

## **Centropa Lesson**

### **So that Memory Doesn't Die**

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New York, NY

Course: Holocaust

Lesson Category: Holocaust

Grade level: High School

Academic time needed: one lesson (45 minutes)

#### **Summary**

In this 45 minute lesson, high school students explore two important aspects of survivors' lives: 1) rebuilding their lives after living through horrors and losing their families, and 2) sharing their stories. Students will watch the Centropa film, *So Memory Doesn't Die*, and read excerpts from the interview with Toska Silberring to explore how Toska rebuilt her life and why she chose to speak about her experiences.

#### **Background Lesson Information**

1. **Context for Lesson:** This lesson is designed for a Holocaust class in which students have some background.
2. **Enduring Understanding:** the help that some Holocaust survivors received during this horrific period gave them strength not only to survive but also to help others on their return and to rebuild a life.
3. **Big Questions:**
  - How does Toska explain the fact that she was able to rebuild her life after she lost her entire family?
  - What parts of her life was Toska able to rebuild, and which parts was she unable to rebuild?
  - What does Toska mean when she says: "so that memory does not die"?
  - Why is memory important?
4. **Goals/Objectives:**
  - a. For students to reflect on what it took for survivors to rebuild their lives after the Holocaust.
  - b. To compel students to reflect on the emotional response to going through the horrors of the Holocaust and how those experiences might shape someone's emotional life afterwards.
  - c. Providing students with an opportunity to think about what qualities it takes for someone to survive horrible experiences, to go on and rebuild their lives and then to speak about them (or not) to others.
5. **Resources Needed**
  - a. Projector, screen, speakers and computer with film downloaded or DVD to play (you can stream it from the Internet, but we do not

recommend this in case there are problems with the Internet connection).

- b. The film, *So Memory Doesn't Die*, which can be downloaded from [http://centropa.roromedia.at/node/60518?subtitle language=](http://centropa.roromedia.at/node/60518?subtitle_language=).
- c. Students will need paper, pens to write down answers to questions.
- d. Copies of several pages in the Silberring Reader/Krakow Walking Tour.

## **The Lesson**

### **Motivating the students/the hook** (4 minutes)

Write the words "So that memory doesn't die" on the whiteboard.

Teacher says: The interview with Toska is called "So that memory doesn't die" and in the introduction she says, "for years I refused interviews. Whoever called me, I refused. But then they started persuading me that it's for history."

What do you think Toska meant by "so that memory doesn't die?"

Students write down their thoughts, giving everyone a chance to reflect, then quickly discuss. They will refer to their thoughts at the end of the lesson.

### **Watch the film** (25 minutes; the film itself is 18 minutes)

Briefly introduce the film, providing whatever context and information appropriate for your particular class, based on what you've already studied and the context in which you are teaching this lesson.

End your introduction by giving your students the questions you want them to think about as they watch the film. You may want to write them on the board or them out on a worksheet. Since the film has subtitles, students will not be able to answer the questions while watching.

1. How does Toska explain the fact that she was able to rebuild her life after she lost her entire family?
2. What parts of her life were Toska able to rebuild, and which parts were she unable to rebuild?

Immediately after watching the film, ask the students to write brief answers to the two questions above.

### **After the film** (10 minutes)

Ask the students to read pages 18-21 in Silberring Reader. Have their answers to questions (1) and (2) above changed? Discuss.

### **Concluding Discussion** (5 minutes)

Using the below questions, try to reach a more sophisticated understanding of “so that memory doesn’t die.” **Depending on the students and on how much time you have, this will either be frontal or with the students.**

- How did Toska’s memories keep her alive (metaphorically – returning home to meet her father and brother; concretely – her aunt’s maid helping out with food; other people who were good to her, see p. 15 in the Reader)?
- And how did she help others after the war because of her memories?

### **Concluding Activity**

An **evaluation piece** for students might be to write a letter to Toska with their feelings after reading the interview and seeing the film.

**This lesson plan is built for a 45 minute class. If there is more time or HW can be given in advance, you may want to read carefully Toska’s own answers to the Big Questions on page 5 of the Reader and add them to the discussion.**

Other discussion or assignment suggestions if you have more time for this lesson:

- Explore the difference between memory and history.
- In addition to discussing Toska’s own explanation for how she was able to go on and rebuild her life after such tragedy and horror, ask the students to identify the qualities they saw in her that allowed her to move on. Use this as an opportunity for student to: What qualities do I need to pick myself up and be able to go on? Jewish schools might draw on teachings from rabbinic tradition on this, and public schools can draw on teachings from public figures.
- In the reader, students learn how after the war Toska not only found those people who had helped her to thank them – and helped them in return, when she could – but she also befriended a German man, which she never thought would be possible. What role did this ability to be thankful, grateful and forgiving play in Toska’s ability to survive?