



Rescue & Resistance: Hidden Children of the Holocaust

Time: 75-120 minutes

Audience: 6-12th Grade

Acknowledgment: *This curriculum is a project of the California Teachers Collaborative for Holocaust and Genocide Education, established by the JFCS Holocaust Center, with support from the California Department of Education, the Marin County Office of Education, and the State of California.*

Learning Objectives: Students will be able to...

- Define the term “hidden children” as it relates to the Holocaust
- Explain why Jewish children went into hiding during the Holocaust and describe the effects of hiding on hidden children
- Analyze the film *A Great Big Secret*, to identify a theme, or overall message from the narrator and cite evidence to support their thinking
- Describe examples of rescue and resistance during the Holocaust and the role of upstanders

California Common Core Standards for Middle School:

- **RI.6-8.1:** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences.
- **RI. 6-8.2:** Determine a central idea and analyze its development over the course of the text.
- **RI 6-8.3:** Analyze how individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
- **RI.6-8.6:** Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text.
- **RI.6-8.7:** Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.
- **W.6-8.9:** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis.

California Common Core Standards for High School:

- **HSS-10.4.3:** Describe the Holocaust and the effects of genocide, totalitarian rule, and acts of resistance.
- **HSS-10.8.6:** Discuss the human costs of war, with particular attention to the civilian and Holocaust toll.
- **RI.9-10.1, RI.11-12.1:** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences.
- **RI.9-10.2 / RI.11-12.2:** Determine a central idea and analyze its development over the course of the text.
- **RI.9-10.3 / RI.11-12.3:** Analyze how individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
- **RI.9-10.6 / RI.11-12.6:** Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text.

- **RH.11-12.7** Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media in order to address a question or solve a problem.
- **W.9-10.9 / W.11-12.9:** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis.

Context

The lesson is designed for secondary students, grades 6 through 12, in English Language Arts, History, and Social Studies. Students should have prior knowledge and background on the Holocaust and World War II. This lesson can be modified and adapted to meet the needs of diverse learners across grade levels and adjusted for time and pacing. The lesson has been designed for in-person learning but can be modified for virtual learning. Please see the end of this document for a full list of differentiation strategies, a glossary of key terms, and additional resources to support students in their understanding of the Holocaust.

In this lesson, students examine the Holocaust through the experiences and perspectives of Hidden Children, an especially vulnerable population during World War II. Students analyze primary sources, including photographs and oral survivor testimony, to understand why children went into hiding and the effects hiding had on their sense of self, identity, and safety. Through an analysis of the short film *A Great Big Secret*, students hear the story of survivor Anita F, a hidden child during the war, and explore themes of empathy, resilience, and the importance of being an upstander and advocate for tolerance.

Materials Needed

- [Google slides](#)
- Short film: [A Great Big Secret](#)
- [Handout 1](#): Photo Analysis
- [Handout 2](#): Glossary
- [Handout 3](#): Guiding Questions
- [Handout 4](#): Supplemental Resources

Optional Materials from the USHMM

- [The Path to Nazi Genocide](#) (grades 9-12)
- [Daniel's Story](#) (grades 6-8)
- *The Path to Nazi Genocide* [discussion questions](#)
- [Additional resources](#)

Lesson/Activity

Note: Before beginning the lesson, it is recommended that the teacher have a conversation with their students about the challenging themes that occur throughout this lesson, provide strategies to implement should the content be emotionally difficult for students, and revisit options should they need to take a break.

For middle school students or students unfamiliar with the Holocaust, consider showing the short film, [Daniel's Story](#), recommended for younger students and their families. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's 38-minute film, [The Path to Nazi Genocide](#), is recommended for students in 9th through 12th grade and with a more advanced understanding of the Holocaust and World War II. Review all materials and videos before implementing them with students.

1. Open the accompanying [slides](#) and introduce the topic to your students: Rescue & Resistance - Hidden Children of the Holocaust.
2. Begin the lesson with an entry task to activate student knowledge before launching the lesson. Invite students to respond independently in writing and ask a few students to share their ideas and thinking.
 - What words come to mind when thinking about childhood?
 - When do you or a sibling feel most supported and safe?

Listen for students to identify one or more of the following in their response:

- Stability and security
- Family, love, affection, and support/ emotional needs being met
- Food and shelter/ physical needs being met
- Freedom
- Routine

Teacher Tip: To extend this activity and create a resource for students to reference throughout the lesson, consider using chart paper to document and record students' responses as they share their thoughts as a class. Use this as an opportunity to list any additional concepts or ideas you want to call attention to before moving forward in the lesson.

3. Think-Pair-Share: Launch the lesson with a think-pair-share. Ask students to take a moment to recall what they know about the Holocaust, and provide time for them to share their thinking with a partner. Listen to students' discussion and call on a few students to share their ideas with the class.

When listening to students' responses, answer any questions and clarify misconceptions. Revisit the definition of the Holocaust.

The Holocaust was the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million European Jews by the Nazi regime and its allies and collaborators. The Holocaust was an evolving process that took place throughout Europe between 1933 and 1945. During the Holocaust, the Nazi regime and its collaborators killed six million Jews, nearly two-thirds of Europe's entire Jewish population.

The Nazis and their allies also targeted other groups for mass murder, including Roma, people with mental and physical disabilities, LGBTQ+ individuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, and others deemed harmful to German society. Over 11 million individuals were murdered by the Nazis during World War II.

Use this as a teaching moment to define **antisemitism**: the prejudice against or hatred of Jewish people.

Explain that antisemitism was core to Nazi ideology and was the foundation of the Holocaust. However, antisemitism did not begin or end with the Holocaust, and still exists today.

Explain that antisemitism is an ideology and form of racism based on hatred and discrimination of the Jews. Anti-Judaism, based on religious discrimination, was part of

Christian European culture for centuries. In the 19th century, it mutated to include racial discrimination, the basis of Nazi antisemitism. Antisemitism also encompasses Holocaust denial and distortion and can exist in places where Jews are prominent and visible and in places where Jewish people are not represented in the community.

4. Photo Analysis: Transition students by introducing them to the next activity where they will analyze primary sources.

Display the images on student [handout 1](#). For an in-person gallery walk, display each image at different points in the room. Provide students with chart paper, sticky notes, and pens to use throughout the activity. Alternatively, you can use the accompanying slides (10-14) and project each image, along with printing the images for students to analyze closely and take additional notes.

In small groups, invite students to visit each image for a few moments at a time. Ask students to use their sticky notes to identify one thing they notice and one thing they wonder about and place these notes on the chart paper with the image. Each student can use two sticky notes per image, one to note something they notice and another to record something they wonder. After the first round, invite students to use a third sticky note to reply to another person's comment or question.

It is recommended that you provide students with approximately 2-3 minutes to analyze each image, discuss it with others in their groups, and write and post their observations and questions or wonderings. After the activity, bring the class together as a whole group to discuss and debrief each group's analysis and response to the images.

Differentiation Strategy: Provide students with conversation starters to use when sharing their thinking with the class. Consider modeling to students how to respond to the questions using academic language.

Example:

- In picture __, I notice...
- I infer __ because/since/due to...

5. After listening to students analyze the photographs, explain to students that before sharing more about the children in the photos, they will learn more about what it meant to be Jewish during the Holocaust.

Use this as a teaching moment to revisit the definition of **antisemitism**: the prejudice against or hatred of Jewish people. Launch slides 15-20.

Tell students that shortly after becoming Chancellor of Germany, Adolf Hitler and the Nazi government enacted a series of antisemitic measures aimed at excluding Jews from German society, including the Nuremberg Laws of 1935. These laws first deprived German Jews of their citizenship and all pertinent, related rights, effectively removing Jews from all spheres of German political, social, and economic life. The laws also established definitions of Jewishness based on bloodlines.

Focus students on the fact that an estimated 1.6 million Jewish children were murdered in the Holocaust, and that children were especially vulnerable during this time. Tell students that as a result of Nazi persecution, some children were forced into hiding.

Activate prior knowledge by asking students if they know of any children hidden during the Holocaust. Anticipate that a few students will raise their hands and recall the story of Anne Frank and her family.

Define the term **Hidden Children**: Jewish children who survived the Holocaust by hiding, either physically or by changing their identities.

Differentiate the two types of hiding children experienced during the Holocaust:

- **Physical Hiding**: meant that the child was hidden and concealed from the outside world.

Mention that Anne Frank and her family, for example, managed to physically hide by living in a small attic that could only be accessed through a secret door behind a bookshelf.

Important! The voice of Anne Frank has become a symbol of the Holocaust. Her famous diary illustrates a life in hiding and it is taught in classrooms throughout the world. Although the most famous, Anne was one of thousands of children who were hidden during the Holocaust, and each has a unique story.

- **Hiding in the Open**: meant that the child did not have to physically hide, but instead had to assume a different outward identity. To do this, children used new names, dates, family histories, and often had to learn the practices of Christianity. Children hiding in the open were either taken in by non-Jewish families or were given refuge in convents or orphanages. Sometimes, children were forced to relocate to other families or institutions when there was perceived danger.

6. Inform students that they will now learn more about the children in the photos. Reveal the photographs with their descriptions.

Explain to students that the people in these photos were actually Jewish children who were hidden from the Nazis and their collaborators. Their childhoods were profoundly affected by antisemitism and the Nazis' extreme hatred for the Jewish people.

Ask students:

- 1) How does your understanding of the history of the Holocaust and the experiences of hidden children under Nazi persecution change the way you view these photos?
- 2) What do you think the children in these photos were thinking, feeling, or hoping?

Consider using this as an opportunity for students to turn and talk, or invite the class to share their thinking as a large group.

7. Tell students that they will now bear witness to the testimony of Anita F, a hidden child during the Holocaust. Introduce the short-film, *A Great Big Secret*. Use this as an opportunity to revisit the learning objectives of the lesson, or [preview the questions](#) you ask students to discuss and respond to during and after the film.

Launch and watch *A GREAT BIG SECRET* with your class.

Differentiation Strategy: Consider utilizing closed captions to support ELs. It is also recommended that you download, print, and provide the transcript of the film to students, especially if there is not enough time to watch the short film a second time. The transcript can be found below the title of the film on [Vimeo](#).

Printing the transcript for students also allows them to reference and directly cite evidence from Anita's testimony when responding to questions.

Extension Activity: If students have the ability to rewatch the film closely a second time, consider implementing an annotation protocol, where students actively listen to Anita's testimony while annotating the transcript for textual evidence or literary devices, such as symbolism, juxtaposition, or foreshadowing.

8. Relay expectations for responding to the [questions](#) aligned with *A Great Big Secret*. In this activity, place students into small groups to discuss and respond to the questions collaboratively. All questions can be discussed and answered collaboratively or independently, depending on the teacher's choosing. Set a timer and let students know you will debrief as a class and each group will be asked to share their thinking.

Differentiation Strategy: While students complete each question, circulate around the room and monitor students' responses. If asking students to cite evidence to support their thinking, check that students have cited evidence correctly and identified a relevant quote to support their analysis. If you notice students *are not* citing evidence correctly, refocus the class and model how to correctly cite evidence to support their response.

Differentiation Strategy: Consider providing language supports such as sentence starters or sentence stems. These language supports can also be differentiated for diverse learners.

Examples:

- One theme/message Anita conveys in *A Great Big Secret* is _____.
- In *A Great Big Secret*, hidden child and Holocaust survivor Anita Frank conveys _____. Anita shares, "....."

9. As the lesson concludes, introduce the idea of resistance, and what it meant to be an upstander during World War II and the Holocaust.

Explain that for the most part, non-Jews were either indifferent or outright hostile towards Jewish people during the Holocaust, and those who helped Jews hide could face severe punishments, including death. While some people were willing to hide Jews, a majority of non-Jews were not willing to risk their lives to save their Jewish neighbors.

Rescuers had different motivations for saving Jewish children. While some did so because they could gain financially, as Jews often had to pay hefty fees to rescuers, some rescuers were **upstanders**—they understood that what was happening was wrong, and intervened. These individuals came from different countries and diverse backgrounds, and their efforts took many forms, ranging from the isolated actions of individuals to organized networks.

Many rescuers have since been bestowed with the title of [Righteous Among the Nations](#), an award given to non-Jews who put themselves at great personal risk to save Jews during the Holocaust. Show slide 33, which honors just a few upstanders during the Holocaust.

10. Exit Ticket: Begin with the quote from Holocaust survivor and author, Elie Wiesel:

"In those times there was darkness everywhere. Only a few had the courage to care. There is always a moment when a moral choice is made... We must learn from them, and in gratitude and hope, we must remember them."

Invite students to respond to the questions independently and in writing.

- What are some qualities that upstanders have?
- What actions can *you* take to be an upstander when you witness acts of injustice or intolerance?
- Think about a time when you have witnessed someone being bullied or discriminated against. How did you react? If you could go back in time, would you react differently?

Assessment: Throughout the lesson, students have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their understanding orally, in writing, in small groups, with partners, and independently. All questions answered independently can be used as assessments, including the exit ticket.

Differentiation Strategy: To create a more rigorous assessment, assess student understanding through an essay analyzing *A Great Big Secret* and ask students to cite multiple pieces of evidence to support their analysis.

Differentiation, Extensions, & Modifications

- Language supports:
 - Provide the glossary to students to reference throughout the lesson
 - Sentence starters and sentence stems for written responses
 - Conversation starters for turn & talks and think, pair, shares
 - Closed captions during screening of *A Great Big Secret*
 - Provide the printed transcript of *A Great Big Secret* to reference during the film and throughout the lesson
- Opportunities to work with diverse partners:
 - Independent work
 - Small group work and discussion
 - One-on-one support from the teacher as needed and direct teacher modeling

- Extensions & Modifications
 - Implement an annotation protocol, where students actively listen to Anita's testimony while annotating the transcript for textual evidence or literary devices, such as symbolism, juxtaposition, or foreshadowing, etc.
 - Utilize the Shoah Foundation's [Visual History Archive](#) to access and bear witness to thousands of recorded survivor testimonies and oral histories. Consider how students can critically engage with these testimonies and examine them alongside Anita's story in *A Great Big Secret*.
 - Closely examine the maps in slides 19 and 20. Compare and contrast the Jewish populations in each country. Break students into small groups to research a country during World War II and conduct a case study. In their country of study, what factors led to the significant decline or increase of Jews from 1933 to 1950? Prompt them to consider factors such as geography, rates of collaboration with the Nazis, acts of rescue and resistance, and the country's history and its relationship with Germany and its Jewish citizens preceding World War II.
 - Using slides 60 and 61, extend the lesson with a focus on rescuers, resistance, and upstanders during the Holocaust. Consider an activity where students research the lives and contributions of upstanders and rescuers and identify examples of resistance, compassion, resilience, and empathy. Explore stories, archives, and interactive exhibits, listen to podcasts, and analyze primary sources at [The Righteous Among the Nations | Yad Vashem](#)

Glossary

Next Steps: History comes alive through primary sources like those seen in this lesson. To learn about incorporating archival materials into your curriculum or bringing a survivor of genocide to your classroom through the Holocaust Center's [Speaker's Bureau Program](#), contact the JFCS Holocaust Center at holocaustcenter@jfcs.org.

Supplemental Resources

References

Portrait of Dawid Tennenbaum in hiding. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Photo Archives. Courtesy of David Tennenbaum. Copyright of United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Potash, Yoav. 2024. *A Great Big Secret*. Headfirst Arts & Media and the Jewish Family and Children's Services Holocaust Center.

Suzanne Vromen, *Hidden Children of the Holocaust: Belgian Nuns and Their Daring Rescue of Young Jews from the Nazis* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. "Hidden Children: Hardships." Collections Highlights. <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/hidden-children-hardships>.

Accessed on June 2, 2024.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. "Introduction to the Holocaust." Holocaust Encyclopedia. <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/introduction-to-the-holocaust>. Accessed on June 2, 2024.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: "Remember the Children: Daniel's Story." <https://www.ushmm.org/information/exhibitions/museum-exhibitions/remember-the-children-daniels-story>. Accessed on June 2, 2024.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. "The Path to Nazi Genocide." <https://www.ushmm.org/learn/holocaust/the-path-to-nazi-genocide>. Accessed on June 2, 2024.

Yaffa Eliach, ed., *We Were Children Just Like You* (Brooklyn, NY: Center for Holocaust Studies Documentation and Research), 93-95.