

How Saba Kept Singing: Remembering Auschwitz

Access the **How Saba Kept Singing** collection [here](#)



Lesson Plan

How Saba Kept Singing: Remembering Auschwitz

Overview: David Wisnia survived unimaginable experiences during the Holocaust. Despite the pain that reliving memories brought, he felt that his life could provide some inspiration to others. He believed that we must “...do away with hatred, as hatred leads to death. We should do good in this world and be good to one another. Live a life with meaning and purpose, and leave this world a better place than when you entered it.” In this documentary, David recounts his experiences as he returns to Auschwitz with family members.

Subjects: Social Studies, particularly U.S. History or World History examining WWII; English Language Arts, Psychology

- This lesson is intended to supplement students’ previous learning about the Holocaust. While it can be used as a stand-alone lesson, students should have knowledge of the Holocaust, Jewish life and World War II.

Grade Level: 7-12

Lesson Duration:

- 1 class period for the Gallery Walk
- 1-2 class periods for documentary viewing (either clips or full film)
- 1-2 class periods for extension activities

Essential Questions:

- How are photographs and documents useful in examining the Holocaust?
- Why is hearing survivor testimony important to learning about the Holocaust?

Lesson Objectives:

Students will:

- Examine relevant primary sources from the life of a Holocaust survivor.
- Analyze individual survivors’ stories as part of the broader narrative of the Holocaust.

Materials:

- Full broadcast version of the film “[How Saba Kept Singing](#)” (Transcript) or selected clips
- Student Activity handout
- Primary documents and photographs

Procedure:

Day 1

1. Gallery Walk:

- a. Display copies of numbered photographs on the wall of a classroom or hallway. Some are actual photographs and some are photographs of documents. Several sets could be displayed depending on class size.
 - i. The photographs are categorized into “Historical photos” (photos 1-8), “Contemporary photos” (photos 9-16), and “Document photos” (photos 17-20).

- ii. Digital versions of the photos are available here: <https://bit.ly/WisniaPhotos>
 - b. Students are to look at the photos as evidence, with no further information provided.
 - i. Students can examine the photographs individually or in pairs, and should ultimately choose one photo from each category to analyze in greater detail.
 - ii. Students will complete the related section on the Student Activity document.
 1. There is space for analysis of each type of photo, along with a reflection question.
 - c. Discuss their questions and conclusions. Can they come up with a story? What else do they want to know?
2. Pose some of the following questions to students (dependent on age group):
 - a. How do we know World War II happened?
 - b. Why are eyewitness accounts important in studying events?
 - c. Why are eyewitness accounts of the Holocaust especially important?
 - d. What primary sources could be significant?
 - e. What would be the effect of hearing that traumatic events in history had happened to a family member?
 - f. Can trauma be passed down to the next generation?

Days 2-3 (The entire film is ~80 minutes long; the combined length of the selected clips is ~15 minutes)

1. Have students view either the entire documentary or the provided clips and fill out the corresponding section in the Student Activity handout.
 - a. The entire film is available here: <https://youtu.be/m84Uz8A14uE>
 - i. Teachers may also wish you use the [How Saba Kept Singing: Film Viewing Guide](#), which includes comprehension and discussion questions.
 - b. Students can either complete the organizer as they watch and listen, or the teacher can stop the film at intervals for students to answer and review.
2. Students are provided with two reflection questions at the end of the film/clips:
 - a. "If you could, what would you want to ask David and Zippi about their experiences at Auschwitz or later in life?"
 - b. "What do you take away from David's story? What will you remember most from his experiences?"

Extension/Research Activities:

The following research activities are meant to further students' knowledge of the Holocaust in relation to themes and events depicted in the film. The timeframe for these activities may range from one to three days, depending on the complexity of the research and the final product created by students.

1. Examine Displaced Persons Camps

- a. Both David and Zippi had experience in Displaced Persons camps at the conclusion of World War II. Have students use some of the resources listed below to learn about where survivors went at the conclusion of the war and what their experiences were like.
- b. **Resources:**
 - i. Displaced Persons | United States Holocaust Memorial Museum:
<https://www.ushmm.org/collections/bibliography/displaced-persons>
 - ii. Displaced Persons Camps | Yad Vashem:
<https://www.yadvashem.org/articles/general/displaced-persons-camps.html>

- iii. “The Last Million” | The National WWII Museum:
<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/last-million-eastern-european-displaced-persons-postwar-germany>
- iv. JDC in the Displaced Persons Camps | JDC:
<https://archives.jdc.org/topic-guides/jdc-in-the-displaced-persons-dp-camps-1945-1957/>
- v. Records Relating to World War II Era Refugees, Displaced Person, Relief and War Crimes | National Archives: <https://www.archives.gov/research/military/ww2/refugees>
- vi. What happened to people displaced by the Second World War? | Imperial War Museum:
<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/what-happened-to-people-displaced-by-the-second-world-war>
- vii. Feldafing Displaced Persons Camp | USHMM:
<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/feldafing-displaced-persons-camp>
- viii. Feldafing (Photo Archive) | Center for Jewish History:
https://archives.cjh.org/agents/corporate_entities/37199
- ix. Feldafing Interviews | Voices of the Holocaust:
<https://voices.library.iit.edu/location/feldafingcamp>

c. Suggested Research Questions:

- i. What is a Displaced Persons camp?
- ii. How many camps existed and where?
- iii. When and why were Displaced Persons camps created?
- iv. Who ran Displaced Persons camps and how did they operate?
- v. How did people experience the Displaced Persons camps? How long did people remain there? What was daily life like?

2. Conduct Photo Analysis from Auschwitz-Birkenau

- a. The Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp accounted for the greatest number of deaths during World War II of all the Nazi extermination camps. Both David and Zippi managed to survive; they were in a tiny minority of those who were deported there.

b. Resources:

- i. Auschwitz-Birkenau Photo Archive | Memorial and Museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau:
<https://www.auschwitz.org/en/gallery/historical-pictures-and-documents/>
- ii. Photo Archives | USHMM:
<https://www.ushmm.org/collections/the-museums-collections/about/photo-archives>
- iii. The Auschwitz Album | Yad Vashem:
https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/album_auschwitz/index.asp
- iv. Faces of Auschwitz: <https://facesofauschwitz.com/>
- v. Auschwitz camp prisoners’ photographs | Arolsen Archives:
https://collections.arolsen-archives.org/en/archive/1-1-2-6_11260002
- vi. Teacher’s Guide: Analyzing Photographs and Prints | Library of Congress:
https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/documents/Analyzing_Photos_and_Prints.pdf

c. Suggested Research Questions:

- i. Who took the photograph(s) you are analyzing?
- ii. What was the purpose of the photo(s)?

- iii. Why would knowing the purpose help you understand the meaning and context of the photo?
- iv. Who could a photograph be used to learn about or make generalizations about the Holocaust?

3. Research a Survivor's Story

- a. Research another survivor story from any concentration camp or survival story of a hidden child or resistance survivor.

b. Resources:

- i. Meet Holocaust Survivors | USHMM:
<https://www.ushmm.org/remember/holocaust-survivors/volunteers>
- ii. Concentration Camp Survivors Share Their Stories | Imperial War Museum:
<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/concentration-camp-survivors-share-their-stories>
- iii. The Holocaust: Survivors | Jewish Virtual Library:
<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/holocaust-survivors>
- iv. IWitness – Dimensions in Testimony | USC Shoah Foundation:
<https://iewitness.usc.edu/sites/dit>
- v. Hidden Children | USHMM:
<https://www.ushmm.org/collections/bibliography/hidden-children>
- vi. Life in the Shadows: Hidden Children and the Holocaust | Museum of Jewish Heritage:
<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/life-in-shadows-hidden-children-and-the-holocaust>
- vii. I was a Hidden Child During the Holocaust | Facing History and Ourselves:
<https://facingtoday.facinghistory.org/i-was-a-hidden-child-during-the-holocaust-why-i-share-my-story>
- viii. Jewish Victims of the Holocaust: Hidden Children | Jewish Virtual Library:
<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/hidden-children-of-the-holocaust>
- ix. Jewish Partisans – Films | Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation:
<https://www.jewishpartisans.org/node/219>
- x. Personal Stories: Jewish Partisans | USHMM:
<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/personal-stories-jewish-partisans>
- xi. Resistance | Holocaust Center for Humanity:
<https://www.holocaustcenterseattle.org/overview-resistance>
- xii. Jewish Resistance to the Holocaust | The Wiener Holocaust Library:
<https://wienerholocaustlibrary.org/exhibition/jewish-resistance-to-the-holocaust-2/>

c. Suggested Research Questions:

- i. Explain the essential elements of the survivors' story. Who, what, where, when, why, etc.
- ii. Are there similarities or differences between stories that you've examined? What are the similarities to and differences from David Wisnia's story?

4. Family Connections

- a. Family is very important to the Wisnias. The close relationship between David and his grandson Avi is evident in the film. Keeping stories alive means that lessons can be passed down from generation to generation. Conduct an interview with an older family member and ask about some of their important memories and experiences.

b. Resources:

- i. Oral History Interviews | American Folklife Center:
<https://loc.gov/folklife/familyfolklife/oralhistory.html>
- ii. How to do Oral History | Smithsonian Institution Archives:
<https://siarchives.si.edu/history/how-do-oral-history>
- iii. Family History Sample Outline and Questions | UCLA Library:
https://oralhistory.library.ucla.edu/pages/family_history
- iv. Sample Oral History Questions | National Underground Railroad Freedom Center:
https://freedomcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/OralHistoryTipsQuestions_200805.pdf
- v. 100 Questions Every Family Historian Should Ask Their Relatives | Family History Daily:
<https://familyhistorydaily.com/free-genealogy-resources/family-history-interview-questions/>
- vi. Creating Oral Histories | FamilySearch:
https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Creating_Oral_Histories

Additional resources for David Wisnia and the Wisnia family:

1. [Oral history interview with David Wisnia](#) | USHMM
2. [David Wisnia songs written in Auschwitz](#) | USHMM
3. [One Voice, Two Lives](#) by David Wisnia

Relevant Standards/ Frameworks:

College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies:

- D1.2.9-12. Explain points of agreement and disagreement experts have about interpretations and applications of disciplinary concepts and ideas associated with a compelling question.
- D1.3.9-12. Explain points of agreement and disagreement experts have about interpretations and applications of disciplinary concepts and ideas associated with a supporting question.
- D1.4.9-12. Explain how supporting questions contribute to an inquiry and how, through engaging source work, new compelling and supporting questions emerge.
- D1.5.9-12. Determine the kinds of sources that will be helpful in answering compelling and supporting questions, taking into consideration multiple points of view represented in the sources, the types of sources available, and the potential uses of the sources.
- D2.Civ.10.6-8. Explain the relevance of personal interests and perspectives, civic virtues, and democratic principles when people address issues and problems in government and civil society.
- D2.Civ.10.9-12. Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interests and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.
- D2.His.16.9-12. Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.
- D2.His.17.9-12. Critique the central arguments in secondary works of history in multimedia in terms of their historical accuracy.

- D2.His.3.9-12. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context.
- D2.His.9.9-12 Analyze the relationship between historical sources and the secondary interpretations made from them.
- D3.2.9-12. Evaluate the credibility of a source by examining how experts value the source.

Common Core Literacy Standards:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH11-12.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH11-12.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH11-12.3: Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH9-10.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH9-10.3: Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

About the Authors:

Barbara Daniel is a social studies educator who developed the Holocaust/Genocide curriculum for Ocean City High School, in conjunction with Stockton University's dual credit program. She is a Jewish Foundation for the Righteous Alfred Lerner Fellow and she recently worked with a team to update and revise the Holocaust curriculum for New Jersey.

Colleen Tambuscio is the President of the New Jersey Council of Holocaust Educators, a member of the New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education, a U.S.H.M.M. Museum Teacher Fellow who continues to actively teach the Holocaust and genocide at New Milford High School in New Milford, New Jersey.