

I. Introduction

The educational project *Teaching the Holocaust* was introduced in the fourth class of vocational school at the General-Technical School in Lubliniec for students in their last year of high school. This was based on the fact that the materials in the project require students to be at a certain level of personal and social maturity. It includes several levels (elements) and is not yet complete. In the following report, I have tried to describe these elements and provide photographs.

The starting point for my idea of a series of lessons on these topics and the project itself came from my participation in several training seminars that both increased my professional knowledge of Holocaust-related topics and provided me with access to a variety of educational materials. These seminars included the Centropa Seminar (March 2012) and the 7th Summer School for Teaching the Holocaust (July 2012). I also incorporated the materials and knowledge that I already possessed.

II. Stage I: Selecting the Class

The first thing I had to do was choose a class. The criteria that I used to select the best class included the style of the lesson, the class' level of knowledge (on various topics), their interest in the topic, etc. This also shaped my ideas about the project's character, which included:

- participating in Centropa competitions,
- analysing literary materials present in the basic programme,
- watching the film *Schindler's List*,
- travelling to Kraków to take part in the Galicia Jewish Museum's educational programme,
- presenting Centropa and its ideas in open lectures,
- working with files from the Institute of National Remembrance,
- another open lecture: *The Auschwitz Album*,
- expanding on the literary materials with texts by Irit Amiel and Ida Fink,
- summing up the project and sending the students' films to the Centropa competition.

III. Stage II: Competition

As an introduction, I discussed the idea of the Centropa competition, taking advantage of the detailed description sent by Ms Kamila Dobrzyńska. The students were provided examples of completed projects and films.

The class was divided into groups to work on two projects:

- Two groups would make films for *Wisława Szymborska and Yehudah Amichai*,
- Three groups would take part in the Centropa competition on traces of the Jewish past in our town.

Because the course was being carried out in English, I invited Ms Olga Gerasymiv, an English teacher, to help keep an eye on the language aspects of our work. The students were encouraged to go to her for consultation in all stages of their work.

In the several months of working on their films, the students came to me many times for help. While I gave them some guidance as to their ideas and provided links to websites with useful materials and methods of presentation, the students worked independently and the projects were based on the group's original ideas. I waited impatiently to see the results.

The students had until 15 December to complete their projects, which I sent to the Galicia Museum just before the holidays.

IV. Stage III: Analysing texts from the national core curriculum and the school curriculum

This stage is not particularly unusual or innovative (in my opinion), as we are working here with texts from the canon of Polish literature [taught in all schools]. The works we examined were:

- The short stories of Tadeusz Borowski (I chose four: "Farewell, Maria", "Auschwitz, Our Home", "This Way to the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen" and "The Battle of Grunwald");
- Hanna Krall's reportage *To Outwit God*.

However, the classwork was many times turned into a free discussion and exchange of ideas; I told the stories of different people, which made a major impression on the students. The lesson ceased to be confined to common elements, but served as a springboard for discussion. Students even opted to stay in class during breaks to continue the discussion or make one last important point before wrapping up. I'm extremely proud of their involvement in this stage.

V. Stage IV: Watching *Schindler's List*

The next phase consisted of the screening of Spielberg's film *Schindler's List*. It was to show students the fate of Jews during the Second World War and acquaint them with the figure of Oskar Schindler and his actions. We paid particular attention to the form of the film: Janusz Kamiński's black-and-white footage, the music by John Williams and the acting, particularly Ralph Fiennes' portrayal of Amon Goeth. The film also helped students prepare for their upcoming visit to Kraków. Despite some logistical challenges (the film is very long, so we had to reserve a room, attend to all the technical problems and develop the younger

class), the students were enthusiastic participants in the screening and I was also able to show them some of the accompanying documentary materials, including interviews with some of the people portrayed in the film.

VI. Stage V: a field trip to Kraków, participating in educational workshops at the Galicia Jewish Museum

We spent 4-5 October in Kraków. There, we participated in a museum lecture led by Ms Gina Kuhn. We got to have an interactive viewing of the very interesting exhibition, which documents Jewish history. Here we are in action:



Later, we participated in workshops on the Holocaust and the fate of Jews during the Second World War:

At the end of the day, we had the amazing opportunity to hear the story of Ms Lidia Maksymowicz, a child survivor of Auschwitz-Birkenau. This part of the programme was rated the highest by the students, as they had a chance to hear in person the memories of someone who had been there and seen these things herself:

On the second day, we took a walking tour tracing *Schindler's List* sites around Kraków. Here is our whole group on Ghetto Heroes' Square:



VII. Stage VI: Open Lecture

I presented the concept of Centropa, its website and its extensive resources in an open lecture entitled “Traces of Memory: Rescue from Oblivion”. It took place on 26 October 2012.

The outline of the lecture can be found in the attachment.

VIII. Stage VII: Working with IPN Files

The files of the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) *The Destruction of Polish Jews During the Second World War*, *Auschwitz – Memory for the Future*, *Poles Who Saved Jews During the Second World War* were used in literature class. Each contains photographs that help illustrate the issues we have been discussing throughout the programme in a direct, and sometimes shocking, way. Unfortunately, the time to work with these materials was limited because students in the fourth class only had 3 hours of Polish language lectures per week.

IX. Stage VIII: Open Lecture

I next had the idea to hold an open lecture dealing with broadening Holocaust education. It will most likely take place on 14 December [translator’s note: the report was sent to us on the 11th] and present the *Auschwitz Album* by Lili Jacob.

An outline for the lecture can be found as an attachment.

X. Stage IX: Supplementing the literature with texts by Irit Amiel and Ida Fink

This class will come after the lecture about the *Auschwitz Album*. The texts that the students will analyse will be:

- *Farewell to My Dead Class*, by Irit Amiel
- *The Key Game*, by Ida Fink

The texts were taken mainly from the excellent source *Choosing Sources to Teach About the Holocaust in Occupied Poland* (Alina Skibińska and Robert Szuchta, eds., Stowarzyszenie Centrum Badań Nad Zagładą Żydów, Warsaw 2010).

Outline for working on the text: mine (I will work on this after the winter holidays)

The selected texts will help the students approach the Holocaust in different ways than what they are used to.

XI. Stage X: Summing Up the Project

I honestly think that's about all of my ideas and thoughts. I planned one more open lecture where students will present their films, but that will take place in January. We have right now a lot of work to prepare for the matura [high school exit] exam and finalizing grades, and I am not able to finish the project before the holidays. We will use the time to take a deep breath, have a break and come back next year with new ideas and feedback. Overall, that time will be devoted to personal reflections from the students and open discussion.