

Multimedia Yom Hashoah Presentation

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Day school special program

Holocaust observance

Prepared by 8th graders and performed for 6th, 7th and 8th graders

20 40-minute class periods

Bio:

Deborah Harris is the technology coordinator at the Solomon Schechter Day School in Northbrook, IL. She has been teaching at the school for thirteen years and oversees all the technology programming and education for students and faculty. The Pre K – 8 school, situated in a northern suburb of Chicago, serves approximately 600 students. She attended the 2011 winter and summer Centropa academies after hearing about Centropa from a colleague.

Summary:

In this unit, selected 8th grade students worked with 3 teachers to prepare a multimedia presentation for the middle school using Centropa materials in observance of Yom Hashoah. The students read through Centropa interviews and watched associated films. They then wrote a script using the interviews and created a slide presentation that was shown while students read brief biographies using the interviews. The Yom HaShoah observance also included opening and closing statements by local rabbis and a musical performance of *Ani Maamin* by student musicians.

Following the presentation, students met in groups of 20-30 with presenters from the community. Presenters included survivors, righteous gentiles, and a filmmaker who is preparing a documentary based on his parents' experiences. The multimedia presentation was a perfect introduction to the program.

The students in the audience were given reflection sheets that also served as programs. A copy of what we used is available for download. The students were extremely (and unusually, for middle school students) well-behaved during the performance. We attributed this to a number of factors. The multimedia aspect was helpful, as it gave the students something to look at as well as listen to. The reflection sheets gave them something to hold (and sometimes to fold...) during the

performance. We collected the sheets at the end, and could tell from the reflections that the students were engaged and thoughtful during the presentation.

Background:

1. Context: This was taught during the school's special period. This is typically a time when students participate in activities such as yoga, study hall or drama. Students volunteered to work on the project (although one was strongly encouraged to participate, given her outstanding media skills), so the group was self-selected.
2. Enduring understanding: Usually, Yom Hashoah observances are centered on the death and destruction suffered during the Holocaust. It is our hope that, by using the words of survivors, students will focus on how people lived, not how they died (to paraphrase Edward Serotta). This year, because our students also met with survivors, it was a fitting introduction to focus on those who survived.
3. Goals/objectives
 - a. Students "got to know" several Centropa interviewees
 - b. Students used Centropa photos to create an engaging slide show that supported the presentations. The audience was able to see the photos while students read the narratives. This was critical given our student audience.
 - c. Students will learn about how people survived the Holocaust, and will gain a sense of how, even in the face of such horror, one can keep his or her faith and sense of hope
4. Students will use skills in multimedia technology, including Keynote, PhotoShop, iMovie and GarageBand.
5. Students used writing skills to distill the sizable Centropa interviews into shorter narratives suitable for presentation.
6. Students had an opportunity to work collaboratively for the project.

20 40-minute sessions:

1. Showed introductory Centropa film to introduce students to the database. Discussed, as a group, how we wanted the multimedia presentation to "feel." Students volunteered for this activity, so they had already bought into the idea of creating a multimedia presentation. We discussed what kind of things the students were interested in doing: writing, media, music.
2. Showed Lilli Tauber film. Discussed what makes an interesting story. The Tauber film was chosen because we had learned with a different assignment that her story is particularly compelling for our middle schoolers.

3. Students explored the database and movies on their own
4. Students continued to explore database and movies on their own
5. Students suggested which individuals they would like to include. An effort was made to find people from a variety of countries. We also included the story of a staff member's father. Students (and faculty members) chose the individual they wanted to research.
6. The next 7 sessions were devoted to reading through the interviews, choosing the photos to use, and writing the narratives. We wanted each individual's story to take no more than 4 minutes, so the students had to work very hard to condense the interviews. This was the hardest part for the writers. The media students worked on the photos. They downloaded them, edited (cropping, sharpening) photos when necessary, and began to put them in the slide show format. Media students also found maps to include in the slide show, and created titles.

Sessions 7 – 14 were spent reviewing the narratives. We had to decide, in some cases, what words to replace with simpler ones. We also had to treat the narratives as scripts, so we needed to figure out pronunciations for the students who would be reading at the presentations. This was more time-consuming than we thought it would be.

Sessions 15 – 19: we met with the students who would be reading at the presentation. Some were in the special but some were not. Students practiced reading their parts, and, in some cases, we had to go back and edit the narratives for clarity and time. We did this with the slide show, so we could figure out the timing for the slide show.

Session 20 (post-presentation) Celebrate!

Student outcomes: this was a special, so we had no expectation or criteria for student outcomes. We can state, anecdotally, that the outcomes were significant for our student participants, including improved writing, media and presentation skills as well as a greater understanding of historical timeline surrounding the Holocaust. And the pride our students had at creating a major event of this nature cannot be discounted.

Reflections: this project took a great deal of time and supervision. We had three teachers working on it, and it took all three of us to work that closely with the students as they chose and wrote their pieces. It was a very high-profile program, however, and there's no doubt that that is what it takes to create a program of that magnitude. The three teachers involved agreed that it was worth doing and would do it again.