Wei 1

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Unit of Study on Courage and Survival

Rationale:

Theme of courage and survival is my favorite because there are elements of excitement in the stories, and the characters in the stories are under some extreme situations that teenagers are experiencing or curious about. Through reading, the student learn that they are not the only ones going through a tough situation, or they can experience the tough situations with the characters. The centerpiece of this unit study is *Night* by Eliezer Wiesel, a young Jewish boy who survives from Auschwitz concentration camp, a network of concentration and extermination camps built and operated by Nazi Germany in occupied Poland during World War II. The author accuses the Nazi Germany murdered his hope, soul and religion all in one signal night when he arrives at Auschwitz because the extermination’s fire and chimney change this young boy forever. “The night was gone. The morning star was shining in the sky. I too had become a completely different person. The student of the Talmud, the child that I was, had been consumed in the flames. There remained only a shape that looked like me. A dark flame had entered into my soul and devoured it….One night--one single night?” (34). In this passage the author brings out the theme of evilness and fear of the holocaust and that embedded the word of night and emphasizes “one single night” has completely changed a person’s identity from an innocence to a prisoner also he is surprised that a person can be completely changed in such a short time. This short time shows the extent of cruelness of the Nazi and how terrible the horror that one has experienced.

Another aspect of the novel shows the environment is the key condition to the evilness of human nature. Throughout the book, Wiesel disappoints about his and other sons’ selfish deeds when Nazi German uses the extreme environment of concentration: hunger—thirst—fear—transport—selection—fire—chimney as tools to kill the Jews. He uses three failure son’s stories to demonstrate the human nature is the product of the environment. If this is the truth of human nature, where do we set our hope then?

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Why do I want to teach it? Before answering this question, I want to ask why the writer writes it. In the second edition, Wiesel writes in Preface to the New Translation that “It is obvious that the war which Hitler and his accomplices waged was a war not waged was a war not only against Jewish men, women, and children, but also against Jewish religion, Jewish culture, Jewish tradition, therefore Jewish memory”, and he clearly states his purpose of writing this work is that, “The witness has forced himself to testify. For the youth of today, for the children who will be born tomorrow. He does not want his past to become their future”. It is a good intention to write a book, and I want to support his intention to teach the young generation to remember the message of the author wants us to receive and to prevent the tragedy happens again.

We should not as apathy as the Jews in Sighet who do care about Moshe’s message, and they lose the battle at the first place. It is beneficial to everyone with a sensitive and alert mind for the voice of suffering. The terrible experience that the author survives through shows great encourage to the high school students because no one suffers more than the Jewish boy in the book, so the students may develop a grateful view about what they own in their life.

Launching the Unit

1. Before reading *Night*, first we will use one class to discuss what do they know about World War II? Who starts the war? Which countries are the axis? And which countries are the allies? Why the countries start the war? What significant events happens during World War II?
2. We will read a poem together (having the words on an overhead transparency) from Tabony (1986). The poem reflects the sentiments of Eastern European writer who is from the country that experienced the Holocaust which is a horrible ethnic cleansing.

“The Final Reckoning”

Sandor Domokos

The blood everywhere is red.

Tears are always the same tears.

In every language sends the same message.

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Many are the Hues of the skin

And the color of the eyes vary.

Words are too poor to cry out the pain

Which cuts into the soul. Woe to you man, woe to you,

if you do not fight evil.

Woe to you, if you do not see

How alike are the Gulag and Auschwitz.

Woe, if you live a double standard

And observe the present only through the past;

If how you view the chains of South Africa

depends on whether the present only through the past;

and you judge according to your interests;

if Cambodia’s destiny is different for you

than that of Palestine or Israel;

if Belfast is close to your heart,

but Afghanistan does not interest you;

if you cry over injustices in the Baltic States

are not your concern;

if you wish to gain freedom

by killing your enemies,

and after the victory

you only create more prisons, woe to you,

for then with your own hands

You will hasten the coming of the End.

1. A song from World War II

Bella Ciao

This perennial left-wing folk anthem got its start in Italian Partisan resistance and Italian Civil War of 1943–45. It is still being sung to this day all over the world in support of anti-fascism.

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<https://www.historyhit.com/definitive-songs-from-world-war-two/>

<https://youtu.be/Lqs2oIBFPxI>

Expending the Unit

1. Centerpiece Work: the centerpiece for my unit is *Night* by Elie Wiesel. I chose this because it is a book commonly read for War themes in high school. The novel is short, and we will read one or two chapters in the previous night for the next day class discussion.
2. SSW activity (20 mins). Before each the class starts I will have two students read out loud from two picture books: *I am Human* by Susan Verde and *Say Something!* By Peter H. Peynolds. After the reading I will ask students to choose either book’s idea to write a respond to the previous night reading. They can write down what they want to say to the characters of the novel to prepare them for the final essay.
3. During reading I will ask students to list the words how the author used to call his people or himself. For example “shadows” (12), “a ghost”, (102) “A-7713” (39), and “a belly” (35).We will discuss what is the author’s intension to use these terms to address his people.
4. I will have students respond to a prompt about what they would have taken with them if they were force from their homes into the camps taken with them if the Jews were. Students should be prepared to explain why they would take what they’ve listed.
5. Supplementary Texts

Students are also required to read *Milkweed* by Jerry Spinelli as homework: the novel is the tale of a boy with no identity at a time when one's identity could mean the difference between life and death. Published in 2003, the novel became a popular young adult work used by English teachers to facilitate a discussion of the Holocaust. Readers are immersed in the experiences of a child who does not fully comprehend what is happening around him in the Warsaw Ghetto.

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1. While reading the two novels students have to identity three similar themes in between them and collect three quotations for each of the theme from either of the book.
2. Final Assessment

I will collect the students’ three themes and quotes to write essay prompts and students are required to use one of the prompts to develop an essay. List three examples as follow:

1. The novels particularly describe the cruelty and suffering experiences of the Jews in the concentration camps or out of the camps. It give the reader a detailed, personal account of suffering in the Holocaust. Find the specific evidence to support what the effect the Holocaust has had on the characters of the novels?
2. Use the list of your words collection in use of metaphors to call someone(s) in the novel of *Night*, discuss why the author calls his people in that way? Those terms are from whose perspective? Are these terms suggest the Jews missing something? What is it? Is it possible for them to regain it? How?
3. For example, in the beginning of *Night*, the main character Eliezer cares about others and has emotions toward people who are suffering, but by the end of the novel, this same character behave differently. Through characterization, we can learn to understand people. Select specific quotes from the novel you read include *Night* to show the changes of the character(s) and how do the characters feel about their changes? Explain what the changes suggest?

Young Adult Literature Selections

*Farewell to Manzanar* by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston: Jeanne Wakatsuki, the novel’s protagonist, is a seven years old Japanese American whose family and other thousands of Japanese American internees are put in Manzanar camp during World War II. The novel presents from the female voice of young girl telling her fear, confusion, and bewilderment as well as the dignity and great resourcefulness of people in oppressive and demeaning circumstances.

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*Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry: in the book the main character Annemarie Johansen is a Denmark girl who is with her family to help her neighbor and classmate Ellen Rosen, a Jewish girl, escape to Sweden to avoid the Nazi’s persecutions upon the Jews during World War II.

*The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank: Kitty is the main character in Anne Frank’s diary describes the two years of Anne and her family are in hiding in an attempt to escape Hitler’s anti-Jewish laws and genocidal desires. In the diary Anne still beliefs that people are inherently good and journals about love and her desire to be a better person.

*The Devil’s Arithmetic* by Jane Yolen: the book is about Hannah Stern, a Jewish girl who lives in New Rochelle, New York and is sent back in time to experience the Holocaust. During a Passover Seder, Hannah is transported back in time to 1942 Poland, during World War II, where she sent to a work camp and learns the importance of knowing about the past.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Devil%27s_Arithmetic>

Closing the Unit

At the close of the unit, students will do a creative group projects to reflect any theme of the novels they are perceived from reading of the novels and use quote(s) to explain the ideas they used in their projects. We will use a class to present each group’s project.

Work Cited

<https://www.historyhit.com/definitive-songs-from-world-war-two/>

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