

To Tommy Lesson Plan

For K to 1st Grade

This lesson plan was adapted for Congregation Kol Ami by Violet Neff-Helms and Deborah Fripp from Lea Roshkovsky and the instructors at Yad Vashem.

Overview

This unit is designed to introduce the youngest students (Kindergarten and 1st grade) to the idea of the ghetto. The unit consists of a soft-cover book which includes an introduction from Tommy himself, and a series of post cards with the pictures from the book.

Grade Level: Kindergarten – 1st grade

Materials:

- *To Tommy, for his Third Birthday in Theresienstadt, 22 January 194* by Bedřich Fritta¹

Procedure Part 1, Getting to Know Tommy:

- Start by introducing Tommy to the students without talking about the Holocaust. Start by talking to the class about the fact that their parents, and their teachers, were once children. As children, they did many things that they share with us now. Then tell the students of a man who had a special childhood.²
- Look at the pictures and have the students make up stories that Tommy might have told about these pictures. Most of the pictures have no specific Holocaust theme to them – they are pictures of means of transport (riding a turtle!), animals, or types of food.
- Spend a little time every week talking about Tommy and making him part of the class.

Procedure Part 2, Tommy's Birthday in the Ghetto:

- After the students have gotten to know Tommy (in January or February), introduce a few pictures that show how Tommy had to move to the ghetto with his mommy and daddy.
- Show how his mommy made him a space to sleep because the apartment was so crowded.
- Talk about Tommy not being able to get all the types of food that he wanted and Tommy being upset about this.
- Finally, introduce the picture of Tommy's birthday cake. Let the children look at it and talk about their birthday cakes (if they want to – don't prompt this). Then tell them how Tommy's parents wanted to make him a birthday cake but could not because they could not get the ingredients. They drew this picture for him instead.

Depending on the age of the children, at this point you can also read Tommy's testimony from the beginning of the book, which tells about what happened to his parents (who were deported and died) and how he survived the war.

¹ Available from Yad Vashem at <http://secure.yadvashem.org/store/product.asp?productid=495>. If you live in the Dallas area, you can borrow the unit from the JCC's Tycher library.

² By starting in this way, we make it clear that Tommy survives whatever happens to him and grows up.