

Introductory Information

Overview Information

- Lesson Plan Title: Forgiveness
- Amanda Lepore, Alverno Heights Academy
- World History
- Holocaust
- 10th Grade, On-Level students
- 2 Class Periods (85 Minutes & 70 minutes). It could be shortened with homework or a jigsaw activity

Personal Introduction:

My name is Amanda Lepore and I teach at Alverno Heights Academy, which is an all girls Catholic school in Sierra Madre, CA. I teach US History, AP US History, World History, AP World History, and AP Human Geography. In the past, I have also taught at public schools in Los Angeles, CA and Phoenix, AZ. I attended the 2017 Centropa Summer Academy in Berlin, Germany.

Summary

Students will explore the concept of “Forgiveness” while studying the Holocaust. Using a Centropa Film and the book “The Sunflower: On The Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness”, students will explore their own attachment to “home” and the existential question of “Would you forgive if someone took what was dearest to you away?”

Background Information

1. Context for Lesson - How does this particular lesson fit into the broader themes of the course?
2. Enduring Understanding (EU) - Students will understand that forgiveness, resentment, love and hate are complex emotions with each person having their own method of coping with tragedy. Students will also process how impactful the Holocaust was and how people lost more than their families and possessions; they lost their home, their sense of safety, and their freedom.
3. Goals/Objectives -
 - a. SWBAT discuss the complexity of forgiveness and develop empathy for victims of the Holocaust and other genocides.
 - b. SWBAT analyze the long term effects of the Holocaust on survivors, including the emotional and physical trauma of what they went through.
4. Materials Used -
 - a. Centropa Film: [A Life Not Lived - The Jews of the Mosel Valley](#)
 - b. Book: [The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness](#)
5. Background Information - Students will need to have a basic understanding of what the Holocaust was and the impact on individual lives.

The Lesson

1. Opening Activity (15 minutes) - Students will create a 3x2 table on their papers that looks like this:

Students will be instructed to fill in one box with the most important thing to them. Then, they will be instructed to fill out the other 5 boxes with other things. After they are filled out, the teacher will instruct them to eliminate one thing. Then, another thing. Eventually, they will be down to 1. Ask students: Is this the most important thing to you on that list? Why? Have students journal about it.

2. Activity 1 Part I (45 minutes) Students will read a quick summary of *The Sunflower* along with the following excerpts:
 - a. Desmond Tutu
 - b. Harry Wu
 - c. Dith Pran
3. Activity 1 Part II (25 minutes) After reading, students will summarize each person's excerpt into 1 paragraph. If students struggle with reading or if you are pressed for time, you can jigsaw these excerpts and have students read them in a group. Each group would read one excerpt and share their summary. This will save you class time.
4. Activity 2 Part 1 (15 minutes) Students will watch "A Life Not Lived - The Jews of the Mosel Valley" on Centropa's website.
5. Activity 2 Part II (25 minutes) Students will answer the following reflection questions:
 - a. "Why do you think they never returned after this visit?"
 - b. "Was it insensitive or rude to ask her if she felt German or Jewish?"
 - c. "In the film, the woman said she did not hate the Germans even though they killed her family. How would you have responded if that was you?"
6. Concluding Activity (30 minutes) Students will reflect on the assignment and complete the following:

- a. Write a letter to Simon Wiesenthal and answer his question. Would you forgive and why or why not?
- b. Write a letter to one of the people in the film. What would you tell them if you had the chance? How did this interview change your perspective or help you gain a better understanding of what was lost.
- c. Think back to our original activity. Would you change the thing you were left with or would you exchange it for something else? Why or why not?

Reflection

1. What was your experience of teaching this lesson?

I had a positive experience with this lesson. I think it was helpful to take a rest from the facts and figures to engage with the humanistic experience of the Holocaust. Students often hear of stories during the Holocaust, but in previous years I have lacked in teaching them the points after the Holocaust. How did survivors move on? How did they cope? These are important things for students to reflect on because the trauma does not end after liberation or migration.

2. What recommendations do you have for other teachers using your lesson plan?

You need to know your students well. If they have experienced excessive trauma, then tread lightly with some of these questions. Students who have been refugees or migrants may experience difficulty with this lesson, but it is still an important lesson to deliver.

3. What worked well?

Students were engaged with this lesson. They enjoyed the video and the excerpts. The students were inquisitive and took the lesson seriously. They reflected on their own values.

4. What might you do differently next time? What challenges did you face?

Some of my EL Students had difficulty with the excerpts, so I put them into "Rewordify" to lower the Lexile levels and/or translated them to their native languages.