

# Through Our Eyes/Return to Life Lesson Plan

## For Middle School

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This lesson plan was developed for Congregation Kol Ami by Deborah and Michael Fripp.

### ➤ **Lesson 1: How Life Changed**

*Objective:* Compare life before the Nazi rise to power to life in the ghetto.

*Questions this lesson addresses:*

- What was life like before and how did it change?
- How did they survive physically?
- How were they able to maintain their culture?

*Essential lessons:*

- These were regular people.
- They were able to maintain their culture, humanity, and hope.

*Plan:*

- Select pictures and testimonials from chapters 1 and 7 of *Through Our Eyes*.  
(Do not use all of them – there are too many. See below for recommendations.)
- Have them look at the pictures and read the statements aloud and tell what they see/hear.
- Make charts of these on the board, comparing life before vs. in the ghetto. Note what is similar, what could not be continued, and what was continued in a different form.

*Recommended Selections:*

- Chapter 1
  - P15: School: pictures, Dora
  - P17: Music: guitar picture, Hanna S. & Anna H.
  - P19: Recreation: pictures, Liliana & Kitty
  - P23: Synagogue: pictures, Alicia
  - Ask: What kind of houses did they live in? What did they eat?
- Chapter 7
  - P77: Ghetto: pictures of the wall, Sima
  - P78: Housing: Miriam + homelessness picture on p80
  - P79: Life: Yitskhok
  - P80: Life: Eva & Charlotte
  - P82-83: Physical Survival: all 3 testimonials and Reflection at bottom
  - P85: School: Sara S. & Warner
  - P87: Synagogue: pictures, Judith
  - P89: Helping each other: Pictures, Motele's poem

➤ **Lesson 2: How Did We Get from There to Here?**

*Objective:* Explore how the Nazis were able to isolate the Jews from the rest of society.

*Question this lesson addresses:*

- How was it possible for the Jews to go from tightly integrated into society to so isolated that they could be forced into a ghetto?

*Essential lessons:*

- Isolating people takes specific effort.
- Once a population is isolated, bad things can happen.

*Plan:*

- Select pictures and testimonials from chapters 2 to 6 of *Through Our Eyes*.  
(Do not use all of them – there are too many. See below for recommendations.)
- Have them look at the pictures and read the statements aloud and tell what they see/hear.
- Draw a stair-step on the board. Label the stairs with each step of the process of isolation (loss of rights, being forbidden from school, destruction of property, humiliation, isolation through the yellow star).

*Possible Supplements:*

- Is it possible to prevent the isolation and subsequent bad things by objecting?
  - Denmark refused to let their Jews be marked and when the Germans came to round up the Jews, the Danes rescued them. The Germans allowed the rescue in order to prevent the spread of opposition to the occupation.<sup>1</sup>
- Should we speak up when people talk about isolating a population?
  - During the 2016 election, suggestions were made about banning or isolating the Muslim population. Should we speak up? At what point? Should we speak up when people are only talking about it or wait until laws are being proposed?

*Recommended Selections:*

- Chapter 2
  - P30: white section, Susan, Boycott picture – why is there a soldier standing there? *Answer: to keep Germans out – the boycott was a failure because the Jews hadn't yet been isolated from the rest of the population.*
  - P31: white section, Liliana and Chava
  - P32-33: pick one testimonial
  - P36/37: Discuss “For Reflection” questions 1 & 4
  - *Note: if you want to discuss propaganda, use pages 34-37, but this needs a separate class.*

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<sup>1</sup> Additional resources for discussing Denmark in the Holocaust can be found at [www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/stories/historical\\_background/denmark.asp](http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/stories/historical_background/denmark.asp) and [www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/courses/life\\_lessons/pdfs/lesson9\\_1.pdf](http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/courses/life_lessons/pdfs/lesson9_1.pdf)

- Chapter 3
  - P41: Bernhard Rust, Erica
  - P43: white section, lithograph
  - P44: quote in white section
- Chapter 4
  - P49-50: pick from both the white and tan sections, consider “For Reflection” question 1
- Chapter 5
  - P56: timeline
  - P59: white section, Hanna D
  - P60: pictures, white section, Jacku
  - P61: Eva, For Reflection
  - P62-63: pick some
- Chapter 6
  - P68: Rosemarie & Macha, also Livia on P69 and Agnes on P70
  - P73: For Reflection question 1, *and 6 if you think they would be able to answer it.*

➤ **Lesson 3: Life Changes Again**

*Objective:* Understand life in the camps.

*Questions this lesson addresses:*

- How did life change when they got to the camps?
- How did they survive physically?
- Were they still able to maintain their culture?

*Essential lessons:*

- Essential aspects of life were broken – family, home, freedom, identity, feelings of safety.
- Some were able to survive and to maintain their culture, humanity, and hope, although barely.

*Plan:*

- Select pictures and testimonials from chapters 8 to 10 of *Through Our Eyes*.  
(Do not use all of them – there are too many. See below for recommendations)
- Have them look at the pictures and read the statements aloud and tell what they see/hear.
- If you still have the chart of life before vs. life in the ghetto, add life in the camps to that chart.
- Ask: *What are the questions the kids in the book are asking?* Write them on the board. Remember, avoid asking the students to place themselves in the position of the kids in the book.

*Recommended Selections:*

- Chapter 8
  - P93: History/Timeline
- Chapter 9
  - P99: Vladka
  - P101: Livia, packing list
  - P107: David B
  - P108: Sara S
- Chapter 10
  - P110: Sara S
  - P113: Barry
  - P115: Mel
  - P117: Miriam
  - P120: Jacob
  - P121: pick some or read all
  - P122: pick some or read all
  - P125: Simcha & David B (*these are essential for the 2nd Essential Lesson*)
  - P127: Simcha, discuss the For Reflection question

➤ **Lesson 4: What Do We Do Now?**

*Objective:* Learn how the survivors were able to move on after the war ended.

*Questions this lesson addresses:*

- How do you go on and rebuild after something like this? Do you get revenge? Or do you find a way to rebuild life?
- Survivors say: “Grandchildren are the best revenge.” What do they mean by that?
- Why Israel?<sup>2</sup>

*Essential lessons:*

- It is difficult to move on from a trauma of this nature.
- “They did not get revenge, they got married” – they rebuilt their lives.
- Israel was the only place that they could count on.<sup>2</sup>

*Plan:*

- Use the *Return to Life* kit, as directed in the teacher’s guide. Using the posters in the kit to establish what a return to life looks like can be an effective technique.

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<sup>2</sup> The 6<sup>th</sup> grade class at Congregation Kol Ami has a strong focus on modern Israel and this lesson connects to that. If your class does not have such a focus, you may want to concentrate on other aspects of this lesson.