



Frequently Asked Questions A Guide to Introducing a Holocaust Unit Study in ELA

Why is the Holocaust an important topic of study? What relevance does it have for today?

The Holocaust was an unprecedented event in the history of humanity. Understanding the prejudices that allowed the Holocaust to happen, as well as the role of perpetrators, collaborators, bystanders and upstanders allows us to consider the role of choice and responsibility in our world today. Because the Holocaust is such an important part of world history, the State of Michigan passed Public Act 170, which requires the Holocaust to be taught between 8th-12th grades.

Why is my student learning about the Holocaust in language arts instead of a history course?

While social studies classes afford students the opportunity to study history through dates, places and events, literature, both fiction and non-fiction, help the students to *feel* history--to see the humanity behind the statistics and recognize the power of language and expression. While one focus of the unit will be on reviewing key historical context, students will also practice in-depth literary analysis and writing skills as they would in any other language arts course.

What are the emotional effects that such content may have on my child? Is this material too dark?

The design of the unit will rely on the principle of safely preparing students to begin studying the Holocaust and how to safely conclude the unit to avoid any negative emotional effects. Students will be introduced to new material at an appropriate pace, with time to process it in through activities such as brainstorming, small group discussions, and journaling. Although the unit will focus on harsh realities of antisemitism and genocide, we will also discuss stories of resistance and hope.

We encourage families to explore Echoes and Reflections at <https://echoesandreflections.org> before the unit begins. Echoes and Reflections is a free Holocaust educational resource created by three leading organizations in

Holocaust education – The Anti-Defamation League, the USC Shoah Foundation, and Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center. We also encourage parents/caregivers to talk to your student about what they are studying. Throughout the time you are studying this material check on how they are feeling and handling the material.

How will this unit prepare my student for the SAT or college?

Many works that student's study in ELA classes are based on historical events and moments, such as *Animal Farm* and *The Crucible*. All academic standards are met in our Holocaust unit as they would be in any other literature unit.

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