

Using Artifacts to Enhance Learning About the “S.S. St. Louis”

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Use in tandem with the website I created at <http://learnaboutstlouis.weebly.com>

Grade: 12th

Subject: Jewish history, Holocaust, world history, or American history.

Time required: 90 minutes

Ideally, this would be split up into two periods of 45 minutes each over a period of two days. Section I includes the “Revisiting the Journey of the Damned,” the journey mapped out, the artifacts, and pictures. Section II includes the 15-minute testimony, the post-testimony activity, and the exit card. Although it is ideal to teach the material over a span of two lessons, it can also be taught in 90 consecutive minutes.

Objective: It is important that students walk away knowing the (1) **basic facts of the story of *St. Louis***. However, the artifacts, photos, and cartoon bring the story to life. The goal is to (2) **expose students to the artifacts to get them to understand and process the fact that these events really occurred**. The testimony further achieves this objective.

Section I

1.) “REVISITING THE JOURNEY OF THE DAMNED” (20-30 min.)

Distribute the worksheet located on the first page of the website. A PDF version is available at the bottom of the first page on the website. Also distribute “Revisiting the Journey of the Damned” by historian Rafael Medoff from the Spring 2014 issue of *PRISM: An Interdisciplinary Journal for Holocaust Educators*. The link to the article is located at the top of the first page. You can have students work in pairs or independently to complete the worksheet. I would allot 15-20 minutes to complete the worksheet and then review the responses together for 5-10 minutes.

2.) THE JOURNEY MAPPED OUT: (1-2 min.)

Show the class this image located under the page “The Journey Mapped Out” to show them the route the ship sailed.

3.) ARTIFACTS: (13 min.)

If your school has computers available to each student, have students go to the website, click on the links, and explore the artifacts themselves. This is ideal because it allows

your students to be active, go at their own pace, and see a close-up image. (You can zoom in on the image on the website). If computers are not available for each student, then you can show the slides to the entire class at once on a SmartBoard or projector. Instruct your students to read the description below the artifact as it appears on the website. If you opt to examine the artifacts as a class, then read the descriptive paragraphs aloud.

Caveat: Students may be tempted explore other artifacts on the museum’s website. Make sure to keep them focused on the relevant webpage.

4.) PICTURES: (1-2 min.)

Show them the pictures. (This is a good review/ summary of the class)

Section II (ideally a day or two has elapsed since teaching Section I)

5.) Pre-TESTIMONY: (2-3 min.)

Before watching the testimony, tell your students to pay attention to the “guiding questions” and have them write the answers as they watch. You can either 1) distribute the questions before watching the testimony and ask them to write the answers as they watch, or 2) have them answer the questions after watching the testimonial. Keep in mind that some students may learn better when they don't have to be preoccupied with writing during a film. (You can request students to hand in the guiding questions at the end of class as an assessment.)

6.) WATCH TESTIMONY: (15 min.)

7.) Post- TESTIMONY ACTIVITY: (15-20 min.)

Use Fishbowl (see link, below) to have a class discussion about the given prompts. Allow the discussion to expand beyond these questions, but use them to anchor the discussion. Some prompts may only take a couple of minutes; others may take up to 10 minutes to discuss, depending upon class interest.

Here is a link to instructions of how to use Fishbowl in a classroom. There are many different variations of the Fishbowl activity; decide which version will be most effective for your classroom. (Class size should be a consideration.)

<http://www.learner.org/workshops/tml/workshop3/teaching2.html>

EXIT CARD: (5-7 min.)

Students will answer the following two questions as an assessment:

1.) WHAT WAS SOMETHING NEW THAT YOU LEARNED TODAY?

2.) WHAT PART OF THE STORY ABOUT THE *ST. LOUIS* AFFECTED/ SHOCKED/ UPSET YOU THE MOST?

Collect the exit cards at the end of class. These exit cards are a quick and easy way to assess individual understanding!