

3rd: Yom HaShoah: Understanding the Holocaust

UNIT OVERVIEW

Essential Question: What was the Holocaust, why do we remember it, and what does it teach us about kindness and standing together?

Unit Learning Objectives: By the end of this series, students will be able to:

- Understand what the Holocaust was and when it happened
- Learn about survivors from our community and their experiences
- Understand why we remember and what Yom HaShoah means
- Recognize the importance of kindness, courage, and hope
- Feel pride in Jewish identity and heritage
- Understand that survivors rebuilt their lives and became part of our community

Lesson 1: What Was the Holocaust?

Duration: 60 minutes | **Objective:** Students will understand what the Holocaust was, when it happened, and why we remember it.

Materials:

- World map showing Europe 1930s-1940s
- Timeline poster (1933-1945)
- Chart paper and markers
- Photos of Frida Altman (from Stories of Strength document)
- Lesson 1 Student Handout

Instructional Sequence:

HOOK

Ask: "Has anyone ever felt left out or treated unfairly because of who they are? How did that make you feel? Today we're going to learn about a very sad time in history when Jewish people were treated very unfairly. But we're also going to learn about people who survived and built beautiful lives."

Take 2-3 responses. Say: "Today we're learning about the Holocaust and about Frida Altman, a woman from our community whose family survived."

MINI-LESSON: WHAT WAS THE HOLOCAUST?

Explain: "The Holocaust was a terrible time in history. It happened about 80 years ago, from 1933 to 1945. A man named Adolf Hitler and his Nazi Party took over Germany. They blamed Jewish people for Germany's problems, even though this wasn't true.

Hitler and the Nazis made laws that took away Jewish people's rights. They said Jewish people couldn't go to certain schools, couldn't have certain jobs, and couldn't do many things that other

people could do. They made Jewish people wear special badges so everyone would know they were Jewish.

Then things got even worse. Jewish people were forced to leave their homes and move to crowded areas called ghettos. Later, they were sent to concentration camps—places where conditions were terrible. People didn't have enough food. They had to work very hard. Many people got sick. Many people died.

Approximately six million Jewish people were killed during the Holocaust. But some people survived. Some survived because they were strong. Some survived because kind people helped them. Some survived because they never gave up hope."

Create a simple timeline on the board:

Year	What Happened
1933	Hitler takes power in Germany
1935-1939	Laws take away Jewish people's rights
1939-1941	Jewish people forced into ghettos
1941-1945	Concentration camps and genocide
1945	War ends. Survivors are freed.

Ask: "Why do you think we learn about this? Why is it important to remember?"

FRIDA ALTMAN'S STORY: SURVIVAL AND REUNION

Read aloud: "Frida Altman was born in Romania. When she was a teenager, she moved to Budapest with her brother, Chaim. They were a close brother and sister.

When the Nazis invaded Hungary, Frida and Chaim were captured and sent to Auschwitz, one of the most terrible concentration camps. Conditions were horrible. People were starving. Many people died.

But Frida was strong. She survived Auschwitz. And something amazing happened—her brother Chaim also survived! They didn't know if the other had made it. But they were both alive.

After the war ended, Frida and Chaim were sent to Sweden as refugees. When they arrived in Sweden, they found each other. Can you imagine? They thought they might never see each other again, but they were reunited!

But their journey wasn't over. They got on a ship headed to Israel, but the British stopped the ship and sent them to Cyprus instead. They lived in Cyprus for two years as refugees. Finally, they were able to go to Israel.

In Israel, Frida met a man named Binyamin Altman. They got married and had two children. Frida built a beautiful life. She was a loving mother and grandmother. She put family above everything else.

Frida's story teaches us about survival, hope, and the importance of family. Even after terrible things happened, Frida rebuilt her life and created a loving family."

Ask: "What was hard about Frida's experience? What was amazing about her story? What does her story teach us about hope and family?"

WHY WE REMEMBER

Explain: "We remember the Holocaust for important reasons:

- To honor the people who died
- To celebrate the survivors who were strong and brave
- To learn from history
- To make sure it never happens again
- To stay connected to our Jewish identity
- To understand the importance of kindness and standing up for what's right

When we remember Frida's story, we're saying: We know what you went through. We honor your strength. We're proud of you. And we promise to be kind to others and stand up against unfairness."

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

Students complete their handout: "Understanding the Holocaust"

Prompts: "The Holocaust was... It happened from... to... Frida survived by... Frida's story teaches me that..."

CLOSURE

"The Holocaust was a terrible time in history. But it also shows us the strength of people like Frida Altman. Frida survived. She was reunited with her brother. She built a beautiful family. Her story teaches us about hope, courage, and the importance of family. Next lesson, we'll learn more about what happened during the Holocaust and how people survived."

Lesson 2: Survival and Strength

Duration: 60 minutes | **Objective:** Students will understand how people survived the Holocaust and recognize the importance of hope, kindness, and community.

Materials:

- Chart paper and markers
- Lesson 2 Student Handout
- Photos from Stories of Strength document

Instructional Sequence:

REVIEW & HOOK

Quick review: "Last lesson we learned about the Holocaust and about Frida Altman. We learned that Frida survived Auschwitz and was reunited with her brother Chaim in Sweden. Today we're going to learn more about how people survived and what helped them stay strong."

GUIDED PRACTICE: FRIDA'S JOURNEY OF SURVIVAL

Read aloud: "Frida Altman's survival was a journey. Let's trace her path:

First, Frida was captured and sent to Auschwitz. This was one of the worst concentration camps. Conditions were terrible. People were hungry. People were sick. Many people died.

But Frida didn't give up. She stayed strong. She held onto hope. She believed she might survive.

When the war ended in 1945, Frida was freed from Auschwitz. She was alive! But she didn't know if her brother Chaim had survived. She didn't know if any of her family had made it.

Then something wonderful happened. Frida and Chaim were both sent to Sweden as refugees. And when they arrived, they found each other. They were reunited! Chaim had survived too!

Frida and Chaim's reunion teaches us something important: Even in the darkest times, there can be moments of joy and hope. Even when we think we've lost everything, we might find what we thought was lost."

Ask: "What helped Frida survive? What do you think gave her strength? How do you think she felt when she found her brother?"

WHAT HELPED PEOPLE SURVIVE

Explain: "During the Holocaust, different things helped people survive:

- **Hope:** Believing that things might get better, that they might survive
- **Strength:** Physical and emotional strength to keep going
- **Family:** Staying connected to loved ones, even when separated
- **Kindness:** People helping each other, sharing food, supporting each other
- **Community:** Being part of a group of people who understood what they were going through
- **Courage:** Being brave even when things were scary

Frida had all of these things. She was strong. She had hope. She had her brother. And when the war ended, she was able to rebuild her life."

REBUILDING AFTER THE HOLOCAUST

Explain: "After the war ended, survivors like Frida faced a big challenge. They had lost so much. Many had lost their families. They had lost their homes. They had lost years of their lives.

But they didn't give up. They rebuilt their lives. They came to new countries. They started new families. They built communities. They became teachers and business owners and community leaders.

Frida came to Israel. She married Binyamin Altman. They had two children. She became a loving mother and grandmother. She put family above everything else. She lived a beautiful life."

Ask: "What does it tell us about human strength that survivors could rebuild their lives? What values do you think Frida taught her children and grandchildren?"

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

Students complete their handout: "Survival and Strength"

Prompts: "Frida survived by... What helped her stay strong was... After the war, Frida... Her story teaches me that..."

CLOSURE

"Frida Altman's story shows us that even in terrible times, people can survive. They can be reunited with loved ones. They can rebuild their lives. They can create beauty and love. Frida's strength and hope teach us about the power of the human spirit. Next lesson, we'll learn about Yom HaShoah and what it means for us today."

Lesson 3: Yom HaShoah and Remembrance

Duration: 60 minutes | **Objective:** Students will understand Yom HaShoah as a day of remembrance and recognize their responsibility to remember and honor survivors.

Materials:

- Chart paper and markers
- Lesson 3 Student Handout
- Optional: Candle or memorial object
- Photos or names of community members (with permission)

Instructional Sequence:

HOOK

Ask: "Why do we remember important things? Why do we tell stories about people we love? What happens if we forget? Today we're going to learn about Yom HaShoah—a special day when we remember the Holocaust."

Take 2-3 responses. Say: "Yom HaShoah is a day to remember, to honor survivors, and to commit to kindness and justice."

MINI-LESSON: WHAT IS YOM HASHOAH?

Explain: "Yom HaShoah means 'Day of the Holocaust' in Hebrew. It's a day when Jewish people around the world remember the Holocaust. We remember those who died. We celebrate those who survived. We commit ourselves to being kind and standing up against unfairness.

On Yom HaShoah, we light candles. We tell stories. We listen to survivors share their experiences. We teach young people about what happened. We ask ourselves: What can we learn from this? How can we be better people?"

Create a chart: "Why We Remember"

- To honor those who died
- To celebrate survivors and their strength
- To learn from history
- To recognize the importance of kindness
- To commit to standing up against unfairness
- To stay connected to our Jewish identity
- To understand our responsibility to be kind to others

SURVIVORS IN OUR COMMUNITY

Explain: "Many Holocaust survivors came to America and other countries after the war. They built new lives. They had families. Some are part of our community. Their children and grandchildren are our neighbors, our friends, our community members."

Share: "Frida Altman survived the Holocaust. She came to Israel and built a beautiful life. She had a son named Shmuel. Shmuel had three children. One of them is part of our community today. When we remember Frida's story, we're honoring her strength and her legacy. We're

saying: We know what you went through. We're proud of you. And we promise to be kind to others."

Ask: "Why is it important that survivors are part of our community? What responsibility do we have to their stories? How does knowing Frida's story change how we think about the Holocaust?"

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO REMEMBER?

Explain: "Remembering is not just about feeling sad. It's about honoring people. It's about learning. It's about making promises.

When we remember Frida Altman, we're saying:

- We honor your strength and courage
- We celebrate that you survived
- We celebrate that you built a beautiful family
- We promise to be kind to others
- We promise to stand up against unfairness
- We promise to tell your story so people know what happened

Remembering is a way of saying: Your life matters. Your story matters. And we will carry your story forward."

OUR RESPONSIBILITY

Explain: "You are the next generation. Survivors like Frida Altman are not here anymore. But their families are. And you are part of this community. You have inherited their stories and their responsibility.

What does that responsibility mean?

- Learn the stories and tell them to others
- Be kind to people who are different from you
- Stand up when you see someone being treated unfairly
- Include people who are left out
- Treat others the way you want to be treated
- Remember that your choices matter

You have more power than you might think. Your kindness matters. Your choices matter."

Ask: "What does it mean to be a 'keeper of memory'? How can you carry forward Frida's story? What choices will you make to be kind to others?"

Prepare Students for Respectful Listening:

Say: "We're going to have a special guest who will share their family's story with us. This person's family member survived the Holocaust. We need to be respectful listeners. This is an honor and a responsibility."

Create a chart together: "How to Be a Respectful Listener"

- Listen with your whole heart and mind

- Don't interrupt
- It's okay to feel sad, moved, or emotional—all feelings are valid
- Ask kind and thoughtful questions
- Thank them for sharing
- Remember what they shared
- Respect their experience

Generate Questions Together:

Ask: "What would you like to know about their family's story?"

Write student questions on paper. Guide them toward respectful, thoughtful questions:

- "What was your family member's name?"
- "Where were they from?"
- "What was their experience during the Holocaust?"
- "How did they survive?"
- "What did they do after the war?"
- "How do you keep their memory alive?"
- "Why is it important to tell their story?"
- "What did you learn from your family member?"
- "What do you want us to remember?"
- "What message do you have for young people today?"

Avoid questions about graphic details or suffering. Emphasize respectful, thoughtful questions that honor the survivor's experience and legacy.

CLOSURE

"Yom HaShoah is a day to remember, to honor, and to commit. Next lesson, we'll hear directly from someone in our community about their family's story. This person's family survived the Holocaust, and they're going to share what that means to them and what they want us to know."

Lesson 4: Guest Speaker & Reflection

Objective: Students will listen respectfully to a community member's family story, understand how survivors' legacies continue, and reflect on their own responsibility.

Materials:

- Guest speaker (relative of Frida Altman or another Holocaust survivor from the community)

POST-VISIT REFLECTION DISCUSSION

Ask students:

- "What did you learn from the guest's story?"
- "How did that story make you feel?"
- "What will you remember about this story?"
- "How does knowing this story change how you think about the Holocaust?"
- "What did the survivor's family member teach us?"
- "What responsibility do you feel after hearing this story?"

ACTIVITY: REFLECTION LETTER

Students write a reflection letter to the guest speaker using sentence stems:

"Dear [Guest Name],

Thank you for sharing your family's story with us. I learned that _____. Your story made me feel _____. I will remember _____ forever. This story teaches me that _____. I promise to _____.

Sincerely,
[Student Name]"

CLOSURE

"Our community is strong because of survivors and their families. When we remember their stories, when we are kind to others, when we stand up against unfairness—we're honoring their strength and their legacy. You are the next generation carrying forward their stories and their responsibility. Thank you for listening with your whole hearts and minds."

Trauma Informed Teaching Notes

Throughout All Lessons:

- **Emphasize resilience, survival, and hope**, not graphic details or suffering
- **Use respectful language:** "passed away" instead of "killed," "concentration camp" instead of graphic descriptions
- **Focus on what people did** (survived, were reunited, rebuilt, created families) rather than what was done to them
- **Normalize emotions:** "It's okay to feel sad, angry, or moved when we learn about injustice. That shows you have a conscience."
- **Provide safety:** "These terrible things happened a long time ago. You are safe. We are safe. We live in a different time."
- **Have support available:** If a student becomes upset, have a trusted adult available to talk with them privately

If a Student Asks Difficult Questions:

Q: "How many people died in the Holocaust?"

A: "Approximately six million Jewish people were killed, along with millions of others the Nazis targeted. That's why we remember—to honor those we lost and to make sure the world knows what happened."

Q: "Could this happen again?"

A: "That's an important question. History shows us that when people ignore warning signs—when they allow hatred to spread, when they don't speak up against injustice—terrible things can happen. But it also shows us that people have the power to prevent it. When we stand up against hatred, when we speak up for what's right, when we are kind to others—we help prevent atrocities."

Q: "Why didn't more people help?"

A: "That's a hard question. Some people were afraid. Some people didn't want to see what was happening. Some people believed the propaganda. But some people did help—they risked their lives to hide Jewish people and help them escape. Their choices show us that even in terrible times, individuals can make a difference."

Q: "Why did God let this happen?"

A: "That's a big question that many people ask. Different people have different answers based on their beliefs. What we know is that our ancestors were strong, they survived, and they built beautiful lives. We can talk more about this with [rabbi/teacher/parent]."

If a student seems upset:

"It's okay to feel sad or angry. That shows you have a conscience, and you care about justice. Would you like to talk to [counselor/trusted adult]? We can take a break if you need to."