



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2002 Volume I: Survival Stories

The Holocaust: Survival Stories

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Overview

What exactly is survival? And why do we feel the need to tell stories of our survival? Survival stories have been around since the beginning of man. They are a universal trait of any given culture and people. Whether the story is told orally or is written does not matter. Even though my high school students are still young, they have already survived something, whether it is a bad childhood, a bad breakup, or adolescence itself. They will be able to relate to and understand the idea of survival. They tell survival stories all the time without knowing it. We will look at survival stories of the Holocaust, both fictional and not.

Literature is different from other types of writing, because rather than simply conveying information, literature explores experience. The writer and the reader through the writing and reading of literature share both the good and the bad of life. A writer can share life through fiction or non-fiction. When we think of survival narratives and memoirs, we almost always think of a true, first-person account, yet some survival narratives and memoirs are fiction. Why would people use imaginative literature as a way to share their stories? What benefits are there to this type of writing, versus non-fiction? What psychological need does presenting the survival story as fiction fulfill for the author? Is the author being fair to the reader if he/she presents the fictional story as a memoir or as non-fiction? These are just some of the questions students will explore in this unit. We will read and analyze two narratives of survival, both works that challenge the divide between fiction and non-fiction. *Fragments: Memories of a Wartime Childhood*, by Benjamin Wilkomirski, is a memoir about his time in various concentration camps as a young boy. Wilkomirski claimed to be a Holocaust survivor writing his memoir, but a skeptical reader found out after doing research that Wilkomirski appears to have made up his story. *Maus I* and *Maus II*, by Art Spiegelman, tells the story of his father's survival during the Holocaust and of his own survival as the son of a Holocaust survivor. This graphic novel, in comic book form, is unique in that Spiegelman draws people with different animal heads representing different ethnicities and races. Both texts are very accessible for students.

Introduction

I teach in New Haven in a magnet school called the Sound School. My high school is unique in that it is a comprehensive aquaculture school. Sound School students study the water, build boats, fish, and sail. Core classes are also taught, but in a more traditional way. I will teach this unit to my English 2 classes. My class is made up of a diverse group of students. My students are from New Haven and over 18 surrounding school districts. The diversity isn't simply ethnic or racial, but socioeconomic also. I have students who are white, African American, Latino, and a mix of all three and more. Some of my students come from poverty-stricken families, while others are quite wealthy. Because my school has a student body of 300, this diversity is a source of enrichment, rather than a source of problems. I also encounter many of the same problems as other inner-city schools have -- low reading and writing skills. But from experience, I've learned that these units get the students excited. Exploring something in-depth gets their analytical and critical thinking skills going.

I don't simply see my job, as an English teacher, as strengthening my students' literacy skills. I also find it my responsibility to help my students become healthy, productive adults. In light of this, I always try to teach life skills as well in all my units. Students today are so overloaded with information from so many sources: media, family, peers, Internet, T.V, school, etc. Unfortunately, too many students, and adults as well, do not truly analyze information, but rather believe it as truth. Take the Internet for example. There are so many websites that offer "facts" about a variety of topics, yet many of them are incorrect and unreliable. If we are to arm our students with the critical thinking skills that they need in life today, we must teach them to think for themselves. With this objective in mind, I will not tell the students that *Fragments* might actually be fiction. Many experts were duped into believing the authenticity of this work, as I expect my students will be. They must learn to question what they learn, even what they learn from me. Someone once said, and I don't know the identity of the speaker, "The difference between an educated man and an uneducated man is that the uneducated man believes what he is told, and the educated man questions what he is told." Students don't need to necessarily know all the answers yet as long as good questions are being raised and resources are being used to figure out the answers.

Another objective for the students is to learn how writing can help someone heal and/or deal with problems or traumatic events. Many students today, although still young, have had to live through terrible adversity, and maybe they can learn to turn to writing for solace and therapy. Even if they haven't had terrible past events in their life, simply being adolescents, they face adversity. I truly believe that adolescence is something we "survive." I know many people tell the students that these are the best years of their lives, with all their lives ahead of them. I agree they have their whole lives ahead of them, but being a teenager is often hell, to be frank. Friends can be petty, body image can be shaky at best, peers can be brutal, parents don't always understand, teens don't always know who they are, and the list goes on. Adolescence is hard. Writing can be an outlet for students, especially when given the chance to write only for themselves. Through this unit, they can begin to write their own survival stories in a journal and in a photography project to be explained later.

Introduction to the Holocaust

I have found that students' background knowledge of the Holocaust varies greatly. Some know so much about it, while others only know of *Schindler's List*, the movie. My first activity of the unit will be a chalk talk. This activity is great for finding out what students know about a subject. It can also be used as a review to see what the class has learned. In the middle of the board I will write "the Holocaust." Silently, students will, one at a time, go up to the board and write a fact, a comment, a question... about the Holocaust. They can draw arrows, signs, pictures either connecting to what someone else wrote or by itself. I love this activity for many reasons. Not only do I find out what the students already know, all students can participate, even the shy ones. Students who don't know anything about the subject can also feel success participating by asking a question. Students love this activity too, and they actually stay silent for it. Once we finish, we go over what's on the board. We answer the questions that were asked and discuss what people know.

When this is finished, I will spend about two days lecturing on the Holocaust so students have the historical knowledge needed to understand and appreciate the literature. I don't lecture often, but I like to include the technique in class so students get a chance to practice different note-taking skills, a skill often over-looked. By April, when I'll teach this unit, students will be able to take notes without me having to write everything on the board. What I do in the beginning of the year, which works well with lower-level classes, is teach note-taking in stages. At first I'll write everything I want them to write in their notebooks on the board. I'll do this for a while, changing the style of note-taking so students can figure out what works best for them. Then I'll only write key items down and will ask them to write details from what I say. At the end of class, I'll hand out exactly what they should have written down so they know what information was important, what they caught and what they missed. Then I only speak and see what they take notes on by checking their notebooks. This process does take time, but the long-term benefits are incredible. Soon students take excellent notes and you don't have to worry about that anymore.

According to *Teaching about the Holocaust: A Resource Book for Educators*, which can be found on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum website (www.ushmm.com) the Holocaust can be defined as,

...a specific genocidal event in twentieth-century history: the state sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Jews were the primary victims -- 6 million were murdered; Gypsies, the handicapped, and Poles were also targeted for destruction or decimation for racial, ethnic, or national reasons. Millions more, including homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Soviet Prisoners of War, and political dissidents, also suffered grievous oppression and death under Nazi tyranny (www.ushmm.com).

When I attended the Belfar Conference at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, we were told to avoid comparing the pain of the Holocaust to other painful events in history. We were also told to tell students, "just because it happened does not mean it [the Holocaust] was inevitable" (www.ushmm.com). The Museum's website is a wonderful resource for both educators and students to learn about the history of the Holocaust, see maps, see pictures, hear testimonies...

Adolf Hitler created the "Final Solution", the Nazis' name for their systematic plan to exterminate all of Europe's Jews. The Final Solution became a German State policy. The policy claimed that Jews were an inferior race and blamed Jews for the country's depression and for losing WWI. Hitler exploited centuries of anti-Semitism, "extreme nationalism, financial insecurity, fear of communism, and so-called race science"

(www.ushmm.com). He pronounced the Aryans the pure race. In 1933, a series of laws were passed that were damaging to Jews. Jews were forced out of many jobs. Germany mandated a boycott of Jewish businesses. In 1935, the Nuremberg laws were passed, claiming Jews as second-class citizens. Instead of identifying Jews by their practicing religion, people were Jewish if their grandparents were Jewish. So even if only one grandparent was Jewish, the Nazis considered that person Jewish. Once the Nuremberg laws were in place, discrimination against Jews escalated. In 1938, on a night now known as Kristallnacht, the Nazis rioted and destroyed many Jewish stores, synagogues, and homes, and many Jews were murdered. By the time war broke out many Jews who had the means to flee Germany had done so, but many more tried and were rejected by the countries where they sought refuge, including ours, or simply didn't have the financial or personal resources to get out. Hitler's campaign against the Jews intensified after the outbreak of war. First Jews were herded into ghettos, where Jews were forced to live in a small section of a town. One family would share one room. Lice were a huge problem. Ghettos were "liquidated" and the inhabitants sent to concentration camps. These camps varied in purpose; some were forced-labor camps, some, like Auschwitz, were almost wholly devoted to killing, through gas chambers, mass shootings and other means. There was even a "model" camp set up to appease international visitors and the Red Cross. Mostly the elderly and children inhabited the camp. Prisoners took art and music classes to show that the Nazis were treating the prisoners humanely. As Germany began to lose ground against Russia in the East, inmates were often made to march or ride in cattle cars between camps. Hundreds were forced into a cattle car and were made to ride for days without food, water, or toilets. Many died by such means as starvation and because they were trampled on. In the death marches, prisoners were often made to march from one camp to another, often in the dead of winter. Prisoners were lined up in rows and if anyone fell out of line, they would be shot. Often, prisoners had no shoes and would lose toes from frostbite. In the last stages of Germany's retreat the Nazis tried to cover up their crimes by destroying evidence. In 1942 alone four million Jews were killed; by the end of the war in 1945, approximately six million were dead.

Fragments

The first work we will read is *Fragments: Memoirs of a Wartime Childhood*, written by Benjamin Wilkomirski. This work was published in 1995. The memoir is aptly titled because the writer presents his childhood memories in fragmented flashbacks. The narrative takes us through different memories from concentration camps, the ghetto, an orphanage, and a foster home. For instance, Wilkomirski remembers when a new boy came into the barracks and had to go to the bathroom. Since the children were not allowed to go at night, Wilkomirski told him to go in his bed. When the Nazis found out this new boy relieved himself in the bed, he was killed in front of all the other children. Wilkomirski also recalls being hid by women and being the only boy left from the hiding place. He remembers seeing someone who he thinks is his mother in the camps. Wilkomirski also recalls being sent to an orphanage and being afraid someone would realize he didn't belong there and send him back to the camps. He would steal food out of fear of not eating again soon. He also tells of when he was taken in by the Dossekker family. His memories of this time don't seem happy, as one might think finding a family would be after all he's been through. Since Wilkomirski was so young during the war, many of the memories don't make sense to him, or to the reader. They are not in chronological order and leave many questions unanswered.

This story is written about childhood, through the voice of a child. There are various levels of analysis the class

will conduct on the text. First, we will explore different types of narratives. According to J. Hillis Miller in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, “narrative would be a process of ordering or reordering, recounting, telling again what has already happened or is taken to have already happened” (71). The class will analyze the basic elements of narrative, which are that stories have a beginning and an end and a variety of ways to connect them. Miller writes that all narratives have “an initial situation, a sequence leading to a change or reversal of situation” (75). They also are personified either by the written or oral word, bringing the story to life. Lastly, all narratives repeat elements surrounding “a nuclear figure or complex word” (75). We will also look at the different ways to structure narrative. Some examples include tragedy, myth, fairy tales, and comedy. After a basic understanding of narratives, we will also explore the structure of *Fragments*. Personally, when I remember my childhood, I only remember specific moments, as if I’m looking through a photo album. Wilkomirski presents his memories this way too. The fact that so much doesn’t make sense immediately to him or to the reader parallels life. Often we don’t understand the meaning of events in our lives until they are in our past and we can reflect on them. It will be after these analytical discussions that I will tell students that the story turns out to be fiction. When this memoir first came out, people thought it was non-fiction; in fact, many experts praised the work as truth. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum had Wilkomirski help fundraise, thinking him a true survivor. Now it appears that Binjamin Wilkomirski never existed at all, for no records corroborate Wilkomirski’s story. He fooled many.

“The Memory Thief” by Philip Gourevitch is an article from *The New Yorker’s* June 14, 1999 edition. The article discusses how the work as non-fiction is being contested. I find that students should read these types of texts. It not only exposes them to different types of writing; it also models critical thinking and how to express this in writing. Many students don’t trust their own thinking, and this will possibly help them confirm and articulate their thoughts. Further, students must realize that they must think about the information they receive, whether it be from a book, from a teacher, from TV, from the Internet, or from the media. Too often, it isn’t until a student is a junior or senior in college that they begin to truly think for themselves. Not only do some students not know how to think for themselves; they are often not truly asked to. They take information as rote, without analyzing the validity of it. When we do ask students to think for themselves, they are often insecure about their conclusions. We as educators must take more responsibility in guiding students to think critically.

Wilkomirski is the Swiss-born Bruno Grosjean. He was put up for adoption as an infant and was adopted by the Dossekker family. Wilkomirski himself admits he’s not sure who he is and what his memories are of. He is under psychiatric counsel and many think that he has made up these memories, but that they are very real to him. The problem too is that if he was directly involved in the Holocaust at such a young age, he wouldn’t know who he is or where he comes from. Yet, if he has had psychological problems since childhood, he could very well have created this other life for himself, explaining his lack of identity. Gourevitch’s article supports the notion that Wilkomirski was not malicious in his intent to deceive but rather has serious identity issues. What makes this controversy so pertinent for many is that Wilkomirski is “laying claim to the Holocaust” as Gourevitch says. Wilkomirski replies, “ ‘Who can judge what was possible at the time? Nobody. Because it’s more than you can imagine’ ” (67). Gourevitch makes the point that Wilkomirski is trying to make the connection that those who doubt his story must also doubt that the Holocaust existed at all. He also points out that Wilkomirski wrote his narrative based on borrowed memories. Historian Stefan Machler conducted research to clear up the debate. He didn’t find any corroborating evidence that there ever was a Binjamin Wilkomirski, and so the publishers withdrew the book.

When students are finished reading both the text and the article, we will explore their feelings about being “lied” to. Is literature ever a lie, since fiction can also convey truth? We will also explore the ramifications for

such an action as Wilkomirski's, both personally and for society. The class will also investigate the motivation for a writer to do this. How might this be a means of survival? Why would it be effective or ineffective psychologically? Is this fair to true survivors, and what does this do to them? Does it even matter that the story is fiction, because so many children lived this life? Is it still considered effective literature? We will also determine why society was so ready to believe in this work as truth. What need does our society have to bear witness for the Holocaust? Why not question the work when it came out?

Maus I and II

Maus I and *Maus II* are incredible tales of survival. Art Spiegelman, the author, narrates in comic-book form, called a graphic novel, a delicately woven story about his father's survival of the Holocaust, while at the same time telling his own story of surviving life with his sometimes-difficult father. The characters in the story have animal heads that represent different races and ethnicities. For example, Jews have mouse heads, Germans have cat heads, and Americans have dog heads. We see Vladek and Art's relationship unfold as Spiegelman narrates the experience of interviewing his father about his life during the Holocaust. As Vladek tells Art about his experience in a Jewish Ghetto and in the concentration camp, we learn that Vladek wants Art to visit more often. It appears that the only time Art does visit is to interview his father. Art and his wife do visit to make sure Vladek is taken care of. Vladek's first wife, also a Holocaust survivor, committed suicide years before the book takes place. In fact, Vladek destroys her diaries that she kept during the war, and Art is understandably angry that such an important piece of his mother is no longer accessible. Vladek remarries and Art shows how strained this second marriage is. Art candidly shares his complex thoughts and feelings of annoyance, resentment, and love for his father with the readers. We also see flashbacks to Vladek's life during the war. Vladek was lucky compared to many, due to his professed resourcefulness. Readers can learn of the horrible conditions Jews and others lived in during the Holocaust at a level appropriate for both middle and high school. The loss of freedom and life is profoundly felt throughout the story. Vladek dies by the end of the second book. Students will be able to readily understand the content of the books, because the prose is at a fairly basic reading level, which allows for time to be spent analyzing the narrative structure and meaning of different elements in the story. We can focus on the "how" of the story, rather than only the "what."

We will first explore what is being told to us. We will evaluate the relationships between the author and his father, the author and his mother, the author and the war, the author and himself, the father and the war, and the father and his second wife. The one aspect I think students will really relate to is the struggle of Art with his father. Against the backdrop of his father's tale of surviving the Holocaust, anything Art does seems to him to be trivial. Yet, what he does is important. Art's struggle with his father also validates the struggles between parent and child, something every one of my students understands. Adolescence is a time of figuring out who we are as individuals, separate from our parents. It's also a time of struggle for the independence we want and feel we deserve, but aren't quite ready for as our parents often point out. The books give voice to an aspect of this struggle.

We will then look at how the story unfolds. What did Spiegelman do to tell us his story and was it effective? Students will consider the unreliable narrator. Is what Vladek says true or is it colored by his own pride and need to show his son that he was resourceful? Can we trust that Art is presenting his father objectively given that their relationship is strained? What is a novelistic structure and why does this help us understand the story better? Students will analyze and evaluate the animals chosen to represent each ethnicity. Racial

essentialism is important to this kind of story. We will examine what stereotypes are being presented to us and why they are needed. I will also ask the students if they think Spiegelman is questioning these stereotypes or perpetuating them. One interesting stereotype is that Spiegelman presents his father as a stingy, cheap man. This is the anti-Semitic view of Jews. We will look at the courage Spiegelman uses to present his father this way, knowing that some people will say “See -- there’s a Jew for you.” Irony is a concept that is often difficult for students to fully understand. We will look at the irony used throughout the books, especially in relation to the stereotypes and to Vladek himself. Depending on the level of the class, I might have to walk students through this in more of a lecture form at first.

At Sound School, we have electronic whiteboards, which are white boards that display a computer screen. You touch the board with a special pen and the pen acts as a mouse. Using the electronic white board, the class will spend a few days looking at the CD-ROM of *MAUS*. This CD-ROM includes the entire content of both texts, three hours of interviews between Art and Vladek, extensive historical documentation about the Holocaust, audio and video commentary by Art about making *MAUS*, and hundreds of sketches and family photos. It’s an incredible resource that gives us a first-hand account of the story and shows the students that books don’t make themselves. We will understand what went into making the texts, and the CD allows students to see story-telling as a craft.

Videos

Survivors of the Holocaust is a video created by Steven Spielberg in association with Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation. The video is a compilation of historic documentary and survival testimonies from survivors of the Holocaust. The narratives are very powerful and are another medium to increase student understanding. Also *Witness* is another documentary produced in cooperation with Yale’s Fortunoff Archive of Video Testimony. Both are wonderfully poignant and educational.

Supplemental Readings

...I never saw another butterfly... is a compilation of children’s drawings and poems from Theresienstadt Concentration Camp during the years 1942-1944. Hana Volavkova edited the book. Some basic facts about the ghetto and camp are included in the foreword. Some of them are staggering and it is important to let the students know these facts. The statistics may seem abstract and intangible at first, but once they read and see the work, the numbers become people.

As of April 20, 1945, there arrived.... a little over 141,000 Jews.

33,456 died in the ghetto

88,202 were transported to the death camps in the East.

On May 9, 1945, there remained in Theresienstadt a total of 16,832 Jews.

Of the 15,000 children deported from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz, 100 survived -- none under the age of fourteen (xx -- xxi).

Theresienstadt was unlike many other camps. It was a “model” camp used to show off to the Red Cross and representatives from other nations that the Jews were not being executed or terribly treated. Because of the Nazis’ need to impress these groups, students were able to take art classes taught by some well-known artists. Some of the children survived and some didn’t. Either way, their voice lives on through their work. Students will study some of the poems and artwork in the book, not only to learn about a different aspect of Holocaust life, but to see the different ways experience can be shared.

We Are Witnesses: Five Diaries of Teenagers Who Died in the Holocaust by Jacob Boas gives a powerful voice to an age group that parallels my students. I will not teach the entire book, but will pick two of the five diary excerpts to give to students. We will not only look at what is said, but how the narrative is told. Students can use this as a model for their own journal entries. This will also further their understanding of how stories are told, as well as give them a deeper understanding of the experience of the youth of the Holocaust. We will read excerpts from David Rubinowicz’s diary. David was a Polish Jew who was forced to move to the Bieliny ghetto. His father was forced into slave labor. We don’t know what happened to David and his family, but they are assumed dead. When the war was over, David’s diary was found in the rubble at the ghetto. Eva Heyman was a Hungarian Jew who lived in Budapest. She recounts the Nazis taking over. Her entire family was forced into Auschwitz concentration camp. Eva was killed there, but her maid kept this diary and gave it to Eva’s mother after the war. Eva’s mother had it published before committing suicide. *Children in the Holocaust and World War II: their secret diaries* by Laurel Holliday is an anthology of children’s diaries written during World War II. The diarists come from all over Europe and England and were between the ages of ten and eighteen. Not all of the writers are Jewish. Some of the children in this book are the same as the previous book. If you can only get one of the books, I’d get this one. The entries are relatively short, and we will study a variety of experiences and viewpoints. “Through these boys’ and girls’ writings we learn about the external realities of children’s wartime lives as well as their innermost thoughts and feelings” (xiv). Werner Glanik wrote about his experiences in the Riga Ghetto and in two concentration camps. He is known to have survived the war. His diary gives a startling first-hand account from a child’s perspective. Janine Phillips was a Polish Christian whose family fled to the country-side to escape the Nazis taking over the country. She writes about her family’s struggle with the war and how they hated the Nazis. Macha Rolnikas was a Jewish girl from Lithuania. Not only was her family persecuted because they were Jewish, but also because her father was a lawyer who defended Communists. She writes about her experiences in the Vilnius ghetto and the Stutthof concentration camp. We also learn about the death marches, which she was forced to endure. “Of all the children’s diaries in this book, Macha’s is, perhaps, the most horrifying account of Nazi brutality. She was badly beaten, starved for days at a time, and forced to be an ‘undertaker’ for her friends’ dead bodies” (186). Students will compare these diaries to *Fragments*. Is the effect the same even though *Fragments* is not true? Is one more powerful than another? Why?

Websites

There are great resources on the Internet to help teach the Holocaust. Some of the websites relate directly to texts and others are more general information and lesson plan ideas for teachers. You can also use a search engine to find more information. I like to use www.google.com and www.37.com.

<http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/holocaust/spiegelman.html> -- this website offers essays that analyze the psychology behind MAUS.

www.geocities.com/Athens/Atlantis/2671/ - MAUS resources on the web. This site offers many resources to help you and your students understand MAUS, including interviews with Spiegelman.

<http://fcit.usf.edu/Holocaust/> - the site provides an overview of people and events of the Holocaust using many mediums.

www.ushmm.com -- the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum -- this site is the home run of all sites. It's very educational and interactive and can tell you almost anything you need to know about the Holocaust. There is also a place for students and for teachers to go.

Writing Assignments

Students will complete two major writing assignments throughout this unit. The first will be writing their own imaginative survival narrative. Throughout the unit, students will keep a journal using various prompts that I provide. Students will use the prompts to help them with their journals and to help them express their feelings in writing. I will copy the introduction from *Children in the Holocaust and World War II: their secret diaries* for students to read. The introduction discusses why journals and diaries are so important and what purpose they serve for the writer. Laurel Holliday writes that children wrote "from loneliness" to gain the "courage to go on," as well as "a way of testifying to the unspeakable evils perpetrated by the Nazi criminals." She also states that the children used the diaries "to resist humiliation and oppression" and to analyze themselves both psychologically and emotionally. Further, the diaries "served most of the children as outlets for anger and rage... [providing] a way of finding meaning and purpose in the chaos with which they were surrounded" (xv-xvi). Students need not have lived during the Holocaust to relate to these reasons. With all that is going on in their lives and the world today, a diary will be an excellent way to deal with things.

We will look at elements of a narrative, and the subject of their narrative must come from something that actually took place in their life. They may use their journals as springboards for their narrative. Using the texts as a model, students will take their true-life experience and share it through a fictional story, written as if it were true. Hopefully students will find that they can "talk" easier about the subject through fiction. Maybe they will feel safer to share the event/experience, and with any luck find closure on the matter.

The second writing assignment will be a compare/contrast essay. Students will compare two of the texts that we've read, but they may not compare one diary to another. I want them to choose the diaries and *Maus* or *Fragments* or pick *Maus* and *Fragments*. Students will use the block comparison structure rather than comparing the texts point by point. They will pick three aspects to compare and contrast. For example, they may choose to compare the structure, the voice, and the style of both texts. As their critical thinking skills improve, so will their ability to articulate their thoughts in writing. I will give them a grading rubric before they begin the writing so they know exactly what to include.

Final Project: Survival Story through Photography

I always include some type of art in my units. I have found students love to work with art, because it allows them another means to gain understanding. I can teach analytical and critical thinking skills in a different way. If a student is a poor reader or a poor writer, using art takes away the difficult medium. Because students are taught how to analyze paintings in other units I teach, I will focus on the use of photography to tell a survival story. We will look at various photographs from different time periods, but I will focus on those that relate to these texts. I have many photographs from the Holocaust. The models they use will cover the concentration camps, the ghettos, the SS, liberation, etc. We will read excerpts from Marianne Hirsh's *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* to show students why photography is an important medium in collecting memories. We will spend a day or two discussing photographic composition, how to think about the frame of a photo and how to fill it. I will demonstrate this by making a big cardboard frame that I can move around the classroom and put over students' faces in different ways. I will then ask students to describe what they see within the frame. The purpose of this exercise will be to show students that photographs don't simply show objects, they group lines and colors and textures and shapes within a frame. Students will then create their own individual or community memory using photographs. They may use photos they already have or they may take photographs specifically for this project. I will provide each student with a disposable camera, unless they'd like to use their own camera. Students will then create a type of photo album and present them to the class. In the event that the subject is confidential, students may choose to present the album only to me in a conference. The idea is to get the students to think critically about how the information is being presented to the viewer. How are they telling their story? Is the viewer seeing their story as they want it to be seen? Is the viewer left with the effect intended by the presentation?

Once all the survival photo presentations are made, students will be asked to pick one picture that represents the essence of their story. We will then take the compilation of photos and create a story quilt. The quilt will represent all of their stories. Students will have to decide which order the photos will be put in to tell their cumulative survival story. Colors and textures will have to be decided on, as well as fabrics. I will have each student design and make their own square, and the classes will then simply decide on what order makes the most sense. In my experience, students get so excited to present their work in a way that can be made public. By presenting the quilt as a whole, the risk of exposure for nervous students is lessened.

Lesson Plan I: Narrating a childhood memory

In this activity, students will write a story from their childhoods. This lesson will precede the reading of *Fragments*. Students will not only get a sense of the challenge of writing from memory, they will also get a chance to see how our memories are often colored by emotion and aren't necessarily objective.

OBJECTIVES

- To familiarize students with the idea of writing about a memory
- To facilitate group participation as students collaborate to choose a memory to write about
- To increase writing skills
- To enhance interpersonal skills
- To introduce interviewing techniques

PROCEDURE

1. Students will brain storm ideas for a childhood memory they would like to write about. They will discuss three possibilities with the group and choose one memory they will write about.
2. I will lecture for about 15 minutes on the different types of narrative structure (see Fragments section) they can use. They must include the basic elements of a narrative.
3. I will hand out a grading rubric that I will use to grade their narrative. We will discuss this so they are sure how they will be evaluated.
4. Students will write their narratives for homework.
5. Students will work in pairs peer editing their narratives using the rubric. If a student has written about a very sensitive subject, we can edit in a teacher-student conference.
6. Students will then rewrite their narrative, fixing errors found by their peers.
7. Students will hand in their narrative.
8. I will give a mini-lecture on interviewing skills. They will learn how to interview using open-ended questions and how to take notes and quote from an interview.

9. Students will practice interviewing on each other.
10. Students will interview a relative or friend who would remember the incident or event of the narrative.
11. Students will rewrite the narrative based on the interviewees' perspective.
12. Students will compare their memories of an event to those of others.

Lesson Plan II: Creating a story quilt square

This lesson is the second part of a project. In the first part, students will create a survival story using photography. They will take pictures and put them in an album or on a storyboard telling their own survival story. They will then choose one picture, which represents the essence of their story. This is the picture they will use to create the story quilt. The class will then take the pictures and the quilt will be the class' survival story.

OBJECTIVES:

- To give students a chance to express themselves visually
- To construct meaning through visual and artistic means
- To tell a narrative using a different medium
- To facilitate group participation as students work together to create quilt

PROCEDURE:

1. Students will pick a square piece of material from a variety of pieces I will provide.
2. They will then use fabric glue to glue their picture on the square. I will have already made copies of their pictures onto copy paper. This way, they can keep their original photo.
3. Students will then create a border around their picture using either material, felt, glitter glue, construction paper, or any other material they can think of.
4. If they wish, they may then use marker to write something about their picture or story.
5. When everyone is finished with their square, we will use fabric tape to piece the squares together, creating the class' survival story quilt.

Lesson Plan III: CAPT exercise

In the Language Arts section of the CAPT exam, students are asked to respond to a quote from the story. Many students only tell what they think the quote means -- they paraphrase the quote. This exercise will help students think about the importance of a quote to the story and the characters.

OBJECTIVES:

- To enhance critical thinking skills
- To guide students to higher order thinking
- To encourage students to elaborate on their thoughts and express them in writing
- To understand the difference between the meaning of something and its importance
- To facilitate cooperative learning

PROCEDURE:

1. Students will copy the following quote from the board. This quote comes from *MAUS II*. "High up I saw a few hooks to chain up maybe the animals. I had still the thin blanket they gave me. I climbed to somebody's shoulder and hooked it strong. In this way I can rest and breathe a little. This saved me" (85).
2. Students will answer the following questions in pairs and write down notes from their answers.

- What does this quote mean?
- What does this quote show about the speaker's personality?
- What makes you say that?
- Why would the writer want us to think this about the speaker's personality? What is the writer trying to get us to understand?
- What does this quote show about the message or theme of the text?
- Does this quote show the conflict of the story? If it does, how?

3. Students will then use their notes and write their own individual responses. Responses must be at least 2

pages.

4. I will then have students cut their response in half to a page. They must take out all unnecessary words, so they learn how to write concisely. They only get a page to answer on the CAPT test.

Teacher Bibliography

Wilkomirski, Benjamin. *Fragments: Memories of a Wartime Childhood* . New York: Schocken Books, 1995. A fictional memoir about Wilkomirski's experiences as a young boy in a ghetto, in concentration camps, and in orphanages. He takes us through his fragmented memories so the reader gets a glimpse of what life was like during the Holocaust. The book must be photocopied from a library for classroom use, since it is out of print.

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Spielberg, Steven. *Survivors of the Holocaust* . Video. 70 minutes. Turner Original Productions, 1995. A poignant collection of survival testimonies from survivors of the Holocaust, telling of the horrors they endured during WWII.

Teaching about the Holocaust: A Resource Book for Educators . www.usmmm.com. A wonderful resource on how to teach the Holocaust. Gives background information and discusses methodology and pedagogy.

Student Reading List

Wilkomirski, Benjamin. *Fragments: Memories of a Wartime Childhood*. New York: Schocken Books, 1995. A fictional memoir about Wilkomirski's experiences as a young boy in a ghetto, in concentration camps, and in orphanages. He takes us through his fragmented memories so the reader gets a glimpse of what life was like during the Holocaust. The book must be photocopied from a library for classroom use, since it is out of print.

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