



La Benevolencija: Reaching Out to Welcome In– An Act of True Benevolence

Melyssa McBryde, Alief Taylor High School

Holocaust and Genocide Studies

Humanities

11 & 12 Grade, On Level, English Language Learners

1 (50 minute) class period

Summary: This lesson will help the students to discover what a community is, how it functions, and how a community can come together and help each other in a time of need like war. I used the *Survival in Sarajevo* film as an example. The students' goals are to define what a community is, how it functions, and how we can help each other in a time of need as a community in Alief, Houston, and the world.

Context of the Lesson: This lesson is part of the introduction to the Holocaust and Genocide Studies class; before we can discuss genocide the students first have to understand who they are as an individual and then as a community. The community concept will help them understand how a lack of a community will lead to hate, hate crimes, and ultimately genocide.

Enduring Understanding: The Community is the central part of a nation and when the community works together, despite their ethnicity, race, creed, gender, or religion, the community will withstand any and all interferences from outside forces.

Goals/Objectives: TLW watch the Centropa video “Survival in Sarajevo” and define, describe what a community is and analyze how the people came together in Sarajevo as a community to help and support each other by answering the analysis questions and participating in a Chalk Talk Discussion.

The knowledge gained from this lesson is what a community is, how it functions, and how the community helps and supports the members during crisis.

The impact of this lesson is that the students discover the need to help others in their community.

Materials Used:

Facing History Website: <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/defining-community-universe-obligation>

Facing History Worksheet:

https://www.facinghistory.org/sites/default/files/Universe_of_Obligation.pdf

Survival in Sarajevo Film:

<http://www.centropa.org/centropa-cinema/prezivjeti-u-sarajevu-prijateljstvo-za-vrijemera?subtitle language=>

Thinking Maps:

<https://www.dvusd.org/cms/lib/AZ01901092/Centricity/Domain/1535/what-are-thinking-maps.pdf>

Chalk Talk:

<https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/blog-posts/genia-connell/chalk-talks-engage-all-students/>

The Lesson:

1. “Do Now”/Warm Up/”Hook”: In your journals (or separate sheet of paper), define what a community is by creating a Circle Thinking Map to help brainstorm. Students will write down any words, phrases, or even draw pictures to help them to best explain what a community is. Students will come up to the board and write down one word/phrase they wrote down. Class discussion over the “Do Now”. (10 minutes)
2. The students will watch *Survival in Sarajevo* and answer the fact-based questions as they watch. Lead a class discussion over the film. (15 minutes)
3. Chalk Talk Discussion: Students will participate in a Chalk Talk Discussion, or a discussion by discussing without speaking. Sheets of paper will be put around in the room with one question on each. The students will walk around the room and answer the question (and writing their name by their answer because most of my students’ writing looks the same!) thoroughly. If they agree/disagree with someone, they can write, “I Agree/I Disagree” but they have to explain why. After each student has answered each question they will sit down and wait until everyone has finished.
 - What characteristics, qualities, and skills did the people of La Benevolencija need in order to do what they did during the siege of Sarajevo?
 - What values did La Benevolencija exhibit in their actions?
 - What role did the government play in La Benevolencija? Explain.

After the Chalk Talk, discuss as a class each question. The students can bring up what other people wrote down to discuss in class.

After the discussion of the Chalk Talk, make the connection to La Benevolencija and Taylor HS by asking the following questions:

- What communities do you think we have here at Taylor HS?
- How can we create a community like La Benevolencija at Taylor HS?
- What obligation do we have to make Taylor a better school and a better community? Explain your answer.



- What are some good examples that we have here in Alief that are similar to La Benevolencija?

Bring up the Hurricane Harvey and how the Alief Community came together to help the greater Houston area in a time of need in terms of shelter, clothing, food, and medical services. Also, Discuss with the students the Adopt a Kid program and how each class is its own community, collecting money and gifts for an elementary student in need and having a Christmas party for them, especially when they probably won't have a Christmas because of their economic circumstances.

Reflection:

- My students absolutely loved the film. They really loved the aspect of what the film taught and that when I went on the Centropa Summer Academy I met the people who were part of this film.
- You can change the lesson to focus on the schools/community of your own.
- What worked well with my students was the class discussion at the end of the class. It was a very healthy discussion over the film and over how the Alief community functions.
- What I may do the next time is I may have my students sit in groups and each group will have to answer one analysis question together as they watch the video. They can share what they discussed at the end of the film. This takes the pressure off the students as they don't have to answer every single analysis question during the film individually, and allows them to really enjoy the film (especially for my ELL students and my SPED students). It also helps them to interact with their peers through group work.

Survival in Sarajevo Fact-Based Questions

1. What are the main ethnic groups in Sarajevo?
2. What was the cause(s) of the war in the former Yugoslavia?
3. How did the outside powers like the United States and Europe help? Was it successful?
4. How did La Benevolencija operate?
5. There are two people mentioned at the end of the film, Zeyneba Hardaga and Denis Karalic. Describe who they are, how they were impacted by the war, and what difference they made for their community.