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Anti-Semitism: Origins and Background

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Anti-Semitism

Since the early part of the twentieth century people have been fascinated with films. My students in New Haven, Connecticut are no different. The majority of them are African American and Hispanic teenagers from the inner city. Many of these students, like other young people of all backgrounds, are self-organized into a subculture that glorifies action movies and violent rap songs. Images of rebellion are attractive to teens. For many, their favorite movie imagery is when the protagonist portrays strength, street smarts, and a cunning character.

My students are sent to our high school from other city schools after having failed to perform either academically or socially. As a result, some teachers may lower their expectations of them. Their future educational or career plans are ridiculed by their peers and considered visions of futility. Most students wish to separate themselves from the reality of their ghetto experience. Since their options of escape are limited in space and geography, movie imagery is the expression of their hopes and pseudo identification with the outside world.

Unfortunately, the majority of my high school students are not academically motivated. This, however, does not quell their natural curiosity. As an Orthodox Jew who wears the traditional head-covering required by my religion, I am asked many questions by my students. They want to know what I am wearing on my head or if I am Muslim. Their inquiries have led me to recognize that their exposure to other cultures is minimal, and their knowledge of how other oppressed people have overcome adversity is very limited. The knowledge that they *do* have about other cultures is information acquired on the street or from sound bites from Louis Farrakhan, Malcolm X, and leaders of the Civil Rights movement.

To balance the students' lack of knowledge about other minorities and cultures, it would be useful to have a curriculum concerning anti-Semitism including the space and geography of Eastern Europe where anti-Semitism has taken place. A curriculum concerning this subject would be unique in comparison to the average history or civics class and would be an attention-grabber, a necessity when working with students that are not academically motivated.

My three lesson plans would encompass the geographical map of Eastern Europe and struggle of the Jewish

people for a national home in the land of Israel. It is a struggle many minority groups, such as those represented in Cross Annex, will recognize as similar to their own. My students will likely draw parallels between the suffering of their own people in recent history and the oppression and suffering of the Jewish people in the last two centuries.

African Americans, for example, can identify with the Jewish search for a homeland. Both African Americans and Jews were treated like aliens by countries they lived in or were forced to live in. Some adopted artificial characteristics to survive. "Sambo" became one stereotype of the African American personality. "The Wandering Jew" became the Jewish mentality. Such an existence, combined with social, economic, and political impediments forced both peoples to struggle throughout their history. Even when both groups were officially "accepted" into mainstream society, both were subject to discrimination: anti-Semitism and racism. Eventually, African Americans made great strides during the Civil Rights movement, and the Jewish people regained their national existence and the State of Israel, after the Holocaust.

The Social Studies curriculum will provide general understanding and knowledge of Jewish life and anti-Semitism within the geographical map of Eastern Europe, beginning in the later part of the eighteenth century. The curriculum will include several films such as *Long is the Road*, *The Pianist*, *Schindler's List*, etc., showing the life and conditions of Jews scattered around the world without a country of their own. The films selected for this curriculum symbolize the ideology of Zionism and the Jewish national aspirations as a result of oppression within the geographical map of Eastern Europe.

Some of the objectives of the curriculum will be to understand the major Jewish movements, such as the Zionist movement, crucial in the establishment of the State of Israel. Students will be familiarized with Israel's "Declaration of Independence." They will have assignments that will require them to compare it to the foundations of the American Constitution.

Movies such as *Long is the Road*, *Schindler's List*, and *The Pianist*, will also be used as a springboard to familiarize the students with the geographical regions being studied as well as to acquaint them with the lands and geographical map of eastern and western Europe. These areas are where Jewish history and culture flourished, but where most atrocities against the Jews took place.

It is my goal that the knowledge and understanding gained through my curriculum will help students understand Jewish history and how it is related to today's current events.

Students are expected to:

- Listen, view and read various historical sources
- Assess how history changes our perception of others
- Analyze modern Jewish history and the establishment of the State of Israel
- Demonstrate knowledge in the following areas: Zionism, Jewish philosophy and literature, anti-Semitism, Pogroms, the Holocaust, and the establishment of the State of Israel
- Assess the underlying reasons for the establishment of the State of Israel
- Assess how religion was used as a uniting force for the Jewish people when under oppression
- Explain how the Church affected Jewish life in Europe
- Explain how "The Wandering Jew" is related to the Jewish struggle for survival
- Discuss the impact the Russian Pogroms and the Holocaust had on European Jews and their descendents

- Gather historical data from primary and secondary sources
- Write short statements and narratives about diaries and survival stories
- Demonstrate comprehension through verbal, written, visual, and musical formats
- Use the Writing Process to complete a research report
- Watch and analyze various movies and documentaries
- Compose questions and hypotheses to explain major events in Jewish history
- Demonstrate comprehension and understanding when discussing current events

Anti-Semitism and racism are connected to each other. The doctrine of racism states that blood is indicative of ethnic and national identity. It asserts that innate biological characteristics determine individual and class behavior. Individuals are not judged by their character and behavior; rather their value is determined by their membership in a collective racial group.

The nineteenth-century racist theories, especially anti-Semitism, influenced many to believe that Jews were the cause of much trouble in the world. They falsely accused the Jews of poisoning water wells, kidnapping and slaughtering non-Jewish children before Passover, the Jewish holiday, to use their blood for baking *matzo*. The Jews, as the victimized minority could do little to protect themselves from ludicrous accusations and future libels.

Background on Anti-Semitism; The Protocols of the Elders of Zion

The "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" represented the most notorious attempt to spread anti-Semitism in the world. It drew its popular support from old-fashioned libels promulgated in Medieval Europe. The Crusaders circulated unsubstantiated tales among the masses that secret rabbinical authorities were having conferences whose aim was to subjugate and annihilate Christians. These accusations were fantasies and total fabrication.

In 1993, in a historic ruling, a Russian court made a final verdict. The court pronounced the Protocols of the Elders of Zion to be an anti-Semitic forgery. Unfortunately, ten years after that ruling, it is still cited as evidence to justify anti-Semitic activity in Egypt and other Islamic countries.

The inspiration for the Protocols and its anti-Semitic message originated at the time of the French Revolution in the 18th century. Abbe Barruel, a French Jesuit distributed a forged letter allegedly sent to him by a disgruntled police officer who opposed Napoleon Bonaparte's benevolent policy toward the Jews. Abbe Barruel was a member of a reactionary element of the French police force opposed to the French Revolution and blamed the Jews for their supposed conspiracy to set the French Revolution in motion. The anti-Semitic myth that there was an international Jewish conspiracy to take over the world resurfaced in 18th and 19th century Europe especially in Russia, Poland and Germany.

In the last two centuries, the Protocols served the interests of governments and individual anti-Semites in many European capitals. The document was used as a key manifesto and a pretext for Eastern European Pogroms. The Protocols became public in 1905, when the Russians were defeated at the hand of the Japanese inferior forces during the Russo-Japanese war. The shock and disappointment of the Russian people at their defeat, plus the oppression of the proletariat under the Czar led the "Okhranka," or secret police, to concoct a document against the Jews and use them as a scapegoat. The document was fashioned to portray Jewish elders as planning a Jewish plot for world hegemony and destruction of governments, nations, and institutions.

The Russian pogroms started in a gradual and methodical order. They reached a climax during the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, and followed during the constitutional amendment in Russia. The Jews were blamed for the Revolution as well as the institution of the *Duma*, the Russian Parliament that was opposed by nationalistic supporters of the Czar.

The Russian Pogroms against the Jews reached their height in the early part of the twentieth century. However, waves of pogroms had started after 1880, organized and sponsored by the Russian government and with police encouragement. The perpetrators and hooligans raped and murdered their Jewish victims while pillaging and looting their personal properties. Tens of thousands of Jews were killed through government-sponsored pogrom violence in the Ukraine region and other parts of Eastern Europe.

The mass violence against the Jewish communities of the Russian Empire led to mass immigration of Jews to other European countries. They hoped to enjoy the new legal freedom and equality that supposedly reigned in Europe. They were even ready to integrate themselves into European societies, and enjoy their "natural rights." Many Jews took on gentile names and tried to blend in as common folk. Unfortunately, with greater integration into European society, business, and intellectual life, Jews found themselves in close proximity and scrutiny, and thus, more prone to anti-Semitism, violence, and discrimination.

One such case was the Dreyfus Affair, which shook the foundations of the French Republic, and exposed anti-Semitism as the new weapon against the Jews in France. No longer did a nation need to state sponsor a pogrom against Jews. Anti-Semitism was transformed into a political, economic and social tool to keep Jews from sharing Europe's new legal freedom and equality. Unfortunately, the hopes and expectations Jews had for equality and integration were dashed aside by renewed violence and anti-Semitism in France.

The Dreyfus Affair

Alfred Dreyfus was a French Jewish officer who was falsely accused and convicted of treason for spying for Germany in 1894. The only evidence against Dreyfus was a scrap of paper retrieved by a night watchman from a wastebasket, with hand written notes that remotely resembled Dreyfus' handwriting form. Dreyfus as the only Jew in his military unit was the prime target to be accused and later convicted of being the spy. In 1906, twelve years after his incarceration on Devil Island, off the coast of South America, he was vindicated of any wrongdoing.

The Dreyfus Affair deeply divided the French Republic and its people into two groups: Dreyfus supporters and detractors. It sent the wrong message to the French people about the Jews. The message was that Jews were insufficiently loyal to France and other European countries where they lived. The French revolution's promise for equality in social, economic, and political institutions for all its citizens did not seem to include Jews. Anti-Semitism was reshaped in form but not in substance. Jews no longer experienced Russian style Pogroms. Instead they experienced social, economic and political discrimination as the Dreyfus Affair had demonstrated.

The Jews had no solutions to solve anti-Semitism, as it was not based on logic or truth. There was nothing they could change to make themselves acceptable to their host nations. They knew that to the living they were considered dead, to the nations they were strangers, to the poor they were the exploiters, and to the nationalists they were homeless; people without a country, like orphans without a protector.

The Jews needed a modern Moses to fulfill the prophetic promise for ingathering the Jews and rebuilding the homeland of their forefathers. Unfortunately, self-determination, and national independence remained a prophecy not yet fulfilled. It stayed an ideal in consciousness, thought, and speech; however, there was little progress for national independence for the next fifty years. Indeed anti-Semitism increased.

The writer Emile Zola recognized the injustice and human rights violation against the Jews in France. He decried it in his writings, and finally went into a self-imposed exile in England, as a protest against his own native land. Theodore Herzl, a Jewish journalist from Vienna, Austria who reported the Dreyfus Affair, concluded that no Jewish assimilation would solve anti-Semitism. He appealed to wealthy Jews, like the well-known banker, Baron Rothschild to support his movement, and sought additional help from Eastern European Socialist and Zionist organizations.

It resulted in the first Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland in 1897 as the Dreyfus Affair controversy continued in France. The Congress established the World Zionist Organization, which adopted resolutions for establishing a future Jewish State. One of the major organizations, which were established at that time, was the Jewish National Fund. This organization in later years helped reclaim the land of Israel through financial support, purchase of farmland, and funding for major developments. Although Herzl established the Zionist foundations for a Jewish state after the Dreyfus Affair, his future dreams were premature. The Jewish people had yet to face the greatest anti-Semitic and satanic expression that ever befell humanity: the Holocaust.

The Holocaust

The word Holocaust comes from the Greek, meaning, "Sacrifice by fire." With the rise of Hitler to power in 1933 Jews faced the ultimate test in the annals of human suffering. The reason for their misfortune was Nazis' usage of the Aryan ideology of racial superiority. The Jews were classified as an aberration of nature. They were labeled as inferiors and misfits, foreigners and stateless, who should be exterminated for the betterment of the Aryan nation. In his book *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle), Hitler delineated his "final solution" to exterminate European Jewry. Unfortunately, his inhumane plans were never taken seriously by the free world until it was too late. When Hitler rose to power in 1933, there were nine million Jews in Europe. By 1945, only three million survived the carnage of his "final solution." The rest were murdered systematically in the gas chambers of Treblinka, Auschwitz, Birkenau and others.

To accomplish his master plan to exterminate European Jewry, Hitler established concentration camps; he herded Jews into Ghettos, and labor camps. The Einsatzgruppen (mobile killing units) carried out mass murder operations against the Jews. They shipped millions of them from Europe's occupied territories to extermination camps, where they were murdered in gas chambers and other killing facilities.

Germany, one of the most developed nations in the world in science and technology, used peaceful technology and great scientific achievements as vehicles for annihilation of innocent people. In hindsight, the genocide of Europe Jewry was written on the walls of every European capitol. Unfortunately, the European nations did not have the political will to oppose Hitler's monstrous plans. Hitler knew it. He gambled on the isolationist policies of the free world and won. He started with local anarchy and ended up with global destruction and terror. First he ordered his Nazi party to carry out discrimination, persecutions, and segregation of Jews in an organized fashion. As he grabbed more power, he became even bolder. He issued anti-Jewish legislation, a boycott of Jewish businesses, and ordered what was later known as the "Kristallnacht" (the night of broken glass).

Hitler knew that Jews, who were known as the "People of the Book," could not be exterminated easily. The German dictator realized that his highest priority at that stage was to separate the Jews from their nurturing sources. He had to destroy them in stages; spiritually, intellectually, and then physically. As early as 1933 German students rampaged through Jewish neighborhoods in a series of government sponsored torch light parades. The Nazis made large bonfires and threw thousands of Jewish books into the flames in the city of Munich. The book burnings were not only intended to cut off Jews from their past, but also to "purify" Germany of foreign culture and influence, and keep the Aryan race superior and pure. The world was watching in astonishment. The fires were the early omens of things yet to come. Nations became alarmed when the purges of intellectuals and suppression of freedom of the press and free speech were taking place in Germany.

Some in America responded to the book burning with displays of Jewish cultural exhibitions, as a sign of identification with the plight of Jews in the hands of Hitler and his henchmen. The demonstration of support included expositions of books written by Jewish scientists and intellectuals such as Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx, Leon Trotsky and others famous Jews whom Hitler labeled "ink slingers." The book exhibition and support of American citizens with the plight of European Jews left the painful unanswered question of: why was there such a strong reaction to book burning in Germany and such a slow national response to the burning of people in Europe? The answer is beyond the scope of this curriculum. It is obviously a question for social scientists and students of history to analyze for many years to come.

Nazi ideology continued unabated. They built forced labor camps, and in 1938 they began to deport Jews to these camps and when they were no longer useful, they were killed in the gas chambers and disposed of by cremation. The Germans followed their destructive path, and built "death factories" or extermination camps such as: Sobibor, Treblinka, Auschwitz and others. They tried to keep their death camps a secret. They landscaped the ground, buildings were camouflaged, and dead bodies were removed and cremated. Such ideology of terror and destruction could not be kept secret for too long. Word came out via escapees, refugees, or Holocaust survivors, detailing the German atrocities in the extermination camps and places like, Babi Yar.

Babi Yar

Babi Yar is a name of a ravine outside the city of Kiev, the capital of Ukraine, which was part of the old USSR. On September 29, 1941 the Jews of Kiev were forced to march into the ravine. They were told to remove their clothes and any valuables. They were told to march in groups of ten. When they complied, they were shot to death by the Germans and fell into the ravine. The total number of Jews executed at Babi Yar was 33,771. In 1943 the Germans were trying to remove the corpses from Babi Yar by exhumation. This task was given to inmates of the concentration camp Syrets. This operation was completed in six weeks. There was barely a trace left of thousands of innocent Jews who were murdered there and no one would have known except for the fifteen Jews who carried out the clean up work, who later escaped and alerted authorities.

The Jewish Response to Anti-Semitism

Translating Jewish experience and transmitting its values to subsequent generations have always been venerable tasks for Jews. Of central importance to the Jewish people has always been to keep Judaism alive, to be a lamplight to the world and a shining guide to mankind. Jewish scholars from a number of disciplines have written commentaries, and have long examined Jewish thought, culture, and religion. At the end of the nineteenth-century a new multidimensional approach to Jewish continuity was necessary, due to the pogrom and other atrocities sponsored by the Russian Czar in St. Petersburg and other Russian cities.

For the most part Jews did not take up arms (except for the Warsaw Ghetto uprising) to fight their oppressors. They used the power of the pen to reflect and deflect their pain. In examining the Jewish experience in fighting back against anti-Semitism, one can understand why in an era of prejudice, hate, and pogroms Jews could not rely on others for salvation. Instead, they turned inward, into their intellect, to explain and teach future generations. They sought to transform a tragedy into a learning experience for generations to come. One such writer was the poet, Chaim Nachman Bialik.

Chaim Nachman Bialik

Bialik was called the father of Modern Hebrew poetry and the poet-prophet of Jewish nationalism. Some of his

greatest contributions to Jewish nationalism and hopes were written in the early part of the twentieth century. He witnessed the Russian pogroms, the Russian Revolution, and the rise of Zionism. These were reflected in his poetry, which helped revive the Hebrew language. "The City of Slaughter," written in 1903, after some of the worst pogroms sponsored by the Czar in Kishinev made Bialik a world recognized poet.

Bialik describes the agony of the dying in the pogroms, and the terror of their death. "Their eyes cry, asking God why? It is a silence only God can carry". He continued to describe in the poem how the atrocities of his people would affect the body, spirit, and soul forever. He ends with a question: "Where are the heirs of the Hasmoneans (Jewish rebels) the sons of the Maccabees?" This poem inspired many Jews to join Zionist organizations. As a result, many immigrated later to Israel and set up *kibbutzim* (farm settlements).

Leon Pinsker

In 1882, Leon Pinsker decried the place of the Jewish people among the nations of the world. He said that most nations lived side by side with each other, secured by treaties and international recognized boundaries, but it was different with the Jewish people. No such privilege of equality existed with them. Although the Jews had a common language and a historic homeland, they were treated as stateless people. European nations never dealt with a Jewish nation; only with individual Jews, who adapted to their lands and lost the culture of their former holy land. As a result, Pinsker felt they lost touch with their inborn qualities of being the descendants of David, the king of Israel. Pinsker added that Jews mistakenly thought that if they identify with their oppressors and deny their past, that anti-Semitism would cease to exist. Jews never succeeded in gaining the acceptance they sought to enjoy as natives with equal rights.

Yevgeni Yevtushenko

Yevgeni Yevtushenko's poem "Babi Yar" was written in 1961, to commemorate and expose the human tragedy and subsequent cover up by the Russian government's refusal to erect a monument in the memory of thousands of Jews murdered there by the Nazis on September 29, 1941. In the poem Yevtushenko sees himself as an ancient Israelite wandering the roads of ancient Egypt. He describes himself as being in a cage, trapped in, persecuted, spat on, slandered, and smelling vodka and onion everywhere. He hears the jeers of the pogrom and the calls to "kill the Jews and save Russia." He ends his poem with a statement: "The Anti Semites have proclaimed themselves to speak in the name of the union of the Russian people."

Chaim Nachman Bialik, Leon Pinsker and Yevgeni Yevtushenko inspired the Jewish people at a time when the world was apathetic to the plight of the Jews. These poets did not call on their brethren to be anarchists or suicide bombers. Instead, they were crying out for international support. They made people think what to do next, to be active or passive, to join an organization or set up a national liberation movement. The answer came on November 2, 1917 with the Balfour Declaration letter to Lord Rothschild. In it, Balfour, a British government official, described his Majesty's Government of England's sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations and its favoring the establishment of the State of Israel. On May 15, 1948 the establishment of a Jewish homeland in the State of Israel became a reality. Jews from all over the world flocked to the new Jewish state. Today, Israel has six million citizens.

Using Films to Depict Anti-Semitism

The Jewish world responded to anti-Semitism by creating diverse programs, films, art, and discussion series. Several films, which present the Holocaust with a distinct view of Jewish experience, will bring the story vividly to the students.

Long is the Road

This film produced in 1949, captured the mood right after the devastation of World War two. It starts with a German Blitzkrieg, which sends citizens scurrying for shelter, while an orthodox Rabbi, believing that God will help him and his family, continues his Friday night Kiddush (blessing of the wine) together with his family uninterrupted. He soon finds out that the world is cruel enough when he is deported and needs to leave his house carrying his personal belongings, though still believing that it is only a temporary experience. While the Jews are being herded into trains to be taken away, the camera projects lengthy images of a cold and brutal winter. It is a metaphorical message of lifelessness and alludes to the world's cold response and the hopelessness yet to come.

In the next scene Jews are huddle together at night. In a flashback, the camera takes a close up of one mother when she says: "The living envies the dead, me they sent to the right but my Yankele, they sent to the left, to die. They killed him and spared me." The tragedy and human suffering are clearly seen on the faces. The dreary winter helps to create an image that only a miracle will give hope to this persecuted people.

The miracle occurred when the protagonist escaped from the train into the unknown and hostile world. Yet, he was fortunate enough to find a righteous farmer who helped him evade the German searching team.

This farmer is a symbol of the many exceptional individuals who emerged when they were called upon to show courage. These individuals challenged the German machinery of death and destruction and helped Jews. Their lives would surely be over if they were caught. Yet they rendered their assistance so Jews could escape death. Eventually, many Jews who were sheltered by these righteous Gentiles immigrated to Israel and started new lives. They founded agricultural and cooperative farms and rebuilt the Jewish homeland. Today Israel is a modern society with scientific institutions and democratic government.

Schindler's List

The film portrays the devastation of European Jewry and its communities. How life fragments could hang in the balance of one German soldier or another. It is not a picture of an isolated pogrom in Russia or Poland. Instead, it is a film attesting to Hitler's program for the "final solution" of European Jewry. Yet in the middle of this chaos, Spielberg builds up a personality of an exceptional magnitude. And thanks to such courage and individual fortitude, it is clear that humanity has not completely lost all remnants of dignity. Spielberg, a Jew

himself, whose parents are European in origin, felt compelled to show that humanity can still cling to hope, that evil can be overcome if one has the courage to try. Trying to fight under unjust conditions like the Holocaust requires a substantially stronger moral fiber of heroism than most people possess. One who possessed this courage was Oskar Schindler.

Schindler is a righteous Gentile who made a decision to help Jews escape death and was prepared to risk his own life in order to save the life of a Jew. He negotiated with German officers to help Jews even though he was of a different nationality, social and religious background. Schindler's personal life did not seem like one that could rise above his own mundane pleasure and yet he was able to assume a role of the likes of Raoul Wallenberg and other righteous individuals. What is most astonishing is how Spielberg, the director, was able to show the transformation of Schindler from a womanizer and a common businessman into a remarkable man who outwitted the Germans and saved countless lives from perishing in the gas chambers. Spielberg was successful in showing how Schindler evolved from being a war profiteer, with a flair for showmanship and grand courage for bribery, to helping hundreds if not thousands of Jews escape certain death.

Schindler spent millions helping save Jews. He died penniless. But his good deeds in his lifetime earned him the financial support of those he saved in his dying years and a place among the righteous for eternity.

The Pianist

Roman Polanski, the Jewish Director of *The Pianist*, had a personal stake in this film. It is partly his own story of survival during the Holocaust as a child, while losing most of his family. It is also a story of individual survivors like the pianist, and other Jews who relied on their profession to be useful for the Nazis, and survive.

The film is shot in stone-cobbled Europe. The scenery is the cold European winter, with its dreary blue tint and depressing scenery. *The Pianist*, looking gaunt and malnourished, tries to survive by playing the piano and hiding his identity. The film, *Europa Europa* portrays a similar attempt for survival, where a Jew tries to pass as German. A daring survival technique in war ravaged Europe. In addition, Polanski shows the deportation trains, taking the Jews to the gas chambers. It is a heart-wrenching scene to see families torn apart from each other, still trying to maintain a semblance of a nuclear family by dividing a small cookie.

The pianist's family tries to preserve their family unit by keeping normalcy, hoping these horrors are only temporary. This hope soon disappears, when the deportation train appeared and the family is broken up again. The pianist is left on his own again, trying to conceal his identity as a Jew, and get a job as a pianist. Similarly, in the movie *Mr. Klein*, a Jew uses someone else's identity as a mean to survive.

Mr. Klein

The movie *Mr. Klein* directed by Joseph Losey, starring Alain Delon and Jeanne Moreau, takes place in Nazi occupied France. Robert Klein is a wealthy French Catholic art dealer, using the wartime condition as an opportunity for profiteering. He discovers that a Jew had stolen his identity as a disguise for his war resistance

activities. He becomes passionately fixated on finding the impostor. Little does he realize that the burden he was about to assume would consume him. At the end, he finds himself deep in a world of mistrust and injustice. What is most intriguing about the movie is that the identity roles have changed. The issue of trading identities among Jews who fled persecutions has always been a common phenomenon. Only now, the French Catholic art dealer is in a fight for his life to prove that his identity is in fact the same one he claims it to be.

The Homicide

The Homicide is a film directed by David Mamet, starring Joe Mantegna as Bobby Gold, and William Macy as Tim Sullivan. Bobby Gold, the Jewish detective and his partner investigate the murder of a Holocaust survivor. The two detectives are skeptical when told that the death of the murdered woman is due to a hate crime. However, Bobby Gold finds some evidence of a larger political conspiracy as he investigates and finds more evidence of the victim's long buried Jewish identity.

It is no coincidence that Jewish identity and survival go hand on hand. In times of peace, Jewish identity is the pride of the individual and his family. However, during wartime, when the environment is hostile and survival is at stake, it could endanger one's life.

Long is the Road, Schindler's List, the Pianist, Mr. Klein and *The Homicide* have one common theme that emerges. It is Jewish identity that throughout history has kept Jews connected to their roots. This connection is a source of strength, which allowed the Jewish people to survive as a nation despite thousands of years of persecutions in many lands and by many people. The roots started to bud at the gathering on Mount Sinai over three thousand years ago. Their identity was sealed as one nation. Therefore, despite anti-Semitic atrocities and other tribulations Jews tried to use their rich heritage for the benefit of mankind.

Lesson Plan One - Introduction to Films and Analysis

Lesson Plan one begins with a pilot lesson which will introduce students to the film *The Pianist*. The students will have an option of selecting a movie of their own choice to analyze and compare with *The Pianist*.

Objective:

The students will be watching the film *The Pianist*. It will help them form a general understanding of the space and geographical map of Eastern Europe where most atrocities against Jews took place. Furthermore, it will help them develop a general framework of how to analyze movies in an organized fashion. Several frameworks would be included as a guide: a) Geography, b) People-ethnic groups, c) Characters. A discussion would follow for the rest of the class, covering in detail these frameworks. The same analytical frameworks developed for *The Pianist* would also be applied to the movie selected by the students.

It is of utmost importance that a large map showing the geography of Europe and the rest of the world would

be present at the class for all the students who are not familiar with space and geography. An overhead projector showing enlarged maps of several European countries like Poland, Russia, and the Ukraine, would be included. Our students at Cross Annex high school have little concept of world geography. Yet, it is important for them to know since Europe was the continent that gave America its early democratic characteristics, its fashions, and its architecture, and much more.

The students will brainstorm the social, economic and political history of these geographical locations. They would try with some guidance by the teacher to make sense of what social upheaval is, and what it can cause. The teacher would encourage the students to read books on basic economics. Several concepts like supply and demand would be covered. This would help the students understand that economics is related to supply and demand. Hitler denied the forces of supply and demand. He used Germany's economic condition and depression in the late 1920's as reasons to blame the Jews for creating it.

Geography and people are always intertwined with each other. The Europeans are a mix of Germanics, Anglo Saxons, Slavs and many others. Class discussion will follow with the teacher reviewing some pertinent information on the history of the European people.

The main character and the character's contributions is the third framework to analyze the film. Several topics would be discussed: who is the main character the director develops in the film? Are there any close ups, narrations, flashback, voice over, or metaphors that help create the main character? What kind of a character is he? Is he likeable? Does he stand for high principles and ideals?

Lesson Plan Two - The Graphic Organizer Model for History and Social Sciences

Objective:

After students have watched the films and had a thorough discussion, they will develop a

Framework for comparing geography, people, and the character(s) for each film. They will use a), problem/solution b), cause and effect c), time line and d), compare and contrast. This will prepare the student for greater independent analysis. It will be done in the following way.

Specific tactics to be used in each of the three lesson plans would include:

- Reading assignments to include history of anti-Semitism
- Introductory lesson on anti-Semitism
- Class discussion on the introductory lesson
- Viewing selected films depicting anti-Semitism
- Class discussion of selected films

Class will be divided into debating groups:

- The red group wears red ribbons representing the anti-Semites
- The white and blue group wears white and blue ribbons, symbolizing the moral consciousness, representing the truth seekers

In lesson plan one, each of the two groups will be assigned a position to defend in a class debate, based on a particular film. The red ribbon group represents the European nationalists. It is composed of the Czar's foot soldiers whose cultural norms of intimidation and torture of Jews was a daily routine. They will represent the illogical zone of the human consciousness. They represent the lowest bestial aspect of the human consciousness. However, as low as their behavior has sunk, it has a natural spark of goodness with some redeemable qualities that could help transform their attitude and behavior into positive action, through education.

The white and blue ribbon group represents the franchised European mentality. It includes scholars like Emile Zola whose stand on equality and freedom is devoid of ethno-geographical distinctions. The white and blue ribbon group represents the European progressive forces, which supported the emerging European constitutional and statutory rights of liberty, equality and fraternity. For this group, individual freedom is natural rights that people are born with and that no government has the right to deprive them of it. The white and blue group support John Locke's philosophy that government exists for the people, not people for the government. Therefore, the purpose of a government is to protect its citizens, their natural rights to life, liberty and property. Any government, according to the white and blue ribbon group that abuses its power, by supporting or abetting anti-Semitism should be opposed.

In lesson plan two, the groups will reverse roles. Each group will represent a position the other group took on in lesson plan one. The purpose is to enhance the student's experience in honing their conflict resolution skills, role playing, and debating tactics. This practice could be of much use for all students who must deal with daily conflicts in their neighborhoods and with school age friends of different ethnic background.

In lesson plan three, the original two groups which were represented in lesson plan one, will be selected again. The white and blue ribbon will characterize the Jewish people and the red ribbon group will symbolize *old Europe*. The objective of the newer debate is to find *solutions* to anti-Semitism in present daily life.

The group dynamics would be similar to the "encounter group" of the 1960's. Each participant would talk about how difficult it is to identify with anti-Semitism. How painful it is to experience others' pain and hear the cry of children who beg for their lives as seen in the films. On the other hand, the white and blue members, representatives of the progressive European consciousness, will express their feelings in opposing anti-Semitism. How they were touched by their feelings when they debated the need to protect Jews, or when they watched a film showing incidents of terror such as deportation of Jews to the gas chambers.

The usefulness of Graphic Organizers is well documented. This tool helps students learn by binding ideas, concepts, and experiences together. Cognitive psychologists describe human learning as a process of organization and storage of information. They refer to this process of learning as schema. Most educators support the theory of learning that students actively involved making connection with cognitive structures.

Graphic organizers help create the panorama for learning. It helps make connections among existing ideas and motivate students to seek new networks. Piaget indicated that knowledge comes from action. Dewey stressed the concept of active involvement, as opposed to passive learning. The role of active learning is a living experience, which plays a significant role in the educational development of the student, Dewey concluded.

When students use graphic organizers, they tend to be actively involved with details, which trigger divergent thinking. Students then manipulate information to fit the constraints of the organizer. When they use it on a regular basis, the students use less memorization and more creative applications.

The **Problem/Solution organizer** would serve the student best when the student identifies the problems faced in the movie. This would be the student's main preoccupation. The student would summarize the problem he sees in the film and fill in the assigned space in the organizer. Problems such as deportation of Jews, families breaking up, and individual tragedies are useful in order to learn the film's deeper message to the student viewer.

The **Compare and Contrast Organizer** would serve a different purpose. The student is asked to compare the likenesses and differences among events, geographical locations, characters, ideals, concepts etc. This exercise can help students compare and contrast strong impressions left after viewing the film. Some of the contrasts to be used include good versus evil, individual characteristics shown in a film versus the purpose of life. It is a personal test one can apply to himself. The student gets to know himself a bit better as he makes all these comparisons and fill them in the graphic organizer.

The **Cause/Effect structure Organizer** is particularly useful for students and teachers whose love is history and the social sciences. Cause and effect indicates how events, facts, or concepts were created, because they depended on each other. The teacher would guide the students to understand that a cause may be accidental or irrational (like anti-Semitism) and the effect would follow. Students would have little difficulty in identifying the irrational and the rational. They will have to fill in their graphic organizer that Hitler's final solution was the effect of an irrational cause.

The Time Order Organizer is similar in nature to "cause and effect." Both are based on a previous event. When the focus is on a sequence of events with reference to time, graphic organizers can be very useful in aiding students ordering events. One kind of time order organizer used by social scientists and teachers is a time line. This tool can help students fill in their graphic organizers with appropriate order of events as they happened in the film. They may benefit from this exercise by placing several major events in their graphic organizer, memorizing them, and using them as a starting point of discussion.

Lesson Plan Three - Comparative Analysis of Films

Objective:

In this lesson plan the student will compare two films: *Long is the Road*, with *The Pianist*. The objective is to allow students to develop and write an essay using independent analysis they learned in lesson plan one and two: geography, people, and character.

In lesson plan #3 the students will write an essay using the information written in the graphic organizer as a guide. They would analyze geography, people, and character in conjunction with historical facts. It would be like a history essay using two movies as guides for research. The student would use the same tools he/she learned in lesson plan #2. The student will compare the two movies using the same principles we covered earlier. The usage of information from two graphic organizers will help compare the two films. The student will be free to choose additional principles and variables for comparing the two movies.

Assessment

The students' essays will be assessed using the Rubric method. It would be divided into three sections 1) Introduction, 2) Body, and 3) Conclusion.

In the introduction, the student would define a thesis statement about the message of the films. The body would include the supporting evidence. In the conclusion the student is expected to review the supporting evidence and make his own conclusion. A rubric of 0-3 scales would be used for assessment.

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Films

The Homicide. Directed by David Mamet, starring Joe Mantegna and William H. Macy. This film portrays a Jewish detective investigating a murder of a Holocaust survivor. In the process, the detective begins to question his own identity.

Mr. Klein. Directed by Joseph Losey, starring the French actor Alain Delon and Jeanne Moreau. In this film, a French art dealer discovered that a Jew had stolen his identity. He gets involved to find out who stole his identity. In the end, the art dealer fights to prove his own identity is his own.

Long is the Road . A film made in Germany by the German Jewish council in 1949, after World War II. This film chronicles European Jewish history under German occupation in Europe. It focuses on the pain and suffering of Jews due to deportation to the gas chambers and the breakage of the Jewish nuclear family. The movie ends with scenes of family reunions and hopes after World War II ends.

The Pianist. Directed by Roman Polanski, starring Adrien Brody. Polanski has demonstrated his own personal stake in this film. Being a Holocaust survivor himself, he demonstrated the pain and suffering Jews experienced in Poland in general and in Ghetto Warsaw in particular. The film shows the survival of a Jewish pianist during this period.

Schindler's List . Directed by Steven Spielberg. This film portrays the devastation of European Jewry and its communities as a result of German atrocities against Jews during World War II. Spielberg shows the moral fiber and heroism of Oskar Schindler who risked his own life to save Jews from being sent to the gas chambers and certain death.

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