



Tommy

For Kindergarten to 1st Grade

This lesson plan was adapted by Violet Neff-Helms and Deborah Fripp for the Teach the Shoah Foundation from Lea Roshkovsky and the instructors at Yad Vashem.

Objective: Introduce the idea of the ghetto in an age-appropriate way.

Estimated time: 10-15 minutes per lesson focused on Tommy, for 3 to 5 lessons
plus 1-5 min/week to include Tommy in other lessons

Essential lessons

- Once, many years ago, Jews in Europe had to move into ghettos, areas of cities with walls, where the rooms were crowded and some foods were not available.
- Even in the ghettos, parents did their best to maintain normal life for their children.

Materials:

- *To my dearest Tommy, for his Third Birthday in Terezin, January 22, 1944,* by Bedřich Fritta – kit, includes a soft-cover book and 52 postcards

Procedure overview:

1. Over the course of the year, get to know Tommy by including him in your class
 2. On or near Yom HaShoah, tell the story about Tommy's birthday in the ghetto
- *Option: in Kindergarten, only do Part 1. Bring Tommy back in Grade 1 and do both parts. This way, Tommy will be familiar to the students already when they reach Grade 1.*

Procedure part 1: Getting to Know Tommy (throughout the year):

- 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.
- Give each student 3 to 5 cards. Have the students make up stories that Tommy might have told about the 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. *Do not mention the Holocaust at all here. The students will not tell Holocaust stories because they have no context for that yet.*
- Spend a little time every week talking about Tommy and making him part of the class. *Option:* draw Tommy on the board doing something related to that week's lessons.



Procedure part 2: *Tommy's Birthday in the Ghetto*
(on or near Yom HaShoah or Holocaust Memorial Day):

- Hold the following pictures out for this story:
 - "My dearest Tommy!" – birthday cake
 - "To my dearest Tommy..." – looking out ghetto window
 - "Tommy's sleepy!" – sleeping behind a curtain
 - "To the table!" – sitting at the table, looking unhappy
- Tell the following story using those pictures:
 - Tommy is all grown up now but he wanted me to share a story with you about something that happened to him when he was little.
 - The story starts many, many years ago, in a country far, far away – there lived a little Jewish boy named Tommy.
 - [*Ghetto window picture*] When Tommy was little, he had to move with his mommy and daddy and many other friends into a ghetto.
 - A ghetto is a place near the city but not really in the city, and it is surrounded by walls. This ghetto was called Terezin.
 - You can see that it's winter now, but it will be spring soon, and there will be leaves on the tree out there.
 - Everything Tommy owns he had to bring with him in that one suitcase.
 - *You could talk about what Tommy might have brought in the suitcase. Do not ask what they would put in the suitcase.*
 - [*Tommy sleeping*] There were many, many people in the ghetto and not enough room, so many people had to sleep in in the same room.
 - Now, Tommy's mother loved him very much, and she wanted to give him his own space, so she found a piece of cloth and hung it up.
 - That way when he went to sleep, he had some space to himself, even though he was in a room with a lot of other people.
 - [*Empty table*] Tommy was hungry. It was very hard to get food in the ghetto
 - His Mommy and Daddy tried their best to get him the food he wanted but sometimes they couldn't.
 - Tommy was upset because he didn't have as much food as he wanted or the type of food he wanted. He thought it was boring.
 - [*Birthday Cake*]
 - *To start with, just show them this picture. Give them a chance to talk about their own birthdays and what kinds of cake they had.*
 - It was Tommy's birthday.
 - Remember, there was a wall, and not enough food, and everyone was hungry. It was really hard to get some kinds of food.



- Tommy's Mommy wanted to make him a birthday cake, but she couldn't get the stuff she needed – the flour and sugar and butter.
- But Tommy's Daddy was a painter so he painted Tommy a birthday cake instead, and made this whole book of paintings as a birthday present.
- *Be sure to present this as a positive/exciting development, and not as a disappointment that there was no cake.*
- *Depending on the age and maturity 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.*

Notes on staying age-appropriate:

- Discuss this as a story that Tommy, who is now an old man, wants to tell them about what happened when he was young. By starting in this way, we make it clear that Tommy survives whatever happens to him and grows up.
- Be sure to say that he moved to the ghetto *with his parents*.
- Talk about this as something that happened to Tommy *a long time ago in a faraway place*. This prevents them from fearing it might happen to them.
- Be sure to talk about how *Tommy's mommy and daddy loved him very much*. For children, home is not a place but wherever your loving family is.
- Never ask them to think about what they would do in Tommy's place. Ask instead what they think Tommy did.