

Women's stories

Pedagogical concept:

This exercise is divided into seven practical parts. Its aim is to help students **imagine stories** from the Holocaust, and **contrast** them with realities learned from women's biographies. The idea is to let students work with their **imagination, story-telling, map-reading, picture interpretation** and **text analysis**. Elements such as music, live art and personal map creation should help students be **personally engaged** with some Holocaust stories, while keeping the learning atmosphere **playful**.

Duration: 90 min

Necessary materials:

- Project or print out the **photos** from this folder:
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1bRVrNVXGacPwU-ceSKZluz-5EfnYtIrA?usp=sharing>
- Print out the **stories** of individual women from this folder:
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1bRVrNVXGacPwU-ceSKZluz-5EfnYtIrA?usp=sharing>
- Print out a **large map of Europe**
- Project an extract from the novel *Fateless* by the writer Imre Kertész:
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1bRVrNVXGacPwU-ceSKZluz-5EfnYtIrA?usp=sharing>

Age group: 11th-12th grade (16-18 years)

Group size: 20-30 students

Description of the activity/methods:

Warm-up exercise (5 min)

1. Put the printed photos or project them on a wall.
2. Students should try to put the photos:
 - in **chronological order** based on **when** they could have been taken
 - in **different groups** based on **where** the protagonists could have lived (city / village)
3. Discuss with the students what the social environment of people in the pictures could have been like.

Imagined life (10 min)

1. Form groups of 4-5 students. Each group should choose a photo of one of the women (see "Necessary materials").
2. Students should come up with information they can infer from the photos and imagine what the life of the person could have been like. Ask them to write all the information on post-its. Each group should put their post-its on the wall and share with the whole group what they discussed.
3. Discuss with the students what similarities they can see between the photos (how they were dressed, the time period when the photos were taken, the occasion of taking the photos, etc.).
4. Prepare a list with the similarities.

Creating meaning: imagination and reality (20 min)

1. Distribute to the groups a short extract related to the person of their choice (from the HerStories biographies, see "Necessary materials":
https://docs.google.com/document/d/10Xc-4QE_nBfnzoew0gvTW1dAb6oiqZzxi-SyzWZGm-g/edit)
2. The students should compare the imagined lives with the reality of the biographies.
3. Complete the **list from the Imagined Life** with **similarities** from the biographies.
4. Discuss together: What might be the reasons for their lives being very similar?

Map (10 min)

1. On the pre-printed large map of Europe, have the groups mark where the main characters in the stories lived (place photos in their hometown).
2. Then mark where their ancestors lived.
3. The photos placed on the map help visualise Central and Eastern European destinies. Talk about how much the region determines common destinies.

Personal maps (10 min)

1. Each group creates a personal map of their protagonist (using Google Map Designer) and marks their personal journeys from birthplace to last stop.
2. Discuss how the war and the Holocaust changed the protagonists' lives.

Unspeakable stories (20 min)

1. Project or print out an extract from the novel Fateless by the writer Imre Kertész. (See "Necessary materials".)
2. Have the pupils find out how many years after Auschwitz Kertész wrote his novel (9 May 1973).
3. Ask students to look for other autobiographical works about the Holocaust and find out when they were written.
4. Discuss with students what the reason for the long silence can be?

Reflection

1. Each student writes individually **a postcard** to one of the five female characters. Then, make an exhibition of the postcards, like a picture gallery.

2. Groups choose a **photo from the Necessary materials** folder (connected to these characters). Students make a **living sculpture** - i.e. they imitate the position of the characters in the photo.
3. Groups choose a **tune or a song** that they think best fits the person they are working with. Each group presents to the others their tune and explain why they chose it.

Discussion

Read the excerpt about Lisa Pinhas and discuss with the students: What could be the reason why women kept their stories to themselves?

"Lisa Pinhas was one of the first women Holocaust survivors in Greece who decided to put her horrific experiences in Auschwitz-Birkenau on paper in the 1950s. For Lisa, it was a conscious decision, as she knew that until then only men had published their testimonies about their deportation and imprisonment in Nazi concentration camps, while women's stories remained unknown."

If possible using wordart, create a collective picture of which words have been predominant.

