

Inside The Glass Case: Boxcar



Developed by:

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Recommended grade levels: Grades 9-12

Suggested timeframe: 1-2 class periods

Historical Context:

- General:
 - Six million Jews (2/3 of the prewar population of Europe) were killed during the Holocaust.
- The “Final Solution”
 - The systematic mass murder of all Jews was known as the [“Final Solution.”](#)
 - Members of the SS and German government officials met at [the Wannsee Conference](#) on January 20, 1942. They discussed the implementation of the “Final Solution.”
 - Six [killing centers](#) were established in German-occupied Poland to carry out the Final Solution: [Chelmno](#), [Treblinka](#), [Sobibor](#), [Belzec](#), [Auschwitz-Birkenau](#), and [Majdanek](#).
 - Nearly 2.7 million Jews were killed at these killing centers.
- Deportations
 - Rail transport from all over Europe was used to transport - or [deport](#) - Jewish people to various [concentration and death camps](#) in Eastern Europe.
 - Jews were often told they were being “resettled in the east.”
 - Roughly 80-100 people were packed into each railcar. Often they did not have any food or water. Many died along the way, as it could take several days to reach the destination.

Goals & Objectives:

- Upon completion of this lesson, students will know:
 - How to analyze a variety of media, such as Holocaust artifacts, poetry, memoirs, and survivor testimony.
 - About the camp system and the Final Solution.
- Upon completion of this lesson, students will understand:
 - That different types of sources contribute to our understanding of history.
- Upon completion of this lesson, students will be able to:
 - Connect personal experiences and accounts of history to major events of the Holocaust.

Procedure:

Part 1: Prepare Gallery Walk

- Step 1: Set up the following resources for students to explore at different stations:
 - Poem “Written in Pencil in the Sealed Railway Car” by Dan Pagis
 - [Emanuel Mittelman’s testimony](#) - Clip #36 and #37 (Note: You will need to create a free account to view this video. Cue the video at a station where students can watch on a computer screen)
 - [Night passage](#)
 - [Auschwitz Album](#) photos depicting arrival at Auschwitz.

For a virtual setting: Use breakout rooms as stations, and use a timer to prompt students to move between rooms OR to move on to the next resource.

For an in-person setting: Have students travel from station to station, moving when they hear the timer expire. For some of the stations, a computer or iPad will be needed.

- Step 2: Set up mentimeter:
 - Go to www.mentimeter.com (you will need to create an account if you do not already have one)
 - Select word cloud, and input the following prompt:
 - As you observed the boxcar's role in transporting Jews to concentration camps, what words sum up your thoughts and the idea of uncertainty?

Part 2: Activity:

- Step 1: Discuss the idea of “uncertainty” with students.
- Step 2: Show students a photo of the boxcar on display at the Holocaust Memorial Center.
 - Students share all of their observations about the boxcar.
 - Students share all of the questions they have about the boxcar.
- Step 3: Tell students about the boxcar - where it came from, what it was used for, and why it is on display at the Holocaust Memorial Center.
- Step 4: Divide students into 4-5 small groups. Each group travels to every station to explore each resource.
 - Each group discusses how each resource connects with the idea of “uncertainty.” Students record their responses.
- Step 3: Students return to their seats and come up with three words that come to mind when they read the following prompt:
 - “As you observed the boxcar's role in transporting Jews to concentration camps and killing centers, what words sum up your thoughts and the idea of uncertainty?”
- Step 4: Students enter their three words at www.menti.com to form a word cloud.
- Step 5: Discuss how the words they have chosen connect to the idea of uncertainty.
- Step 6: Students journal or share their responses to the prompt:
 - What does the boxcar, as a historical artifact, teach us about the human experience during the holocaust? What evidence from your observations today supports your answer?

Content Standards:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.1
 - Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.6
 - Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.7
 - Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9
 - Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9.B

- Apply grades 9-10 Reading standards to literary nonfiction (e.g., "Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid, and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning").
- Social Studies/History:
 - 7.1.3 Twentieth Century Genocide – Use primary and secondary sources to analyze the causes and consequences of genocide in the 20th century
 - 7.2.3 World War II – Analyze the causes, course, characteristics, and immediate consequences of World War II by:
 - investigating the development and enactment of Hitler’s “final solution” policy, and the responses to genocide by the Allies, the United States government, international organizations, and individuals analyzing the major turning points and unique characteristics of the war
 - 7.2.6 - Case Studies in Genocide
- C3 Social Studies State Standards
 - D2.His.1.9-12 Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.
 - D2.His.3.9-12 Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context.