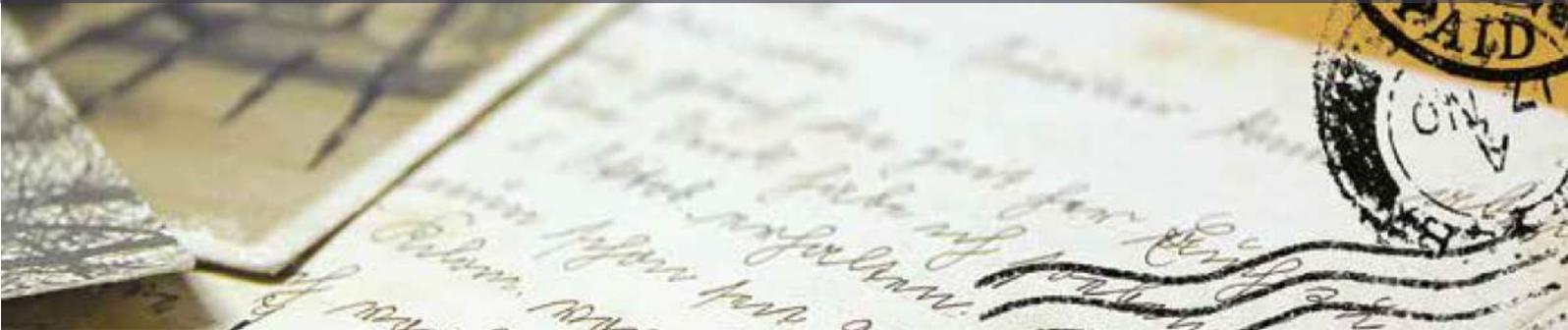


ACTIVITY PLAN



TITLE OF THE ACTIVITY

17 letters – for the last time and forever

ENQUIRY QUESTION

What do letters and notes written by people caught in the storm of the Second World War and of the genocide of European Jews tell us about the years between 1941 – 1944?

INDICATIVE AGE

14 - 18

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Develop a clear knowledge of the impact of the Nazi regime on the lives of Jews in Europe and of the Holocaust
- Learn how to approach primary sources
- Understand the historical value of primary sources
- Increase their critical thinking skills

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF STUDENTS

What do students already need to know to learn during this activity?

Teachers are asked to discuss the Second World War with their students before implementing the practice, so that students have some general knowledge of the key events.

BLOCKS TO LEARNING

What are students likely to find particularly hard? What needs to be addressed in the lesson to make sure the planned learning can take place?

- The letters are of different length, and some students might have difficulty in analysing the shorter letters
- Most of the letters have been sent by Poland and other countries in Central-Eastern Europe. Some students might find it hard to identify with the authors.

LESSON STRUCTURE

In this lesson, students will be divided into groups and brainstorm on their knowledge of the Holocaust. Then, they will apply the first four steps of the five-steps critical analysis (reading, analysis of the context, analysis of the content, interpretation). Then, they will get together and report each other their findings. Finally, teachers have the possibility of applying the last step: questioning and research. This can be used as homework.

ACTIVITY PREPARATION

Print the letters, cut them if more than one letters are on the same page. In this way, it will be possible for you to give different letters to different groups.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY

Step 1 – Division of the classroom in group and brainstorming

As a first step, students are divided in groups of 2 or 3. They are then asked to brainstorm on what they already know about the Holocaust, what they remember from previous lessons, and what they would like to learn from examining the sources.

Step 2 – Preliminary Reading

In the second step, each group is provided with one of the letters. They are asked to start the five step critical analysis by reading the document, locating the subject and the main topics. This is the first step of the five step critical analysis.

Step 3 – Analysis of the context of the document (or: External Analysis)

Students are then asked, in their group to discuss what they know of the date of the document, the identity of the author, whether the author is an actor or a witness of what is narrated in the letter, the intention behind the letter, and the nature of the document: did students read the original document? Did they read a translation? Did they read a complete document, or only a summary of a longer piece? External Analysis is the second step of the five step critical analysis.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY

Step 4 – Analysis of the content of the document (or: Internal Analysis)

Each group, then, proceed to analyse the content of the document. To do so, they have to discuss what the general subject of the letter is, and what the specific topics are. Is the document a narration of facts? Or does it reflect the opinion of the writer? Is the author of the document reliable? This is the third step of the five step critical process.

Step 5 – Interpretation

During the fourth step critical process, students try to make sense of the content of the document and of the themes touched upon in it. In groups, they discuss the following questions:

- What did you learn from reading the document?
- How is the document useful?
- Which questions does the document answer?

Step 6 – Getting together

Then, the class gets together again, and each group presents to the others their findings and their takeaways on the history of the Holocaust.

Step 7 (optional) – Questioning and Research

The final step of the five step critical analysis is optional, teachers can decide whether or not to carry it out. In this step, students are asked to select one of the questions that they formulated during the Internal Analysis or the Interpretation phase, and use them to further explore the subject by means of a research. This step is often used as homework, to consolidate the knowledge of the Holocaust developed during the practice.

ASSESSMENT

Students are asked to fill in a questionnaire on the sources they analyse.



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