



Lesson Template

Please write your Centropa lesson according to this template.

Project / Lesson Title:
Childhood past to present
Participating school, city, state (for USA), country
Watchung Hills Regional High School Warren NJ USA
Teacher(s):
Participating educators: Maya Ashkenazi- Israel Magda Dimaki - Greece Iryna Levchuk - Ukraine Triantafyllia Syvaka- Greece Mary Sok- United States Gili Sherman - Stepping into the Future coordinator
Subject or class this lesson taught in (i.e., Social Studies, English, Spanish):
Social Studies and English
Participating students
<i>Number of students participating: approximately 25-30 students</i> <i>Age range : 14-16 years old</i> <i>Grade(s): 8th-11th grade</i>
Total time to teach lesson (for example: 3 sessions, 45 minutes each, plus homework)
<i>45-60 minutes per month minimum</i> <i>Additional time in March to design and coordinate the photo exhibit 4-5 hours)</i>
Pedagogical goals
<i>What problem/challenge does the lesson/project try to solve? What is the main question you want to answer?</i> <i>This unit provides an in-depth exploration of individual and collective histories through the lens of childhood, both past and present. Students will engage in a cross-cultural exchange, fostering empathy and global understanding by examining personal narratives, particularly those of their grandparents, and connecting them to broader historical contexts, including the Holocaust.</i> Objectives • Examine the lived experiences of grandparents through cross-cultural student exchange. • Explore the Holocaust through personal/primary source storytelling and historical narratives. • Understand the power and impact of personal stories/biographies and historical narratives. • Reflect upon personal narratives, values, and their connection to broader human experiences. • Develop empathy and forge meaningful cross-cultural connections. • Explore the responsibilities inherent in global citizenship. Skills Developed • Social and Emotional Learning: Personal interviewing, storytelling, narrative construction. • Digital Literacy: Utilizing photography and Canva for creative expression and narrative reflection.

Communication: Engaging in cross-cultural written and spoken communication with students from the United States, Greece, Ukraine, and Israel using Padlet.

What curriculum standard(s) or requirement(s) will this lesson / project meet?

1. **NJ Social Studies Standards - 6.1.8.History:** Analyze the impact of historical events on individuals and groups.
2. **NJ Language Arts Standards - 6.1.3.:** Engage in collaborative discussions, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
3. **NJ State Standard 6.1.12.C.6.a:** Analyze the historical significance of the Holocaust and its impact on Jewish identity and memory.
4. **NJ State Standard 6.1.12.B.5.b:** Evaluate the influence of personal narratives on understanding historical events and issues.

Centropa Resources and Online Tools. Which Centropa resources and online tools will you use in this project? Be specific, and if possible include links.

- Return to Rivne: A Holocaust story (Centropa website: [link1](#); [link2](#))
- Centropa Series Season 12 Podcast: To Kill a Ghost the Kindertransport from Vienna
<https://www.centropa.org/en/podcast/season/12>

Step-by-step lesson/project outline. Use bullet points to tell us what students will do each step of this project. If participating teachers are doing different activities leading up to the final project, please indicate each teachers' lesson outline separately, and indicate the teacher for each. Add as many lists as teachers in the project.

Planned activities/schedule/milestones:

Unit Timeline and Activities

Part 1: Establishing Connections – Childhood Past to Present (September)

- Each participating educator will select **5-7 students** for the cross-cultural exchange.
- **Student Introduction Slide:** Students will create an identity/introduction slide using Canva, including their name, country, school, extracurricular activities, hobbies, and a photo.

Part 2: Grandparent Interviews – Unearthing Personal Histories (October)

- Students will **interview a grandparent** (or a close family member/friend who knew their grandparents well) using the following guiding questions:
 - Where were you born? Where did you grow up?
 - How many siblings did you have?
 - What were your parents' professions?
 - What was your favorite childhood toy?
 - Who was your best friend?
 - What historical memories do you have from your childhood (e.g., economic issues, natural disasters, discrimination, war)?
 - What/where was your "happy place"?
 - What do you remember about your parents? What experiences can you share about your great-grandparents?
 - What "words of wisdom" would you like to share?
 - Students will devise **two additional questions** to ask their grandparents.

Part 3: Visual Narratives – Sharing Grandparent Stories (November)

- Students will add to Canva presentation a photograph of themselves with their grandparent, accompanied by a summary of the interview and an essential quote (words of wisdom).

- *Note:* If a direct photo with the grandparent isn't possible, students can have the grandparent hold a childhood photo or a significant object in their own picture.

Part 4: Connecting to the Holocaust – *Return to Rivne* (January)

- Students will watch the Centropa film, *Return to Rivne: A Holocaust Story*.
- Prior to viewing, students will be instructed to pay close attention to specific details such as geographical locations and dates. The teacher will periodically pause the video to ask questions, ensuring attentiveness and comprehension.
- The teacher will create a timeline on the board outlining major years, locations, and events from the video to help students understand the sequence.
- Students familiar with locations mentioned in the video through their own family histories may be invited to briefly share their stories.
- **Discussion Questions:**
 - What were your initial impressions and feelings about the video?
 - How do children adapt to challenging circumstances?
 - Are there any connections between the video and your or your grandparents' experiences?
 - Why do some individuals act as bystanders, while others choose to stand up?
- **Padlet Activity:** Teachers will create a Padlet where students will:
 - Post a photo of themselves.
 - Respond to **2-3 posts from students not from their own country**.

Part 5: Reflecting on Resilience – *To Kill a Ghost* (February)

- Students will listen to the Centropa Series Season 12 Podcast: *To Kill a Ghost - The Kindertransport from Vienna*.
- While listening, students will draw an image that reflects their feelings, then photograph and post it to the Padlet.
- Students will **respond to 2-3 posts from students not from their own country**.
- **Reflection Questions:**
 - Are there any connections between your grandparents' experiences, your own experiences, and those depicted in the film and podcast?
 - What conclusions can you draw about the impact of historical events on families' experiences, both past and present? Write a reflective response.
 - What can we learn from the stories of survivors of the Holocaust or of the mass atrocities that have occurred since? How might their stories help us to better understand those moments of history? How might they help us to better understand human behavior?

Part 6: Project Showcase – School Photo Exhibit (March/April)

- Each participating teacher will host a **photo exhibit** in their school, showcasing the project, student work, and the experiences gained throughout the unit.

End products, outputs. *What will the students produce during this lesson/project? Be as specific as possible, and if the final product is different in each school please tell us what students in each class are producing.*

Part 1: Student Introduction Slide: Students will create an identity/introduction slide using Canva, including their name, country, school, extracurricular activities, hobbies, and a photo.

Part 2: Grandparent Interviews – Unearthing Personal Histories (October)

Students will **interview a grandparent** (or a close family member/friend who knew their grandparents well)

Part 3: Visual Narratives – Sharing Grandparent Stories (November)

Students will add to Canva presentation a photograph of themselves with their grandparent, accompanied by a summary of the interview and an essential quote (words of wisdom).

Part 4: Connecting to the Holocaust – *Return to Rivne* (January) : Teachers will create a Padlet where students will:

- Post a photo of themselves.
- Respond to **2-3 posts from students not from their own country.**

Part 5: Reflecting on Resilience – *To Kill a Ghost* (February)

- Students will listen to the Centropa Series Season 12 Podcast: ***To Kill a Ghost - The Kindertransport from Vienna.***
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Documentation. *How do you plan to document the lesson/project? (photos, videos, essays, etc.) Please send to us as soon as you have photographs, videos, or essays to share!*

The lesson will be documented through Canva slides, Padlet responses and photography exhibit

Assessment. *How will you assess your students' learning from this lesson/project?*

📄 **Part 1: Identity/Introduction Slide (Canva)**

- **Assessment:** Completion grade based on inclusion of all required elements (name, country, school, activities, hobbies, photo). Quality can be assessed for clarity and presentation.

📄 **Part 2: Grandparent Interview**

- **Assessment:** Completion grade for conducting the interview. Evidence could include submitted interview notes (even informal ones), a list of answers to the questions, or a signed parental/guardian verification confirming the interview took place. Assessment could also include the quality and thoughtfulness of the two student-devised questions.

📄 **Part 3: Grandparent Photo, Summary & Essential Quote (Canva)**

- **Assessment:** A rubric-based assessment for:
 - **Completion:** All elements (photo, summary, quote) included.
 - **Content:** Clarity and conciseness of the interview summary; relevance and impact of the chosen "words of wisdom" quote.
 - **Digital Literacy/Presentation:** Effective use of Canva for visual appeal and organization.

📄 **Part 4: Return to Rivne Video & Padlet Engagement**

- **Assessment:**
 - **Participation (Formative):** Observation of student engagement during in-class video viewing and discussion.

- **Padlet Post Quality:** teacher assessment the thoughtfulness and depth of their initial response to the video's questions (impressions, feelings, connections, bystanders/upstanders).
- **Cross-Cultural Engagement:** A rubric assessing the quality of their 2-3 responses to posts from international students, focusing on respectful interaction, thoughtful commentary, and evidence of genuine connection.

📋 **Part 5: To Kill a Ghost Podcast & Padlet Engagement/Reflection**

- **Assessment:**

- **Creative Response:** Completion and thoughtfulness of the image drawn to reflect feelings about the podcast.
- **Padlet Post Quality:** Assessment of their post including the image and explanation.
- **Cross-Cultural Engagement:** A rubric assessing the quality of their 2-3 responses to posts from international students, similar to Part 4.
- **Written Reflection:** A rubric assessing the clarity, depth, and insight of their written reflection comparing similarities/differences between experiences and drawing conclusions about family experiences past and present. This assesses historical understanding, empathy, and critical thinking.

📋 **Part 6: School Photo Exhibit**

- **Assessment:** A grade for their contribution to the design and attendance for the photography exhibit and reflection on their experiences participating in the cross-cultural exchange.

What else would it be useful for other teachers to know about your project?

This "Childhood Past and Present" project offers transformational learning opportunity for students in Greece, Israel, Ukraine and the United States. The project includes personal history, global awareness, and empathy building. The lessons could be replicated and used by teachers in all of the counties and provides the opportunity for future collaboration.