

We Remember

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Type of school: Jewish day school, United States

Course: Humanities

Lesson Category: Jewish history

Grade level: 8th grade

Academic level: regular

Academic time needed: nine or ten 42 minute classes (w/students working at home, as well)

Summary:

Students make a 3-5 minute film that tells the story of a family member. We start the project by showing Centropa films as models for short films that tell a compelling story through narrative, visual and audio elements. Students interview family members, learn to craft a compelling story about their family, write the narration, collect the photographs and visual images, choose appropriate music and edit everything using film-making software. We conclude the project by having a film festival where we invite parents and each student film is shown. Through this project students learn crucial 21st century skills of research, writing, storytelling, and editing, and students and parents alike are delighted with the results.

Background Lesson Information

Context of Lesson: This project is part of an 8th grade Humanities class and takes several months to execute. Students are presented with the project in the Fall, before Thanksgiving, so they have an opportunity to interview family members and do their research. The film-making process takes place in January with nine to ten 42 minute class periods devoted to making the actual film.

Enduring Understanding:

- History shapes who we are and our family stories.
- Students represent all who went before them.
- Understanding the lives of others who lived in very different circumstances.

Goals/Objectives:

Knowledge:

- Students will learn about their family history.
- Students will learn about how historical events influenced their family history.

Skills:

- interviewing
- history research skills
- writing skills

- film making skills (integrating multiple media into an emotionally compelling, meaningful and creative film, communicating a story, conceptualizing)
- presentation skills
- digital literacy skills
- meeting deadlines
- creating a product to show to an audience

Resources needed:

- Students will need some way to record the interviews, whether it is taking notes, a digital recorder, a computer, etc.
- Students need access to computers with a movie software program and access to the Internet.
- Centropa films: Any that fit in your curriculum or simply any the teacher likes. I show “Maps, Central Europe and History,” “Jewish Soldiers in the Austro-Hungarian Army,” “Survival in Sarajevo” (as a community-builder), “A Suitcase Full of Letters” (about Lilli Tauber), Haya Lea Detinko, Rosa Rosenstein. Later in the year I show others: “From Frankfurt to Tel Aviv,” (about Erna Goldmann), “Three Promises” (about the Kalef sisters in Belgrade).

Background skills and knowledge:

- Students will need some experience with the Internet. Experience with film editing is a plus but this is a project where students learn those skills.
- Since students’ stories will come from various places and cover a wide range of events I don’t expect them to know all of the historical reference they encounter in their family’s stories. Therefore, I read their stories or script and suggest ways to include relevant historical data to guide them to research historical references in the interview they don’t understand. For example, one student said, “My Oopa left Hamburg in 1938 and went to Shanghai and then came to LA.” She had no idea what Shanghai was about. When she researched more she found he had been there for 8 years and had a store (she found photos), and she also learned that many other Jews also used Shanghai as a haven during WWII.

The Lesson

Pedagogy:

- Hands-on, experiential learning.
- Modeling of good storytelling through watching and discussing Centropa films.

Opening Hook/Motivation

Watching and discussing Centropa films to model for students how to tell stories using narration, visuals and audio. Since we have done this film project for several years I often show student films from previous years. At this point it is a known “big project” in the school and students are excited to embark on it.

The Assignment

Give the students the assignment attached below. Included in the assignment are Internet links for helping them learn how to make a film using computers. In addition, spend some

time with the students going over the Short Story Template. Students like a good story, but they need guidance in learning how to tell a good story.

In order to guide them effectively, I set deadlines along the way for each step and then check in with each student, especially after they submit a bullet summary and script. I might read them at home and then spend one-on-one time with each student to make sure each part of the story is clear and moves smoothly from one segment to the next. Students also help each other. I also watch each student movie more than once and ask other adults to view them and give feedback. These are steps are critical for helping the students make high quality films that tell compelling stories.

Deadlines/check-in points

Very important: tell students to “Remember to put everything you create or collect on a file on your desktop.” They will not be able to proceed properly if they don’t put their sources in one place where they can easily find them.

1. Talk to your family and find a story.
2. Write your story in bullet notes – detailed. I read these and make suggestions, often about history
3. Plot your story on the template – I check all these.
4. Find historical information that fits, including YouTube or other clips.
5. All the while collect visuals from the family collection or the Internet. Scan these if necessary.

The last thing we do is write the script – which I read and edit. Make suggestions about history or clarity or anecdote. I make sure there is an introduction, a concluding reflection, a theme and the other elements listed in the directions – this is key.

Production

Now we are ready to take a week of class time to put everything together. I get extra help and the class is a hive of activity with kids either working on their own or with an adult who is checking and giving feedback or help.

The first thing to do is record the voiceover. Kids are all over in quiet spots recording. It is usually easiest to do this at home. All homework for the week is “Work on your movie.” Import voiceover.

Import the visuals and sync them with the voiceover. Some kids make a storyboard before they do this but I don’t insist.

Make text boxes, titles, captions, quotes, credits.

Find music.

Concluding Activity: We hold a film festival in which the parents are invited to come and watch all of the student films.

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Student Assignment Sheet

Resurrect your history – you represent all who went before you.

- You will make a three to five minute film honoring a family member.
- Find a compelling story within your family. It could be any family member who lived before you.
- Interview your parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles. Look at old photographs – find a story about a person.
- It is best to focus on a dramatic aspect of the story, an aspect where your character has a conflict to resolve or an obstacle to overcome. Find an interesting way to tell his or her story
- The story should be something you care passionately about and your passion (and compassion) needs to come through.
- Your story needs to teach your viewers about the time period, the values history and issues of the time. You will have to research; read literature about the time, history. It is a good idea to try and watch a film about the era if you can find one.
- Your story should explain both the Jewish (if your character is Jewish) experience and the wider world history of the time and place
- Your film should have certain elements:

ELEMENTS

Make it true

- Introduction
- Conclusion
- Interview (optional)
- Anecdote
- Historical context – make sure your viewer understands the history of the time and the time before that to ensure historical context. Include both Jewish history and world history.
- Culture/mores – you need to make sure your film shows what the cultural values of the time were like

Make it beautiful

- Music
- Stills
- Photographs (authentic from the period – your own family pictures are best but if you don't have enough you will have to "fake" them from the internet.
- Maps
- Footage
- Narration – (voiceover)
- Sound effects
- Titles
- Quotes or poems
- Credits

- MAKE US CARE!!!!

Write the story – you can use detailed bullets

Find the history – you MUST have background history.

Find visuals and music.

Open the **Short Story template** (attached) and plot your story on a poster sized piece of construction paper.

- **Video tutorial on "How to make a movie** (Part 1: [Saving images](#), Part 2: [Creating an audio narration](#), Part 3: [Windows Movie maker main tutorial](#) -- by [Nick Holton](#), Milken School, Los Angeles) If these links don't work you can find them at the old web site: <http://www.centropastudent.org/?nID=227>.
- <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/> - Editing download that is apparently helpful
- <http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Movie> - How to make a movie
- <http://www.wikihow.com/Write-Movie-Scripts> - Writing scripts
- <http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/lessons/storyboarding/b.html#prep> - How to make a movie PBS Lesson Plans
- http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Movie_making_manual