constant problem in the world. Committee on Conscience.

SLIDE 50

Maybe your focus is about the fragile nature of democracy and the civic duty of every individual to be informed and to take part. The Weimar Republic was a democracy. Importance of reflection.

SLIDE 51

This idea of objectives is particularly important when we choose literature for students to read as part of our courses. Here are four books that feature an individual in Auschwitz. But which Auschwitz --- I, II or III? What do we want them to take from the story? Is the work age-appropriate? We need to go beyond "reading levels" here. Consider poems, short pieces, excerpts to help reach an objective.

SLIDE 52

Same as with literature. We talked last night about using film. Are there films you'd never show? Can you effectively show parts of films?