

Paidiea Seminar Plan for *The Sunflower* by Simon Wiesenthal

Developed by Renee Boss March 1, 2023

based on the structure and format of seminar plans at www.Paidiea.org

Pre-Seminar Content

[Slideshow](#) with steps and extensions

Inspectional Read:

Ask participants to letter the paragraphs and number the lines or sentences.

Background Information:

“[The Sunflower](#)” is a memoir written by Simon Wiesenthal in 1969. Wiesenthal is a Holocaust survivor who wrote his memoir to convey moral issues of the Holocaust. This excerpt speaks to ghetto life for children during the Holocaust.

Pre-Seminar Process

Define and state the purpose for the seminar.

“A Paideia seminar is a collaborative, intellectual dialogue about a text, facilitated with open-ended questions. The main purpose of the seminar is to arrive at a fuller understanding of the textual ideas and values of ourselves, and of each other.”

Describe the responsibilities of the facilitator and participants.

“I am primarily responsible for asking open-ended questions, and I will take a variety of notes to keep up with the talk turns and flow of ideas. I will help move the discussion along in a productive direction by asking any follow-up questions based on my notes. I am asking you to think, listen, and speak candidly about your thoughts, reactions, and ideas. You can help each other do this by using each other’s names. You do not need to raise your hands in order to speak, rather, the discussion is collaborative in that you try to stay focused on the main speaker and wait your turn to talk. You should try to both agree and disagree in a courteous and respectful manner.”

Have participants set a personal goal

“Now please reflect on how you normally participate in discussions as a group. What goal can you set for yourself that will help the flow and meaning of the seminar? Please consider the list of personal participation goals.

- To speak at least three times
- To refer to the text (Textual evidence)
- To ask a question
- To speak out of uncertainty
- To build on the ideas of others

Establish a group goal

- To use names of classmates
 - To speak at least three times
 - To refer to the text (Textual evidence)
 - To ask a question
 - To speak out of uncertainty
 - To build on the ideas of others
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Seminar Questions

Opening

- ❖ Skim the piece another time and underline one word or phrase that you find to be most powerful.
(Round Robin sharing)
- ❖ Share why you selected that word or phrase (spontaneous discussion)

Core

- ❖ What is the symbolic significance of the child being named Eli?
- ❖ What do you see about the contrasts between how the adults and children were treated in the ghetto?

Closing

- ❖ What feelings and reactions did this piece evoke for you?
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Post-Seminar Process

Have participants do a written self-assessment of their personal goal

“As part of the post-seminar process, I would like to ask you to take a few minutes to reflect on your experience in meeting your goal set prior to the start of the discussion. Write a short note about how you did”

Do a group assessment of the social and intellectual goals of the discussion

“Now I would like us to talk together about how we did in relation to the group goal we set for ourselves (insert group goal). On a scale of one to five, five being ideal, how would you say we did? Why?” Discuss. Ask:
“Would anyone be willing to share their personal goal and reflection?”