

Behind The Glass Case: Wedding Band



Developed by:

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Recommended grade levels: Grades 9-12

Suggested timeframe: 1-2 class periods

Historical Context:

The Camp System:

- The Nazi government established a series of camps to imprison perceived political, ideological, and racial opponents.
- As the Nazis invaded other countries across Europe and expanded their areas of control, they established tens of thousands of concentration camps.
- The conditions at these camps were horrible and many people imprisoned there died from exhaustion, starvation, disease, and exposure.
- Between 1941 and 1944 Jewish property was confiscated as a byproduct of the Holocaust. This was part of the Nazi exploitation of resources through plunder in order to aid the German war effort.
- [Dachau](#) was a concentration camp located in Bavaria, a state in the southern part of Germany.
 - Prisoners of the camp included German Communists, Social Democrats, trade unionists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Roma (Gypsies), homosexuals, and Jewish people. It is estimated that at least 188,000 prisoners were incarcerated there between 1933 and 1945.
 - Prisoners in Dachau were used for forced labor. The camp included a crematoria area used as a killing site for prisoners. It also came to be known for medical experimentation on prisoners where malaria and tuberculosis experiments, hypothermia experiments, and experiments testing new medication were administered.
 - On April 29, 1945, American forces liberated Dachau.

Goals & Objectives:

- Students will know:
 - How to analyze an artifact.
 - About the camp system.
- Students will understand:
 - That artifacts tell stories, and that the story gives the victims back their humanity.
- Students will be able to:
 - Articulate lessons that they personally take away from this exploration.

Procedure:

Learning from artifacts:

- Post the word “artifact” on the board/screen for students to see. Have students discuss artifacts using the following suggested questions:
 - What is an artifact?
 - Why are artifacts important?
 - Where do they come from? Where are they stored?
 - Who studies them?

- What can we learn from them?

The artifact:

- After talking about artifacts in general, let students know that they will study one artifact from the Holocaust. Show them a photo of the wedding band, and lead an exploration using the following suggested questions:
 - What is this object?
 - What is it used for?
 - When do you think it's from? Why do you think that?
 - Who might it have belonged to?
 - Where would they have gotten it from?
 - Why would they have had it?

The story behind the artifact:

- Provide background on this ring - let students know that it was found by a US soldier at Dachau after the camp was liberated.
- Explain that Jewish people were deported to different concentration camps throughout Europe, and that when they arrived their possessions were taken away.

Historical context:

- Have students read historian [Lucy Dawidowicz's description](#) of how and why the Nazis took property from the victims:
- To support their reading, show students photos from the "[Kanada](#)" section of the Auschwitz Album:

Analysis:

- Have students free-write or journal their response to the following prompt:
 - We do not know who this wedding band belonged to, or what happened to its owner. What we do know is that it was taken away from somebody - a real person with a name, a life, and a story. Even without knowing the full story beyond this artifact, what is its significance? What message or lesson can we learn from this artifact?

Content Standards:

WHG 7.2.3 - World War II

WHG 7.2.6 - Case Studies of Genocide

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2 / CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.10 / CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.10 - Range of Writing

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

C3 Framework Indicators:

D2.His.4.9-12 – Analyze complex and interacting factors that influenced perspectives of people during different historical eras;

D2.His.5.9-12 – Analyze how historical contexts shaped and continue to shape people's perspectives;

D2.His.11.9-12. Critique the usefulness of historical sources

D4.1.9-12. Construct arguments

D4.2.9-12. Construct explanations