Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes

ARTEFFECT

Remembering the Holocaust

Visual Arts Lesson Plan

Remembering the Holocaust

The **Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes (LMC)** spotlights the stories of individuals from history who took extraordinary actions in service to others and society. This lesson plan equips teachers and students to thoughtfully engage with Unsung Hero stories that are connected to the Holocaust. A teacher does not have to be an expert in the field of art or the Holocaust to broach this topic.

Remembering the Holocaust through visual art requires a high level of sensitivity and keen awareness of the complexity of the subject matter. Teachers are asked to think deeply about the rationale behind teaching the Holocaust and what resources are available to them to assist in this process. This lesson plan presents ten guidelines for teaching and learning that are appropriate and relevant to Holocaust education. After understanding these guidelines, teachers lead students in careful looking at Holocaust art created by victims and survivors to deepen their historical empathy and understanding of how art conveys various meanings. Discussion topics include the impact, appropriateness, focus, and message of the artworks. Students then study examples of ARTEFFECT artworks, shifting their focus to heroic actions and traits. Students come to understand acceptable and respectful approaches to remembering the Holocaust to create their own artworks.

Learning Objectives

1. Reflect on the roles and responsibilities of individuals, groups, and nations when confronting the abuse of power, civil and human rights violations, and genocidal acts.
2. Provide context for students to explore the fears, pressures, and motivations that influenced the decisions and behaviors of individuals during the Holocaust.
3. Understand that the Holocaust occurred because individuals, organizations, and governments made choices that legalized discrimination and allowed prejudice, hatred, and ultimately mass murder to occur.
4. Question the role of silence and indifference to the suffering of others, or to the infringement of civil rights in any society, as a factor that can—however unintentionally—perpetuate these problems.
5. Recognize antisemitism and racism in Nazi ideology and their impact on the events of the Holocaust.
6. Examine artwork created during the Holocaust (1933-1945) to help students learn about history and grow their empathy and compassion.
7. Explore appropriate artistic representations of LMC Unsung Heroes from the Holocaust.
8. Strengthen connections between visual art, language arts, and history/social studies.

Time Frame

Each step is based on a 50-minute class period. This lesson works best when teachers have spent time laying the foundation of basic Holocaust knowledge to their students in previous lessons. An arts integration lesson unit can be built between English, Social Studies, and Art.

- **Day 1:** Steps 1-3
- **Day 2:** Steps 4
- **Day 3:** Steps 5-6
- **Day 4:** Steps 7-8
- **Day 5:** Steps 9-11*

*Project production and exhibition time may vary.

Materials

Writing utensils, Various art supplies.

Resources:

Step 4 Resource: Mindful Looking Worksheet
Step 4 Resource: Holocaust Art Slideshow
Step 7 Resource: ARTEFFECT Student Artwork
Step 7 Resource: ARTEFFECT Artwork Worksheet

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Lesson Plan Activities

Day One Theme

"At critical junctures, every individual makes decisions, and every decision is individual."-- Raul Hilberg, refugee from Nazism and leading Holocaust scholar.

Step 1: Explore the Topic—Remembering the Holocaust

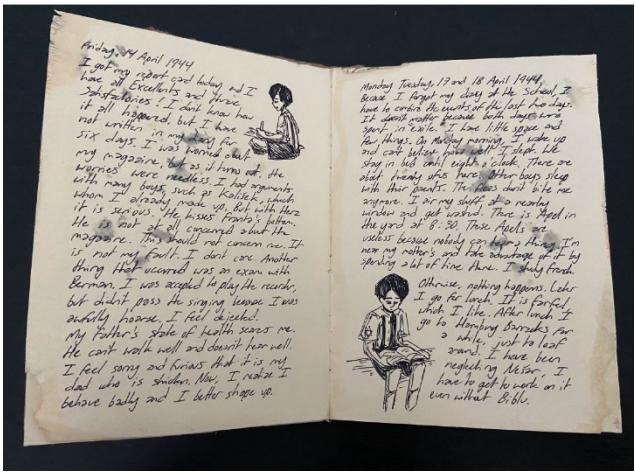
Art fills an area where words leave a void; it is often a form of expression of circumstances and of the artist themself. Students should be allowed to explore the artistic aspects of artworks created during the Holocaust to gather context, knowledge, and understanding before beginning their own projects. Teachers and students must bring maturity and sensitivity when remembering the Holocaust through art. As the Yad Vashem states, *Artistic representation of the Holocaust has become a matter of some controversy.*

Guiding questions for this lesson plan:

- What can art teach us about the Holocaust?
- In what ways can art be used to remember the Holocaust?
- Should there be limitations and boundaries to the artistic representation of the Holocaust? Where should the boundaries be?
- What is the intended message of the artwork?

The Holocaust must be remembered and portrayed as a human event, not an inevitable event that occurred in history. Teachers may want to seek out opportunities for students to speak directly to survivors or their relatives to guide the artist to create an artwork that most-closely translates their experience. Artworks should be created in keeping with an educational philosophy, in an age-appropriate manner (20 minutes).

Step 2: Review the Guidelines For Teaching about the Holocaust



Teachers review Guidelines for Teaching About the Holocaust from the U.S. Holocaust Memorial and Museum (USHMM). Work through each guideline in a classroom discussion to set the context and tone for the lesson (20 minutes).

Step 3: Bridging with Visual Art

Watch the Yad Vashem video Teaching the Holocaust Using Art [00:05-5:10 minutes or 1:36-5:03] (10 minutes).

PRO-TIP: The USHMM and Yad Vashem are world leaders in quality Holocaust education and information. Only use heavily vetted resources during this lesson.

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Day Two Theme

"The seed of a creative idea does not die in mud and scum. Even there it will germinate and spread its blossom like a shining star in darkness."

—Peter Ginz (1928-1944), artist and writer, who was 16 when he was murdered at Auschwitz in the gas chambers.

Step 4: Explore Holocaust Artworks (1939-1945)

In this step, students will explore artworks created during the Holocaust (1939-1945) and practice mindful looking**.** Mindfulness is the simple act of taking time to observe, inspect, study, pay attention to, and think about what we're viewing. Being mindful while looking at art provides students with an opportunity to really discover what intentions the artist had and how the artwork relates to the viewer, and it gives students time to appreciate the artist's skill (5 minutes).

Mindful Looking—Individual Visual Analysis and Reflection

Assign each student one work of art to study and reflect on more carefully. Students can use the Yad Vashem website (links below) to find more information about the artists. Students record their observations and reflections by answering guided questions using the Step 4 Resource: Mindful Looking Worksheet (15 minutes).

- Holocaust Artwork 1
- Holocaust Artwork 2
- Holocaust Artwork 3
- Holocaust Artwork 4
- Holocaust Artwork 5

Small Group Discussion

Next, group students according to the artwork they were assigned. Students spend 15 minutes in their small groups to discuss the artwork. Did someone in your group notice something you did not? Were there differences of opinion amongst the group about the artwork? Remind students there is not necessarily a right or wrong way to feel when looking at art (15 minutes).

Classroom Discussion

Reconvene as a whole class and show each artwork on the projector screen using the Step 4 Resource: Holocaust Artwork Slideshow. Two students from each group will be the spokespersons for their artwork. Each group is given 2 minutes to share out thoughts, opinions, and questions from their group so the rest of the class can hear/see. The teacher will act as the timer and interject with questions/comments, as needed (15 minutes).

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Day Three Theme

"Unsung Heroes are individuals who changed the course of history through their extraordinary actions. Now it's your turn to effect change by sharing the story of an Unsung Hero through your art." —Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes.

Step 5: Introduction to Unsung Heroes

In this step, students will learn more about the LMC Unsung Heroes from the Holocaust. Students begin by learning about Irena Sendler, the inspiration for the founding of the Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes, by viewing a video provided by Yad Vashem or the World Jewish Congress depending on pace of the class (10 minutes).

Resources:

- Yad Vashem Video (6 minutes): Irena Sendler Yad Vashem Video
- Jewish World Congress Video (2 minutes): Irena Sendler Short Video

Provide students with a summary of Irena Sendler's story provided by LMC and read and discuss it together as a class. (10 minutes).

Resource:

- Irena Sendler Summary Text: Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes

Unsung Hero

An individual who has created positive change in history by improving the lives of others and is largely unrecognized by society for their contribution. The individual's impact must have stood the test of time.

Step 6: Discuss Heroic Traits and Actions

Introduce the **LMC Heroic Traits** (see page 7). Choose one character trait and one action from the list. Have groups of students discuss ideas about the meaning of those traits and actions (10 minutes).

Classroom Discussion

Lead the class in a discussion that explores why some stories of heroic individuals from the Holocaust remain untold. What makes someone an "unsung hero" (20 minutes)?

"Can art represent the Holocaust? In what way should it be represented? Can art teach us anything about the Holocaust? Where should the boundaries be?"—Liz Elsby, artist, graphic Designer, guide at Yad Vashem.

Day Four Theme

Step 7: Analyze ARTEFFECT Artworks

Introduce the ARTEFFECT Judging Criteria Rubric. Scoring of artworks is weighted as follows (5 minutes):

- Creative Interpretation (40%)
- Aesthetic Value (40%)
- Impact Paper (20%)

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Using the Step 7 Resource: ARTEFFECT Student Artwork, show students examples of artworks depicting LMC Unsung Heroes from the Holocaust and other genocides. For each artwork shown, students will work in small groups to analyze artworks using their mindful looking skills and applying what they have learned about visual representations from the Holocaust and other genocides (25 minutes). Use the Step 7 Resource: ARTEFFECT Artwork Worksheet for small group discussion.

Small Group Discussion

1. What does the artwork depict?
2. How is the Unsung Hero portrayed (character traits and actions)?
3. What elements of the artwork are most effective in conveying the story of the Unsung Hero?
4. What can we learn about the Holocaust /genocide from viewing this artwork?
5. What impact does this artwork have on you?

Step 8: Choose your Unsung Hero

Now that students have viewed, studied, and thought deeply about works of art relating to the Holocaust or other genocides, it is time for them to peruse the LMC website and select from the pre-approved list of Unsung Heroes. Individuals from the Holocaust and other genocides can be found under the category of Wartime Unsung Heroes. There are over 30 Unsung Heroes from the Holocaust and other genocides on the list that students can explore. Students can choose an individual who stands out as a role model for them through their character traits or actions (20 minutes). Students should invest some time in background **reading and research** on their chosen Unsung Hero.

- Find your LMC Unsung Hero on the approved list.

Day 5 Theme

"Everybody, every human being has the obligation to contribute somehow to this world." —Edith Carter, Holocaust survivor.

Step 9: Create!

Explain to students that their artwork does not have to be a masterpiece. During class they can sketch some ideas about their artworks and complete the work on their own time.

This creative process is an opportunity that can stimulate their minds as they generate ideas about how to portray an Unsung Hero from the Holocaust or another genocide in appropriate and expressive ways (30 minutes).

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Suggested Materials:

Two-dimensional

Dry Media
graphite, charcoal, colored pencil, pastel, etc.

Wet Media
acrylic, oil, watercolor, gouache, ink wash, printmaking, etc.

Mixed Media
photography, graphic design, textile, collage, paper.

Digital Media (must be printed)

Three-dimensional

sculpture, assemblage, ceramic, etc.

Step 10: Impact Statement

During class, students will write a one paragraph "Impact Statement" to accompany their artwork. This writing exercise discusses the Unsung Hero's unique contribution, the student's creative process, and interpretation (20 minutes).

The ARTEFFECT Impact Statement Outline is a resource for students submitting an entry for the ARTEFFECT Competition. The Impact Statement (500-1000 words) covers the following:

1. Introduces LMC Unsung Hero and why you chose this individual.

2. Addresses what is most important about your LMC Unsung Hero. Discuss what you most admire about this individual (e.g., as a role model, character traits, actions, values, their challenge or cause).

3. Explains your creative interpretation of your Unsung Hero's story, character traits and heroic acts in your artwork.

4. Describes the impact that creating your artwork has had on your outlook on life and how you will share your artwork and your Unsung Hero's story with your community.

Step 11: Classroom Exhibition

Upon completion, the teacher will display the artworks and impact statments around the classroom and have a gallery walk in the coming days/weeks. If time permits, each student can present their artwork to the class describing their inspiration, method, and decisions.

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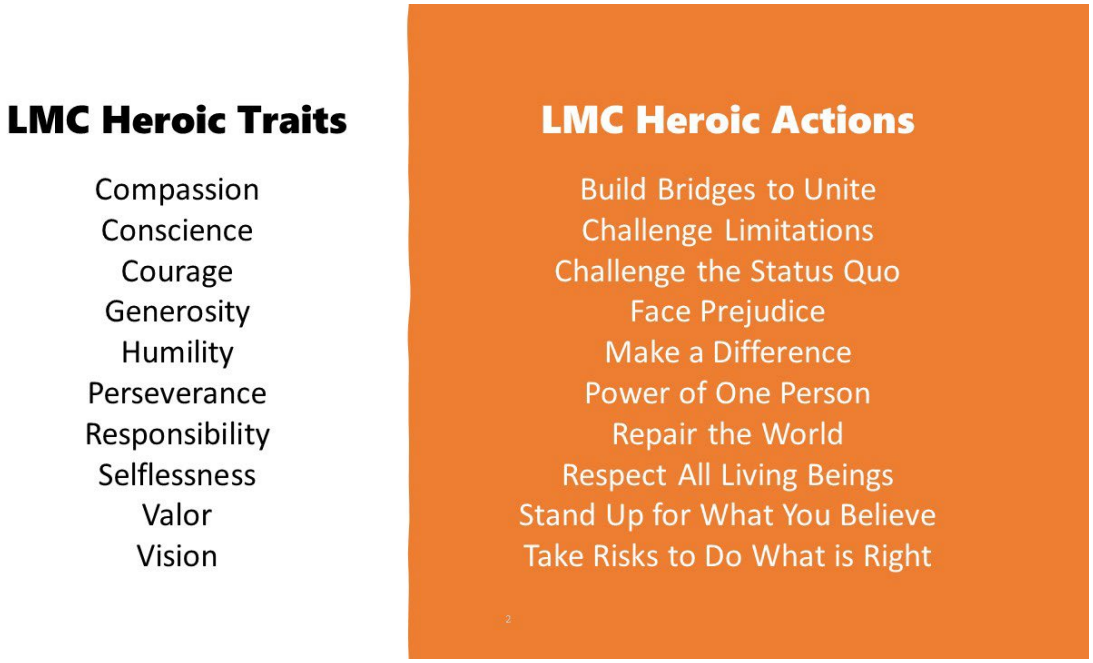
Modifications/Extensions Activity

- Teachers can choose to focus on certain artworks instead of all artworks in the slideshows.
- Teachers can choose to do whole group or small group discussions at their discretion.
- Teachers can alter the timeline of the steps depending on their classroom and district needs.
- Teachers can choose to make this a cross-curricular activity involving Social Studies, English, and Art (or other willing teachers/subject areas).
- Teachers can extend the timeframe for Step 10 for students entering the ARTEFFECT competition.
- If students are eager to learn more and time permits in the classroom, the teacher may use the Timeline Activity developed by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial and Museum. This is a two-day activity that uses visual representation and color-coded layers to better connect key events during the Holocaust, 1933-1945. Use the following link to access the Timeline: Timeline Activity: U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

LMC Unsung Heroes Heroic Traits and Actions



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Vocabulary

Antisemitism is prejudice against or hatred of Jews. It was coined only in the nineteenth century, but anti-Jewish hatred and Judeophobia (fear of Jews) dates to ancient times.

Auschwitz-Birkenau. The largest of its kind, this Auschwitz camp complex was essential to carrying out the Nazi plan for the "Final Solution." Auschwitz left its mark as one of the most infamous camps of the Holocaust. Located in German-occupied Poland, Auschwitz consisted of three camps including a killing center. More than 1.1 million people died at Auschwitz, including nearly one million Jews.

Genocide is an internationally recognized crime with a specific legal definition. The term refers to acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. Raphael Lemkin, a Polish-Jewish lawyer, first introduced the term in his 1944 book. Genocide was recognized as an international crime in 1948.

Holocaust: The Holocaust was the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million European Jews by the Nazi German regime and its allies and collaborators. The Holocaust was an evolving process that took place throughout Europe between 1933 and 1945.

Righteous Among the Nations are non-Jews who took great risks to save Jews during the Holocaust. Rescue took many forms and the Righteous came from different nations, religions and walks of life. What they had in common was that they protected their Jewish neighbors at a time when hostility and indifference prevailed.

Shoah: The Holocaust is also sometimes referred to as “the Shoah,” the Hebrew word for “catastrophe.”

Vet/Vetted: Make a careful and critical examination of, investigate thoroughly, especially in order to ensure that they are suitable for a job requiring trustworthiness.

Yad Vashem: The World Holocaust Remembrance Center, is the ultimate source for Holocaust education, documentation, and research. From the Mount of Remembrance in Jerusalem, Yad Vashem's integrated approach incorporates meaningful educational initiatives, groundbreaking research, and inspirational exhibits.

References

Pre-reading: “Rationale and Learning Objectives.” United States Holocaust Memorial and Museum.

Elsby, Liz. “Teaching the Holocaust Using Art.” Yad Vashem: The World Holocaust Remembrance Center.

“Guidelines for Teaching About the Holocaust.” United States Holocaust Memorial and Museum..

“How to Look at Art.” B.R. Howard Conservation.

“The Story of Irena Sendler: Righteous Among the Nations.” Yad Vashem: The World Holocaust Remembrance Center. Jerusalem, Israel.

ARTEFFECT Competition Resources

The ARTEFFECT competition is open to students in grades 6-12 and accepts submissions on artworks about the LMC Unsung Heroes from November 1-May 1.

ARTEFFECT Introduction Video
ARTEFFCT Competition
ARTEFFECT Preapproved Unsung Heroes
ARTEFFECT Judging Rubric
ARTEFFECT Impact Statement Outline
Student FAQs

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Curriculum Connections / Standards

National Visual Art Standards

Visual Arts—Connecting

- VA.Cn11.1.Ia.
  Describe how knowledge of culture, traditions, and history may influence personal responses to art.

Visual Arts—Presenting

- VA: Pr5.1.7a.
  Based on criteria, analyze and evaluate methods for preparing and presenting art.
- VA: Pr6.1.IIa.
  Make, explain, and justify connections between artists or artwork and social, cultural, and political history.

Visual Arts—Responding

- VA: Re.7.1.Ia.
  Hypothesize ways in which art influences perception and understanding of human experiences.
- VA: Re.7.2.Ia.
  Analyze how one's understanding of the world is affected by experiencing visual imagery.
- VA: Re.8.1.Ia.
  Interpret an artwork or collection of works, supported by relevant and sufficient evidence found in the work and its various contexts.

Visual Arts—Creating

- VA: Cr1.1.Ia.
  Use multiple approaches to begin creative endeavors.
- VA: Cr1.2.5a.
  Identify and demonstrate diverse methods of artistic investigation to choose an approach for beginning a work of art.
- VA: Cr2.1.8a.
  Demonstrate willingness to experiment, innovate, and take risks to pursue ideas, forms, and meanings that emerge in the process of artmaking or designing.
- VA: Cr2.2.IIa.
  Demonstrate awareness of ethical implications of making and distributing creative artwork.
- VA: Cr3.1.IIa.
  Engage in constructive critique with peers, then reflect on, reengage, revise, and refine works of art and design in response to personal artistic vision.

Common Core ELA Standards

Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, & Technical Subjects—Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- CCSS. ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.9
  Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9
  Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

Writing—Production and Distribution of Writing

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.4
  Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience

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Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes

ARTEFFECT

The Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes (LMC) celebrates individuals who created positive change in history by improving the lives of others through their extraordinary actions in service to others and society. By sharing the stories of these individuals who did extraordinary things, LMC seeks to inspire the hero within everyone.

Expanding LMC's mission, **ARTEFFECT** invites educators and their students to explore the diverse stories of LMC Unsung Heroes and their invaluable lessons as role-models from history through the visual arts. It includes an annual competition, professional development, and exhibitions. The ARTEFFECT lesson plans support teaching and learning to generate unique, creative interpretations of these stories in an array of artistic mediums. Students are encouraged to showcase their artworks beyond the classroom to explore the potential of their art to create positive community impact and inspire social action.

The ARTEFFECT competition invites U.S. and international middle and high school students to submit exceptional artworks that creatively interpret an LMC Unsung Hero's story in a unique and compelling way accompanied by an Impact Statement. Since 2016, over 2,000 students have participated in the competition. The annual competition accepts submissions from November-May and awards top prizes to students and recognition to their teachers. Learn more about the competition, previous winners, the prize categories, and the full guidelines.

Lesson plan created by Megan McNeil Helberg. Megan Helberg lives and teaches English in rural Nebraska where she is surrounded by the rolling Sandhills. She is the 2020 Nebraska Teacher of the Year and passionate about traveling the world to bring back as much knowledge, love, and opportunities as she can for her students. Her area of expertise is Holocaust and genocide education. Helberg was selected as a Lowell Milken Center Fellow in 2021 and continues to assist LMC as a facilitator. In 2023, she received the distinguished honor of being named the Anne Frank Center Educator of the Year.

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LowellMilkenCenter.org

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