

LESSON PLAN

Title: "Renee Molho -A bookstore in six chapters"

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School: High School of Krinides, Kavala, Greece

Primary category the lesson belongs to: History, Religion and Civics. It can also be a part of a project concerning exclusively the Holocaust of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki.

Pupils' level and age: The lesson plan can be applied both in Secondary School (age 14-15) and in High School (age 16-17).

Time: Six hours

Reasons for choosing this film

The Jewish community of Thessaloniki was one of the Jewish communities in Europe that were completely destroyed during the Holocaust (94% of its members were murdered in Auschwitz-Birkenau). After the war only 1.950 Jews were counted in Thessaloniki. This lesson plan, which is based on centropas' film "Renee Molho -A bookstore in six chapters", provides the tools which students need to learn about this lost community and its people who participated in the historical events, people with specific names, jobs, lives and not simply anonymous victims.

As far as it concerns me I chose this film for emotional reasons also. Except the fact that I grew up in Thessaloniki my family and I used to shop from Molho's family bookshop. Then I did not know anything about their past...

Background Information

The lesson requires basic knowledge of the Second World War and the Holocaust. The students should be familiar with the use of search engines, word processors, and the use of the Web2:0 tools which the project considers as a prerequisite (Tagul, Timetoast, Glogster).

Methods used:

The lesson plan was based on constructivism, exploratory and discovery learning and student-centered teaching approach.

a. Techniques

- Brain storming
- Team Activity: Think, Discuss, Share. -Think, Pair, Share. (TPS)
- Editing text with guiding questions
- Case study
- Discussion / Dialogue
- Creative expression activity / inspirational text
- Artful Thinking
- Worksheets

b. Use of ICT

- Integration and exploitation of multimedia applications
- Electronic / collaborative documents
- Software presentation
- Online e-platforms

The teacher holds the role of the co-coordinator, animator and leader of the group.

Goals

The students will

- study about the Holocaust in Greece and especially in Thessaloniki.
- acquire knowledge of the Sephardic Jews who had been expelled from Spain in 1492 and lived in Thessaloniki for ages.
- be able to examine through population statistics the influence of Greek Jews in Thessaloniki before and after the Holocaust.
- "meet" people who lived in Thessaloniki this period.

- acquaint with the witnesses and their personal stories.
- understand the relationship between personal story and History and the effects of History on each person's personal micro-history.
- discuss issues of personal responsibility, conscience and moral dilemmas relating to difficult decisions.
- explore the dangers of remaining silent and apathetic to the oppression of others.
- develop an understanding of what it meant to be a "Righteous Among the Nations".
- learn about what happened after the Holocaust: the eradication of the Jewish community, the difficulties of the survivors and their return to the city.
- consider also the non-Jewish part of the society in which the Jews lived, how they felt about their violent detachment and what they thought when the survivors returned.
- understand that the Holocaust wasn't another war crime.
- think about the roles and responsibilities of individuals when confronted with policies of genocide.
- be trained in tolerance, sobriety, acceptance and respect for the nationally and religiously different, the "other".
- be encouraged to become active learners by searching, investigating and criticizing their recourses.
- learn to cooperate with other students and develop their communication.
- cultivate their aesthetic experience through their contact with other forms of art such as photography and video while they create their own artwork.

Material and Sources

- A laptop connected to a projector
- Internet connection for resource information
- Film "Renee Molho -A bookstore in six chapters" available on line in: http://www.centropa.org/centropa-cinema/renee-molho-bookstore-six-chapters?subtitle_language=

- Photos from the family, available on line in:
<http://www.centropa.org/pictures/stories?type%5B%5D=photo&title=Molho&donor=42435#collapsed>
- Renne Molho's biography, available on line in:
<http://www.centropa.org/biography/renee-molho>
- The History of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki available on line in:
<https://www.yadvashem.org/education/otherlanguages/greek/educational-materials/jewish-community-in-saloniki.html>
- Worksheets

Recommended website

<https://www.jewishmuseum.gr/>

Summary of the lesson plan

The didactic scenario follows the Project method so during its development we will distinguish the following phases:

- a. The phase of introduction and planning of educational activities.
- b. The phase of the implementation of the proposed actions.
- c. The presentation phase
- d. The evaluation phase.

Lesson plan

A. Introduction (2 hours)

As a warm up the teacher reads Primo Levi's famous poem "If this is a man" and asks their students to write in a post-it paper the first thought or feeling which flashes across their mind in one word. He records these words in the form of a word cloud with the help of the Tagul web tool (<http://www.tagul.com/>).

Then he introduces the topic: Second World War, Jews, the Holocaust (Shoah) in Greece. After this brief introduction the teacher gives further clarification on the method of teaching and editing the subject. It is explained that at first students will carefully observe three photos and then they will watch a film which belongs to centropas' organization. (At this point the teacher must make a small introduction about the organization and its purposes).

Before watching the film the students are shown three pictures from the movie.



Then he asks the following questions:

1. Who do you see in these photos?
2. What do you think is happening?
3. Where do you think that these pictures were taken?
4. Can you imagine why they were taken?
5. How did these people's lives look like?
6. Can you describe their clothes, expressions and feelings?
7. How could these people be related?
8. What would you like to ask these people if you had the chance to meet them?

After their answers and before watching the film they are given extra questions in order to be motivated about the content of the film.

1. Do you believe that the film's title is appropriate? Why?

2. Which main historical fact of human's recent history is posed in the story?
3. Which techniques did the director use in order to present the movie?
4. Which point of the movie touched you the most?
5. What words would you use to describe the heroes of the film? How does their story make you feel?
6. Which one of the heroes impressed you most?
7. If you had the chance to meet Renee, what would you want to ask her or say to her?
8. What is the most important message of this story?

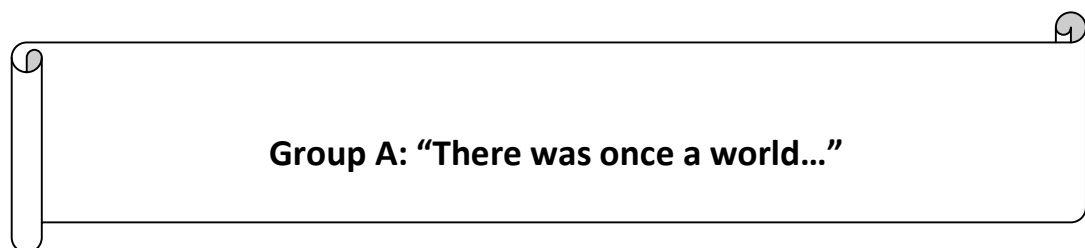
The students are shown the film with the help of the projector. They answer the previous questions and they discuss the film.

After this step the teacher splits the students into groups and gives them different worksheets.

The class is divided into six groups, according to the chapters into which the film is split. Each group has to fill in different worksheet.

B. Worksheet processing into groups (3-4 hours)

There are six teams according to the film's chapters.



- ❖ Which is the town where our history takes place? Which period?
- ❖ What information is given about the bookstore which is mentioned in the film? How it was connected with the town?
- ❖ Which was the origin of the owners?
- ❖ What was their economic and social profile? What do you think about their lives?

- ❖ Renee, referring to the Holocaust in her biography, also said: "All the people who came back, refused to talk about their experiences, as they didn't want to remember it." Why do you think Renee finally chose to tell her story? Why did her husband refuse to discuss it?
- ❖ Renee, referring to the Holocaust in her biography, also said:

Supplementary Activities

- ❖ Look for population statistics and demographics for the ethnic composition of Thessaloniki before World War II and write a brief *article*.

Group B: "The world we found the world we made..."

- ❖ Create the *timeline* (www.timetoast.com) of the historical presence of the Jews in the city of Thessaloniki. Indicate important events and crises during these years.
- ❖ Under what circumstances was the first bookstore of the Molho family founded?
- ❖ To what extent do you think did the fact that they had to issue Greek passports in 1913 affect the family history?
- ❖ What were the results of the devastating fire of 1917 for the Jewish community of Thessaloniki? How did this affect the family's bookstore?
- ❖ Which event affected both the demographic change of the population and the character of the town in 1923?
- ❖ Why did anti-Semitism appear in the city and how did it affect community's life?

Supplementary Activities

- ❖ You are a traveler in Thessaloniki during the interwar period. Write in a *cooperative text* (Google doc) about the multinational and multicultural character of the city.

Group C: "This is the girl for you..."

- ❖ What is the family tree of the Molho family and Saltiel family? You can use the information provided by the film and the biography of Renee.
- ❖ Under what conditions did Solon and Renne meet?
- ❖ What information do we draw for the Sephardic community of the Jews of Thessaloniki? What were the elements that made it differ from the rest of the Jewish communities around the world?
- ❖ In your opinion, is the justification right for the designation of Thessaloniki as Jerusalem of the Balkans?
- ❖ How was the social life of Solon and Renee? Describe one day of their life through the pages of a diary they were holding.

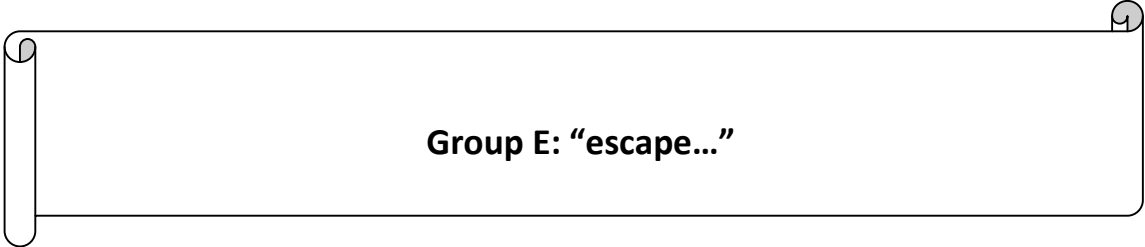
Group D: "When the world went dark..."

- ❖ Solon served and fought in the Greek army. What do you know about the participation of the Jews in the Greek-Italian war?
- ❖ What information does the film give about the consequences of the war on Thessaloniki's Jewish community and their treatment? Make a timeline of the measures which were taken against them.
- ❖ Did you know that the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki was built on the ruins of the city's Jewish cemetery? Do you think students and residents of the city should be informed about this fact? Why do you think that it was only in 2014 that a monument was built as a reminder of the cemetery although it was destroyed in 1942? How does the vandalism to the monument on the eve of the Holocaust remembrance make you feel?

- ❖ Why did Solon decide to flee from the city? How did he manage to do it?

Supplementary Activities

- ❖ Search the Internet for the number of Jewish soldiers who participated in the Greek-Italian War. How many of them were distinguished on the battlefield, how many were injured and how many died? Make a power point presentation.
- ❖ Make a film with Movie Maker about the Black Sabbath of the Jews in Thessaloniki. Search the Internet for photos, testimonies, and texts that refer to it.



Group E: "escape..."

- ❖ How did the Molhos and Saltiels survive? Who helped them?
- ❖ Why were George Mitziliotis and Mrs. Lembess mentioned in the film given the status of Righteous among the Nations? Would you characterize them as heroes? Why or why not? What dilemmas do you think they faced during their involvement in hiding Jews? What elements of their actions and behavior can be considered as "extraordinary" and how did they place them in danger?
- ❖ Can you imagine what the relations were like between survivors who returned from death camps with survivors who were hiding after the liberation?
- ❖ What was the adventure of Renee's flee? How did she finally connect with Solon in Thessaloniki?

Supplementary Activities

- ❖ The Talmud (Code of Jewish Law) says: "He who saves one life, it is as though he has preserved the existence of the entire world." Think of the meaning of the statement in our story and express your thoughts with drawings.

- ❖ Write a *diary* of a Greek Jew returning home to Thessaloniki compared to a Jew returning to Volos or Zakynthos, expressing their emotions. Consider issues like their properties which were stolen or purchased during their absence.

Group F: "A world of books, words never said..."

- ❖ What information is given about Renee, Solomon and the Bookstore after the War?
- ❖ What does Renee's story teach us about the lasting difficulties and traumatic impacts of the Holocaust even after the liberation?
- ❖ Renee, referring to the Holocaust in her biography, also said: "...people who would listen couldn't believe that those things had really happened..." . Considering Renee's film does it surprise you to hear that there are still Holocaust deniers?
- ❖ Why did Solon and Renee remain silent in Yom Kippur's Day, also known as the Day of Atonement?
- ❖ What will you personally keep in mind from Renee's story?

Supplementary Activities

- ❖ Could Renee's and Solon's story have a different end? Give your *version*.
- ❖ Examine population demographics in modern Greece to evaluate the impact of the Holocaust on the population of Thessaloniki. Make your own *assessment*.
- ❖ Create Holocaust's *glossary*.
- ❖ Create a Web-based poster with Glogster (www.glogster.com) combining text, images, video, and audio, referring to the Holocaust.

C. Project's Presentation

The project can be presented in the Jewish Museum of Greece and in the school's website. Furthermore, it can be presented on the Holocaust's Memorial Day (27 January) or on the 4th of March, the Memorial Day of

the unknown Holocaust of Kavala's Jewish community. Actually it was the first massive expulsion of Greek Jewish citizens from the occupied Greek territory, which took place ten days before the departure of the first train from Thessaloniki.

The teacher will also present it in the annual International Conference for the Promotion of Educational Innovation in Greece (Larisa) and as good practice in educational seminars organized by the school's educational coordinator.

D. Evaluation

Students' evaluation is formal and it's based on

1. Active participation in activities throughout the course
2. Worksheets
3. Discussions
4. Cooperative and individual work
5. Assessment and peer evaluation activities of the pupil (short assessment criteria).