

Multimedia Yom Hashoah Presentation

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Type of school: Jewish Day School, United States

Course: Special program preparation for Yom Hashoah memorial

Grade level: Prepared by 8th graders and performed for 6th, 7th and 8th graders

Time needed: 20 forty-minute class periods

Summary:

In this unit, selected 8th grade students worked with three 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 related films. They then wrote a script using the interviews and created a slide presentation that was shown while students read brief biographies based on 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: survivors, righteous gentiles, and a filmmaker who is preparing a documentary about his parents' Holocaust experiences. The students in the audience were given reflection sheets that also served as programs. The multimedia presentation was a perfect introduction to the program.

Background Lesson Information

1. Context for Lesson: This was taught during the school's special period, typically a time when students participate in activities such as yoga, study hall or drama. This means the group was self-selected and the project was not part of a larger class unit.
2. Enduring understanding: When commemorating those who perished in the Holocaust we must also remember how they lived, not just how they died.
3. Goals/objectives
 - a. Knowledge acquired:
 - i. how people survived the Holocaust, and a sense of how, even in the face of such horror, one can keep his or her faith and sense of hope.
 - ii. the importance of remembering how Jews lived, not just how they perished or suffered.
 - b. Skills:
 - i. how to put together an engaging narrative and slideshow for a large audience.

- ii. multimedia technology, including Keynote, Photoshop, iMovie and GarageBand.
 - iii. comprehension, editing and writing skills: distilling sizable Centropa interviews into shorter narratives suitable for presentation.
 - iv. collaborative team work.
 - c. Behavior
 - i. commitment needed to put together a meaningful, engaging and tight program.
 - d. Feelings
 - i. an appreciation of what was lost in the Holocaust.
 - ii. a sense of connection to the Jews who perished through an understanding of how they lived.
- 4. Resources Needed:
 - a. Computers with Keynote, PhotoShop, iMovie and GarageBand.
 - b. Internet access.
 - c. Centropa film, "10 Years in Four Minutes" to introduce Centropa.
 - d. Centropa film, "A Suitcase Full of Memories," about Lilli Tauber.
- 5. Background Skills and Knowledge
 - a. Students need to know basic technology skills such as how to search on the Internet, how to cut and paste photos or text, how to download music or photos, etc.
 - b. It is helpful but not necessary for students to know the computer programs Keynote, PhotoShop, iMovie and GarageBand.
 - c. Note: Though students mostly self-selected to work on this project we did encourage one student with exemplary technological skills to participate.

The Lesson

Pedagogy

1. Some frontal teaching and discussion in the beginning to introduce Centropa to students and learn about dynamic and meaningful storytelling.
2. Much of this project was self-directed, with the teachers acting as facilitators for students as they read through the Centropa interviews, chose those they wanted to include in the program, pared down the narrative for the presentation, chose their photographs, created a narrative to be read by other students and worked with those doing the narration.

Opening Hook

1. Introduce Centropa by showing “10 Years in 4 Minutes,” as well as the database, so they understand Centropa’s goals of teaching about how Jews lived and the materials they will work with.
2. Asked students for their ideas about how this theme could be incorporated into the Yom Hashoah program.
3. Showed the Lilli Tauber film, “A Suitcase Full of Memories” and discuss afterwards what makes an interesting story. (We found in another assignment this story is very compelling for middle school students.)

Body of Project

Sessions 1-2: Students explored the database and movies on their own. 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.

Session 3-9: These 7 sessions were devoted to reading through the interviews, choosing the photos to use, and writing the narratives.

Writers: 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.

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 10 – 16: Students reviewed the narratives. In some cases we had to find simpler words to use. 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 17-19: 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!

Reflections

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.

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.