Embracing Diversity

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Embracing Diversity: Suggestions for the Educator

An emphasis on remembering the past to protect the future from similar tragedies is central to all Holocaust education efforts. The ultimate goal of these lessons, therefore, is the development of an adult learner population who embrace their community's diversity and respect the human differences in the world. Reinforcement of basic human rights helps bridge between dissimilar groups. As people learn to value each person as an individual, the community's tendency to stand up against social injustices increases.

An explicit goal of adult education is to encourage people to see learning as a lifelong process rather than just a means to a specific end, like learning to read better or passing the GED test. These lessons, based on such compelling content, generate a heightened interest among adult learners to learn more. Non-readers have elected to check out books from the library, and passive learners have begun to take an active, enthusiastic role in the learning process.

In the classes that used these lessons in their early phases, the abusive treatment of children universally bridged over all other differences. Adult learners who harbored hostile attitudes about specific groups because of religious or racial differences let those hostilities fall when they learned about the abusive treatment of children—often drawing parallels to their own children. Finding this type of bridge between groups is a key to encouraging intergroup unity.

Adult Learners Speak Out

“That would have been my daughter. They would have killed my little girl just because she’s different.”

I asked my students if they felt they could intervene to save people from certain death. Some said 'yes' without hesitation. One remarked that if children were involved then she would help. A couple stated until they were in a situation, they were not sure how they would react.

“...It created a spark, and when you can ignite someone's interest, that's what you want to do. You want people to learn forever, and when it happens it makes you glad you're in this business.”

Educators' Resource Toolkit
Prejudice and Friendship: Using Picture Books

Some experiences from our childhood are unforgettable. Their memories stir us even as adults. Among the most traumatic childhood memories for many people is the loss of a good friend. To many adults, tears still fall when they think of a friend they lost. In each of the books in this lesson, a young person loses a friend.

During every war, ordinary people’s lives are changed. Even children are not protected from the impact of war. Each story in this lesson takes place during war years. One story takes place during the Civil War. The other two take place during World War II. The story settings are three different places: Georgia, France, and California.

Read the three books. Think about how the stories are similar. Think about how they are different. Think about ways a war has affected you, a friend, or a family member.

Books:

*Pink and Say*, by Patricia Polacco

*The Bracelet*, by Yoshiko Uchida, illustrated by Joanna Yardley

*Star of Fear, Star of Hope*, by Jo Hoestlandt, illustrated by Johanna Kang

A portrait of Marjanna Pass, a child separated from her family during the Holocaust. Children’s photographs were published in newspapers after the war to help reunite families.
Directions for “Remembering What You Read”

Before you begin, read the Remembering What You Read questions. Knowing the questions before you begin will help you notice details in each story.

First, read one of the three books. You may read it by yourself or with a group.

Next, answer the Remembering What You Read questions for the book. You may scan the book to recall details if necessary.

Then, read each of the other two books. Answer the questions for each book.

Finally, re-read your answers to the questions. Think about the three stories as well as your own experiences. Write an essay. Choose one of the essay topics or think of your own topic.

Essay Topic Suggestions:
—Friendships Between People Who Are Different from Each Other
—The Effects of War on Ordinary People
—The Effects of War on Children
—Prejudice and War
—The Strength of Childhood Experiences

Group Discussion Ideas:
1) Think about the descriptions you read or heard in the story. A good writer can reach your physical and emotional senses. Recall details that you were able to hear, smell, taste, feel, and see.

2) This story is based on events that really happened in history. Have you ever heard of these events? What do you know about that time period? What else would you like to understand about the time period of the story?
Remembering What You Read

Complete these questions for each book.

Name of Book: __________________________________________________________

Where did the story take place? ____________________________________________

What year did the story take place? Or what war was happening? ____________
(Pink and Say does not tell the exact year)

What are the two friends names? ____________________ and ____________________

How old are the 2 children in the story? ____________________ and ____________________
(You may have to guess their ages by looking for clues in the text)

Why are the 2 children treated differently? Who treats the children differently?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Does the story tell what happened to each child?

If yes, tell the fate of each of the friends.

If no, tell what you think happened to each child.
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Educators' Resource Toolkit

Center for Literacy Studies, The University of Tennessee
Recognizing Symbolic Meaning

In Nazi-occupied Europe, labels—including armbands and patches—were used to differentiate between people. Nazis, in order to identify themselves as figures of authority, wore swastika armbands on their left arm. The high, shiny black boots and stiffly starched uniforms made Nazis easily identifiable.

Labels often identify—and isolate—groups being victimized. Jewish people in Nazi-occupied Europe were often required to wear a yellow Star of David. The star, often with a “J” or “Jew” written in the center, had to be worn on their outer clothing. The Nazis quickly forced “enemies of the state” to register with government officials.

Once in the concentration camps, different victim groups were identified with distinctive patches. Gypsies were forced to wear a black triangle. Homosexuals were identified with a pink triangle. Jehovah’s Witnesses wore a purple triangle. Criminals wore green triangles. Jewish prisoners were generally labeled with a Star of David.

At times, a person’s fate was shaped by their initial labeling. For example, a Jewish member of the Resistance was labeled as a “criminal,” not as a Jew. The risk of death was lower for a criminal than for someone who was Jewish, so he partially contributes his survival to his initial labeling.

Our culture, like that in Nazi Europe, uses labels to differentiate between people. A common cultural label is the wedding band. The wedding band, worn on a particular finger on a certain hand, indicates that a person is married.
Lessons from the Holocaust
Magda Herzberger, a survivor of Auschwitz: “In the first month, they already wanted to find out who was Jewish or not. All Jewish people were forced to wear a yellow star—then you are like a target. My father was very worried for me. We did not dare to go out on the street. That was the first time that [the danger] came home to us.”

Titles also differentiate between groups of people. Although men can be uniformly recognized as “Mr.,” women are designated by either “Mrs.”—for a married woman—or “Miss” for an unmarried woman. A relatively recent addition in our culture is the “Ms.” designation, which does not indicate a woman’s marital status. Another title, “Dr.”—used for either people who have a recognized medical degree or a Ph.D., the highest academic degree—generally provokes thoughts of intelligence, wealth, and respect.

Word labels in our culture represent specific aspects of a person’s life, like religious affiliation, race, sex, age, or education levels. For example, if you are labeled by your religious beliefs, you might be called Christian, Jewish, or Muslim. Labeling can be positive or negative—both shape the way people perceive themselves and others.

Pay attention to the labels you hear and use each day. Often negative labels build barriers between people who are otherwise very similar to each other. Rather than paying attention to differences between people, look for similarities!
Critical Thinking Exercise
For Recognizing Symbolic Meaning

Think about the ways that people are labeled in society to answer the following questions.

1. How does labeling shape the way you see yourself?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________

2. How does labeling shape the way others treat you?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________

3. How have other people labeled you in the past?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________

4. Write a list of labels that you like to use to describe yourself.

____________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________

5. Read the following list of label pairs. Try to add at least three more pairs to the list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SYMBOLIC LABELS</th>
<th>WORD LABELS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Star of David</td>
<td>Jew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>swastika</td>
<td>Nazi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wedding band</td>
<td>Mrs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

____________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________________
Labeling and Stereotypes

Labeling and stereotypes can be based on personal aspects that can not be changed, like race or sex. Other labels are based on family characteristics, like religion and economic status. Some are individualized, like those based on a person’s weight, clothing, or car type. Labels can also be based on someone’s actions. The discussion questions below address several different aspects of labeling.

Discussion or Essay Questions
1. The narrator of the video “Nuremberg: Tyranny on Trial” tells how Justice Jackson used cutting names to describe the accused Nazis. He used labels like “banker of gold teeth,” “the poisoner of youth,” and “the cruelest slaver since the Pharaohs.” What effect do you think the use of these labels had on the judges? Why? Do you think the use of opinion-shaping labels is ever justified in a court case?

2. Think about a time in your life when you were a victim of stereotyping, prejudice, or discrimination. How were you labeled? Describe how this episode affected you.

3. Think about a time when you have been guilty of stereotyping, prejudice, or discrimination. What shaped your view about the person or group of people? Do you think the label affected the other person?

4. Do you believe the use of labels to describe individuals is justified? Why or why not?

Vocabulary to Know

**Discrimination** – singled out for unfair treatment

**Label** – a term used to describe a person based on only one characteristic

**Prejudice** – beliefs or attitudes about an individual or group that are not based on facts

**Stereotype** – exaggerated beliefs consisting of unfounded generalizations of what people are like
Speaking Out for Others

As we all know, it is difficult to predict the future. A charismatic leader who sounds good at first can persuade people to head down the wrong path later. Nazi Germany provides an excellent example, especially when you look at the case of Pastor Martin Niemöller:

A Biography of Martin Niemöller

Martin Niemöller was born in 1892. During World War I, he was a German U-boat commander. After the war, he was considered a hero. In 1924, Martin Niemöller was ordained as a Lutheran minister.

When Adolf Hitler was trying to gain political support, the Nazi newspapers said that he was a World War I hero, too. At first Pastor Niemöller believed what he read about Hitler, but very quickly he changed his mind. Hitler and the Nazis wanted to revise the New Testament of the Bible to fit in Nazi beliefs. They also wanted ministers to preach, “One People, One Reich, One Faith.” Pastor Niemöller said he would rather burn down his church than preach like the Nazis required.

From 1933 to 1937 Pastor Niemöller spoke out against the Nazis, a dangerous thing to do in Nazi Germany. Eventually, he was arrested for treason. He was found guilty, but was given a suspended sentence. When that happened, Hitler ordered his police to re-arrest Niemöller. He was held at the Sachsenhausen and Dachau concentration camps until the end of WW II. At one point, he was almost executed.

In 1967, Pastor Niemöller received the Lenin Peace Prize and the West German Grand Cross of Merit in 1971. He received these honors because he stood up for the rights of all people. Pastor Martin Niemöller died in Germany on March 6, 1984. He was 92-years-old.

Pastor Niemöller’s poem (or statement) that follows has many different variations. The first version, written as a poem, is commonly read by people studying the Holocaust. The second version came from a statement he made. It is recorded in the 1968 Congressional Record.
First They Came for the Jews

Poem: Version 1

First they came for the Jews
and I did not speak out—
because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for the communists
and I did not speak out—
because I was not a communist.

Then they came for the trade unionists
and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for me—
and there was no one left
to speak out for me.

First They Came for the Jews

Statement: Version 2

When Hitler attacked the Jews
I was not a Jew,
therefore I was not concerned.

And when Hitler attacked the Catholics,
I was not a Catholic,
and therefore, I was not concerned.

And when Hitler attacked the unions
and the industrialists,
I was not a member of the unions,
and I was not concerned.

Then Hitler attacked me and the
Protestant church—
and there was nobody left to be concerned.
Critical Thinking: Speaking Out for Others

Speaking out for the rights of another person is difficult, especially if that person is significantly different from you.

1) Read and think about the poem “First They Came for the Jews.” What is Pastor Niemoller saying about his own actions? Does this “moral” apply to other people?

______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________

2) Consider a situation in which you are a witness to a stranger being abused. How does your response to the situation change if you know that person? Or if that person is your best friend? Or if that person is your child?

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______________________________________________________________________________________________
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3) Describe a situation that you have experienced in which you either spoke up for another person or chose to be silent. If you could change your own actions of the time, what would you do differently?

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______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________