



UK-JHF Lesson

University of Kentucky-Jewish Heritage Fund
Holocaust Education Initiative

Lesson Title:

Exploring Survivors' Testimonies via Found Poems

Lesson Overview

Suggested Grade Level	10th - 12th
Time Required	45-90 minutes or 1-2 class periods, depending on the needs of the instructor and how familiar students are with oral histories
Subject	US History or English Language Arts
Relevant Courses	US History, World History, Sociology, English Language Arts
Kentucky Curriculum Standard(s) Addressed	<p>HS.UH.CH.1: Examine the ways diverse groups viewed themselves and contributed to the identity of the United States in the world from 1877-present</p> <p>HS.UH.I.Q.1: Generate compelling questions to frame thinking, inquiry and/or understanding of key concepts in U.S. history.</p> <p>HS.UH.I.Q.2: Generate supporting questions to develop knowledge, understanding and/or thinking relative to key concepts in U.S. history framed by compelling questions.</p> <p>RI.9-10.7: Analyze various accounts of a subject presented in different print and non-print formats, determining which details are emphasized in each account.</p>
Summary/Rationale	<p>This lesson asks students to critically examine how Holocaust survivors remember their wartime experiences. In this lesson, students will closely read oral history excerpts and then work with their peers to create a "found poem" using words and phrases from the excerpts they identify as particularly meaningful.</p> <p>Up to 7 oral history excerpt pairings are available for teachers to use as part of this lesson. Depending on the specific pairings chosen, certain extension activities will be enabled following the "found poem" exercise, time permitting and at teachers' discretion.</p> <p>This lesson will be most effective if it is implemented after students have already gained a basic understanding of the Holocaust. This is because several of the individuals featured in the excerpts do not specifically define or describe certain events. When one individual refers to the liberation, for example, students should be able to infer that the individual is referring to the liberation of the concentration camps.</p>

	<p>“Day 1” of the lesson is structured as a general introduction to oral histories and what can be learned from them. While useful for students who do not have much experience working with oral histories, educators who have previously used oral histories in other lessons with their students may consider omitting this first day of the lesson and beginning with “Day 2.”</p>
<p>Featured Materials/ Content</p>	<p>This lesson features a total of 14 oral history excerpts. Seven Holocaust survivors are featured in these excerpts: Sylvia Green, Oscar Haber, Ann Klein, Justine Lerner, John Rosenberg, Paul Schlisser, and Alice Dreifuss Goldstein. With the exceptions of the excerpts featuring Goldstein (which were created for the Jewish Kentucky Oral History Project), these excerpts were sourced from <i>This is Home Now: Kentucky’s Holocaust Survivors Speak</i> by Arwen Donahue. These excerpts may be accessed as handouts within the “Links to Necessary Resources and Handouts” section of this lesson.</p> <p>14 excerpts have been made available to provide educators with some flexibility and choice regarding how they would like to implement this lesson. In most circumstances, all 14 excerpts need not be used within a single lesson.</p> <p>The lesson culminates in a class discussion. Do note that class discussions may take a different shape depending on which and how many oral history excerpts are implemented. If an educator desires to challenge students to think about a particular concept or feeling from an oral history excerpt—John Rosenberg’s thoughts on place, for example, or Justine Lerner’s reluctance to discuss her Holocaust experience with others—then it would be best to just implement one pair of oral history excerpts. If, however, an educator wishes to expose their students to a variety of concepts and experiences, using multiple excerpts as part of a single lesson would be appropriate.</p> <p>While the seven highlighted survivors experienced a variety of violence and trauma during the Holocaust, these excerpts do not focus on those experiences. Instead, the excerpts collected here showcase the survivors in various stages of reflection. Multiple survivors consider what helped them to survive the Holocaust, for example, while others consider the changes they noticed as the Nazis gained control over their homes.</p> <p>This lesson offers a means through which students can closely, collaboratively, and critically engage with survivor testimony in the form of oral histories. It is possible that students may emotionally connect with a specific word, phrase, or excerpt featured in this lesson. Those connections can be powerful and can help your students to become upstanders in the world we live in today. At the same time, however, please remind your students that the experiences they will be learning about as part of this lesson belong to the survivors. While we might emotionally connect to elements of the stories they share, we can never experience what they experienced. Understanding that and respecting that is one way in which we can honor them.</p>

Essential Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do survivors remember their Holocaust experiences? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What similarities and differences exist between the memories of survivors? b. How do survivors use their memories of what happened to them to guide them in their modern lives? c. Students will also likely generate additional supporting questions of their own as they examine the oral history excerpts. • What can we learn from oral histories? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. How does the way we interpret (reading, listening, viewing) an oral history influence what we might learn from it? b. How are oral histories different from other types of primary sources?
Learning Outcomes	<p><i>After this lesson, students will be able to . . .</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze survivor testimonies through oral histories as means of understanding their experiences during the Holocaust. • Collaborate with their peers to create a “found poem” based on their shared close reading of the testimonies as texts. • Generate new questions about a particular survivor’s experience and how it fits into the larger context of the Holocaust.
Teacher Planning and Research	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. First, decide how and where this lesson best fits into your pre-existing Holocaust curriculum. If you are in the process of building and/or revising your Holocaust curriculum, the United States Memorial Holocaust Museum (USHMM) offers several excellent lessons and resources. They have created <u>1-day</u> as well as <u>2-and-4 day introductory</u> lessons on the Holocaust. <u>USHMM’s timeline activity</u> could also provide useful contextualization for this lesson, given that some of the featured survivors reference specific Holocaust events. 2. Second, while not required, teachers who plan to implement this lesson should consider acquiring a copy of <i>This is Home Now: Kentucky’s Holocaust Survivors Speak</i>. Nearly all of the oral history excerpts contained within this lesson were drawn from this resource. There is a possibility that students may be curious about other aspects of the survivors’ testimonies they read. Having a copy of the book on hand could be useful in these scenarios. 3. Review the oral history excerpts and make a decision on which ones you would like to utilize and how. If you are using the Alice Dreifuss Goldstein excerpt, you may also want to consider viewing her oral history interview in full. 4. Decide whether your students would benefit from the “Day 1” portion of the lesson. While all students would benefit from Day 1, it is primarily intended for students who are not accustomed to closely examining oral histories as primary sources. 5. Ensure that you have the needed supplies for students to create their “found poems.” Easel pads work well if students are provided enough space. Calculator Tape also works well. However, in a pinch, all students really need to complete this exercise is paper and their writing utensils. 6. Determine workspace and group configurations. While this lesson can certainly be conducted in a traditional classroom, other school spaces may be more convenient (offering students more space, for example), provided that they can be accessed. In terms of group configurations, this lesson plan was designed with groups of 5-7 students in mind, but you know your students best, so feel free to adjust group configurations as needed. Depending on your needs, you may also wish to divide students into groups prior to the lesson.

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During the Lesson

Instructional Sequence

Day 1

1. **“What is an Oral History?” Introductory Activity (5-10 minutes)**
 - a. Begin class by writing the question “What is an oral history?” on your board or projecting it onto your classroom screen. This could be done as a bell ringer. Even if students have no prior knowledge of oral histories, encourage them to think critically about what an oral history might be by thinking critically about the term itself.
 - b. After students have had a few minutes to gather some initial thoughts in response to this question, open the floor for a very brief (1-2 minute) classroom discussion to gauge student thinking.
 - c. Present students with a formal definition of oral history. If you are familiar with oral history, feel free to use your own definition, but [this definition](#) by the Oral History Association or [this definition](#) by the Smithsonian Institution may also be used if you prefer. Allow students 1-2 minutes to read and process these definitions of oral history.
 - d. Once students have had sufficient time to process the definition(s) of oral history, prompt whole-class discussion with the following questions: “Why is it important to preserve human memories with oral histories? What information can be gained from studying oral histories? If you were writing a research paper or an article, what are some “pros” and “cons” for using oral histories as references?”
2. **Following this introductory activity, introduce the main activity by informing students that today they will be conducting a close examination of an oral history focused on a Holocaust survivor, Johanna Gerechter Neumann, and what she witnessed in Hamburg, Germany during Kristallnacht (2-3 minutes).**
 - a. Depending on the class, consider taking a moment here to split your students into pairs or small groups, if those are your preferences for class discussions.
 - b. Pass out the [Oral History Analysis Graphic Organizer](#), as well as a paper copy of [Neumann’s testimony](#), and tell students that they will be conducting three close readings of Neumann’s testimony: first by reading it, secondly by listening to it, and finally by watching it.
 - c. Once students have a copy of the graphic organizer, before they begin work with the oral history, have them complete the first row of the graphic organizer by jotting down what they expect to be learning from her story. Encourage students to simply fill out the first row based on what they know now.
3. **Have students silently read the oral history excerpt of Neumann’s testimony and as they read, direct them to fill out the second row of the graphic organizer. Advise them that they should be prepared to share their thoughts after reading (5 minutes).**
 - a. As students read, consider prepping the audio and visual versions of the oral history by ensuring copies of the clips are ready to be played.
4. **After reading, have students share out any observations and questions they jotted down on their graphic organizers (5 minutes).**
 - a. As this was the first read, observations may be very “surface-level” and focused on the basic facts of Neumann’s story.

- b. Consider using a 30-second Think-Pair-Share if students are unwilling to share.
- 5. **Have students LISTEN ONLY to the audio of Neumann narrating her experiences and direct students to fill out the third row of the graphic organizer** (5 minutes).
 - a. The oral history clip of Neumann can be accessed [here](#), but remember to have students listen only during this step.
 - b. The clip is relatively short at just around 2 minutes long. Since it is short, strongly consider playing it twice for students.
- 6. **After listening, have students share out any observations and questions they jotted down on their graphic organizers** (5 minutes).
 - a. At this point, encourage students to think about what new information they gain from listening to Neumann's story as opposed to just reading it.
 - b. You may prompt student thinking by encouraging them to listen for things like tone, pauses, and emphasized words.
- 7. **Have students watch the [clip](#) of Neumann describing her experiences and direct students to fill out the third row of the graphic organizer** (5 minutes).
 - a. As before, strongly consider playing the clip twice, this time encouraging students to closely watch Neumann as she tells her story.
- 8. **After watching, have students share out any observations and questions they jotted down on their graphic organizers** (5 minutes).
 - a. Again, encourage students to focus on what information could be gained this time specifically through watching Neumann tell her story.
 - b. You may prompt student thinking by encouraging them to pay attention to things like facial expression and/or gestures.
- 9. **After students have read, listened, and watched Johanna Gerechter Neumann's oral history excerpt, direct students to complete the final row of their graphic organizers** (5 minutes).
 - a. This is a summative moment where students should think critically about how reading, listening, and watching were all avenues for gaining knowledge from Neumann's oral history.
 - b. Challenge students to think about how their own perspectives on the oral history changed as they read, then listened, and finally watched it.
 - c. You may also direct student thinking back to the introductory activity and have students contextualize Neumann's oral history with some of the points raised during that initial discussion.
- 10. **Time permitting, have one last class discussion allowing students to share their final thoughts.**

Day 2

- 11. **Introductory Oral History Activity** (5 minutes)
 - a. Begin class by asking students: "What are oral histories and what we can learn from them?" This may serve the purpose of a quick recap of the "Day 1" lesson.
 - b. Have students consider this question individually and encourage them to briefly write down their thoughts before segueing to a brief discussion where students share their responses to the question.
- 12. **Important: Establish some norms/ground rules for the lesson students will be experiencing today** (5 minutes).
 - a. You may if you choose provide students with a very brief overview of what they will be doing today: reading excerpts of survivor testimony in the form of oral histories, choosing a few specific words/phrases that they find meaningful, then working to combine those words and phrases into a "found poem" (no need to explain to students exactly what that is quite yet).

- b. Note to students that they should respectfully approach the survivor testimony that will be shared with them. Let them know that they might have an emotional response to a specific word, phrase, or excerpt, and that's okay. It may be that something a specific survivor said reminds a student of something that happened to them in their own lives, and that's okay, too.
- c. Encourage students to be self-reflective. Especially in the event that students do elicit emotional response to something they encounter in the oral history excerpts, nudge them to ask themselves - "why is it that this resonated with me?" "Why do I think this specific word or phrase is so important?"
- d. After you acknowledge with students that they may have emotional responses to the survivor testimony they encounter today, finish by noting to students that these excerpts they will be reading are ultimately just small glimpses into the lives and experiences of each survivor. And while we may emotionally connect with something they share, we can never experience what they experienced.

13. Introduce and have students read the oral history excerpts that will be the focus of the lesson (5-7 minutes).

- a. Depending on which excerpts you have selected for the lesson, pass out the corresponding handouts and briefly go over the survivor biography to provide students with some context on who they will be reading about. Regardless of how many oral history excerpt pairs you have decided to use, no student should receive more than one handout. This means that even if you are using only one excerpt pair, not all students will receive the same excerpt. For example, if Sylvia Green's excerpts are used, try to ensure that the students who receive "1A" are more or less equal to those who receive "1B."
- b. Direct students to follow the instructions listed under "Do Now" on their handouts. Students will begin silently reading the excerpts and highlighting/circling a word AND a phrase from the excerpt.
- c. **Note:** The "Do Now" on their handouts prompts students to identify words and phrases from the excerpts that "stand out" to them. You know your students best, but do try to be mindful of how you might expect students to engage with the excerpts - if they, for example, have undergone some type of trauma in their own lives that might lead them to select a specific word or phrase. Remember, it is okay for students to emotionally respond to these oral history excerpts. And while we want students to question why they might be responding to an excerpt in a specific way, be aware that some students may not want to be put "on the spot."

14. Give students 30 seconds to engage in a Think-Pair-Share with a neighbor.

- a. Direct students to briefly discuss why they selected their specific words and phrases.

15. Conduct a brief class discussion encouraging students to share out why they selected a particular word or phrase with the larger class (5 minutes).

- a. Depending on the number of excerpts being used, students may begin, at this point, identifying similarities or differences between the experiences they have just read about.

16. Break students into groups based on the excerpt they initially received (or have them move into their groups if they have been pre-assigned) and tell them that they will now be creating a "found poem" using the words and phrases they just highlighted from the oral history excerpts (2-3 minutes).

- a. As students move into their groups, this is when you should distribute the special materials, such as easel pad paper or calculator tape, that you plan to have them use for constructing their poems. All students in each group should have access to some centralized space they can easily reach.

17. Once students are in their groups and have the materials they need, explain the process they will use to create the poem (consider leaving these next steps up on a screen or marker board) (5 minutes).

- a. First, students should write their word and phrase on two separate pieces of paper/calculator tape/etc.
- b. All students will have three turns.

- c. On Turns 1 and 2, students may *either* place one of their pieces of paper into the centralized space or move a piece of paper that has already been put down. As they do so, the group's poem will begin to take shape.
- d. On Turn 3, the final turn, students may either place a piece of paper they have not put down yet, move a piece of paper that has already been put down, or choose to pass.
- e. **Note:** Multiple students may ask if it is "okay" that they wrote down and use the same word or phrase as another group member; this is fine. The same word/phrase or iterations of the same word/phrase may appear in a single poem and this could in fact be utilized in subsequent class discussion - "why were you both drawn to x word or y phrase?"

18. Allow students time to engage in the process of constructing the poems with their group members (5-7 minutes).

- a. As students construct their poems, move between groups, answering student questions as needed.
You may also use this time to "warm call" on students by asking them to share their group's completed poem with the class once it is finished.

19. Once students have completed their poems, allow one member from each group to share the poem their group constructed with the larger class (5-7 minutes).

- a. At this point, instruct students from other groups to hold questions and comments until every group has shared their poem and that you will be having a class discussion after each group has shared.

20. Once every group has shared its poem, engage in the class discussion (7-12 minutes).

- a. Prior to engaging in the class discussion, you may consider implementing another 30-second Think-Pair-Share to have students discuss with a neighbor or with their group members to identify either something they want to share about their oral history excerpt or poem or a question or comment about another group's poem.
- b. As the instructor, you may consider prompting discussion by asking students who selected the same words and/or phrases why they were particularly drawn to those words/phrases. Again, you know your students best; consider "warm calling" on students during the 30-second Think-Pair-Share so that no student feels put "on the spot."
- c. You may also encourage students to share brief summaries of the excerpts they read; keep in mind that even if only one oral history excerpt pair is used, not everyone in class will have read the same excerpt.
- d. If needed, you may refer to the [List of Discussion Questions](#) included as part of this lesson plan to stimulate discussion, but this is optional

21. Before class ends, ensure that you preserve your students' poems, if you wish.

- a. If they have used calculator tape or pieces of easel pad paper, these can be taped together.
- b. You could also take a picture of your students' poems to take note of their configurations, collect their pieces of paper, then reassemble them at a later point

22. Time permitting, you may also ask your students what unanswered questions they have about the survivors they have read about today.

- a. If you have acquired a copy of *This is Home Now: Kentucky's Holocaust Survivors Speak*, you may be able to answer specific questions or enable further class discussion by introducing other aspects of the oral history interviews included in the book.
- b. If you used the Alice Dreifuss Goldstein excerpts, you may wish to share a portion of her taped oral history interview with students.

Assessment(s)

- Graphic Organizer

- Discussion
 - Think-pair-shares
 - Whole-class discussions
- Found “poems”

Links to Necessary Resources and Handouts

- [Oral History Graphic Organizer](#) - For use on “Day 1”
- [Johanna Gerechter Neumann’s Kristallnacht Testimony](#) - For use on “Day 1”
- [Johanna Gerechter Neumann describes Kristallnacht in Hamburg](#) - For use on “Day 1”
- [Oral History Excerpt 1A](#) and [Oral History Excerpt 1B](#) - Sylvia Green
- [Oral History Excerpts 2A](#) and [Oral History Excerpt 2B](#) - Oscar Haber
- [Oral History Excerpt 3A](#) and [Oral History Excerpt 3B](#) - Ann Klein
- [Oral History Excerpt 4A](#) and [Oral History Excerpt 4B](#) - Justine Lerner
- [Oral History Excerpt 5A](#) and [Oral History Excerpt 5B](#) - John Rosenberg
- [Oral History Excerpt 6A](#) and [Oral History Excerpt 6B](#) - Paul Schlisser
- [Oral History Excerpt 7A](#) and [Oral History Excerpt 7B](#) - Alice Dreifuss Goldstein
- [Educator Resource: Oral History Excerpt Discussion Questions](#)

Following Up and Additional Resources

Suggested Modification for Accommodation

- **Virtual and/or Distance Learning** - While designed with traditional in-person learning in mind, this lesson could also be adapted for digital learning via the use of any virtual whiteboard application, such as [Miro](#) or [Figma](#). Instead of having students physically work together in groups, students would instead be grouped up virtually and take turns on Jamboard to create their “found poem.”
- **Extension Opportunities** - If you wish to make oral history a larger component of your existing Holocaust curriculum, this lesson could be repeated on a different day, just with different oral history excerpts. If you wish to use this model with alternative oral history excerpts, consider referring to the two oral history repositories identified in the “Additional Resources” section below.
- **Omitting Day 1** - Educators whose students are already familiar with closely and critically reading oral histories may not benefit as much from Day 1 of this lesson, which is intended more so for students less familiar with oral histories. Educators in these circumstances should feel free to omit Day 1 if that best suits their needs and circumstances.
- **Modifications to the Oral History Excerpts** - Each oral history excerpt included in this lesson is part of a pair. The decision to offer two excerpts for each featured survivor was primarily made with average class sizes in mind. Larger classes, in particular, could implement multiple excerpt pairs to diversify student experiences and to create additional opportunities for thoughtful class discussions. However, if this model is not ideal for a teacher’s needs, they need not follow it. Teachers with very small classes may instead find it beneficial to have their class essentially work as one “group” on one specific oral history excerpt. Since educators in these circumstances may spend less time overall on class discussions, they may opt to have their students complete multiple “found poems” within a single class.

Additional Resources

- [*This is Home Now: Kentucky’s Holocaust Survivors Speak*](#) - Nearly all of the oral history excerpts used in this lesson were sourced from this book. While the book itself is not required for this lesson, teachers may strongly wish to consider purchasing it so that they can plan their own extension activities centered on the experiences of the Holocaust survivors featured in this lesson.
- [Guidelines for Teaching About the Holocaust](#) - This list of guidelines on teaching about the Holocaust was compiled by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Educators new to teaching the Holocaust will find this especially helpful.
- [Additional Survivor Testimonies in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](#) - Educators who wish to create oral history excerpts of their own have a wealth of material to consult online here, in the collections of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.
- [Jewish Kentucky Oral History Project](#) - Educators specifically interested in curating oral history excerpts from Holocaust survivors who live or have lived in Kentucky should refer to the Jewish Kentucky Oral History Project, where numerous oral histories are easily accessible online.

- [Examining Racism and Discrimination through Oral History](#) - This curriculum guide created by Densho helped guide the development of this lesson plan. The Densho model found within this resource has different goals from this specific lesson plan, but could be useful for teachers who wish to learn more about using “found poems” to teach difficult histories.
- [Nancy & David Wolf Holocaust and Humanity Center](#) - Located just north of Kentucky in Cincinnati, OH, the Nancy & David Wolf may be a viable option for KY educators who desire to take their students to a Holocaust museum.

Cross-Curricular Connections

- **ELA** - Social Studies teachers may take this lesson as an opportunity to reach out to the ELA faculty in their schools. While this lesson does use historical sources in the form of oral histories that ELA teachers may not be incredibly familiar with, this lesson could conceivably fit well into an ELA teacher’s existing Holocaust curriculum - as a supplemental activity within a Holocaust survivor memoir unit, for example.

Citations

- Densho: The Japanese-American Legacy Project. “Examining Racism and Discrimination through Oral History.” 2017.
https://densho.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Densho-curriculum_racism_discrimination.pdf
- Donahue, Arwen. *This is Home Now: Kentucky’s Holocaust Survivors Speak*. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2009.
- Goldstein, Alice Dreifuss. “Interview with Alice Dreifuss Goldstein, April 17, 2019.” Interview by Beth Goldstein. *Jewish Kentucky Oral History Project*. Louis B. Nunn Center for Oral History, University of Kentucky Libraries.
https://nunncenter.net/ohms-spokedb/render.php?cachefile=2019oh1378_jk0112_ohm.xml.