



A Gypsy in Auschwitz

Lesson 2: Memoir vs. Textbook

Lesson Plan for Grade 9-12, World History or U.S. History

Prepared by Sarah Welsh for The New Mexico Holocaust & Intolerance Museum

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

Many undervalue the use of memoirs as historical documents and valuable primary sources. This lesson will help students understand that memoirs should not be overlooked in their study of history.

EDUCATION STANDARDS

1. 9-12.WH.26. Analyze and evaluate the values and limitations of primary and secondary sources of Thinking information (including digital) with attention to the source, its context, reliability, and usefulness
2. 9-12.WH.27. Effectively use and integrate evidence from diverse sources to evaluate and develop historical claims.
3. 9-12.WH.28. Synthesize historical information to create new understandings.
4. 9-12.WH.29. Use a variety of source materials to compare and contrast treatments of the same topic
5. 9-12.WH.30. Examine historical events from the perspectives of diverse groups, including Indigenous peoples, national, regional, racial, ethnic, class, and gender, sexual orientation, and differently abled

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will be able to explain how memoirs are valuable as primary sources

and historical documents that allow them to view history through more diverse lenses.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Excerpt from Primo Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz*
2. Excerpt about the Holocaust from your text book
3. Comparison Table
4. Exit Ticket

VERIFICATION

Steps to check for student understanding

1. Table filled out correctly
2. Students are able to explain their reasoning to others
3. Exit ticket

ACTIVITY

Describe activity that will reinforce the lesson

You will provide students with two excerpts- one from a memoir and one from your textbook. You will ask them to read both. They will then fill out the table attached. Once students have read and answered the questions they should share with a partner. Monitor for student understanding. Students will then fill out an exit ticket!

Excerpt from Primo Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz*

“In a moment, with almost prophetic intuition, the reality was revealed to us: we had reached the bottom. It is not possible to sink lower than this; no human condition is more miserable than this, nor could it conceivably be so. Nothing belongs to us anymore; they have taken away our clothes, our shoes, even our hair; if we speak, they would not listen to us, and if they listen, they will not understand. They will even take away our name: and if we want to keep it, we will have to find ourselves the strength to do so, to manage somehow so that behind the name something of us, of us as we were, still remains.

We know that we will have difficulty in being understood, and this is as it should be. But consider what value, what meaning is enclosed even in the smallest of our daily habits, in the hundred possessions which even the poorest beggar owns: a handkerchief, an old letter, the photo of a cherished person. These things are part of us, almost like limbs of our body; nor is it conceivable that we can be deprived of them in our world, for we immediately find others to substitute for the old ones, other objects which are ours in their personification and evocation of our memories.

Imagine now a man who is deprived of everyone he loves, and at the same time of his house, his habits, his clothes, in short, of everything he possesses: he will be a hollow man, reduced to suffering and needs, forgetful of dignity and restraint, for he who loses all often easily loses himself. He will be a man whose life or death can be lightly decided with no sense of human affinity, in the most fortunate of cases, on the basis of a pure judgment of utility. It is in this way that one can understand the double sense of the term ‘extermination camp,’ and it is now clear what we seek to express with the phrase: ‘to lie on the bottom.’”

Name:

Date:

Class:

Directions: Please fill out the following table based on your reading of the memoir excerpt (the one by Primo Levi) and the part of your textbook you were asked to read.

Answer the following questions for each passage.	Memoir	Textbook
What is the tone of the passage?		
What is the passage telling us?		
Is there any emotion in the writing?		
What point of view is it written from?		

Exit Ticket!

Which source helps you to understand history more deeply? Why?