

## **Return to Rivne – A Holocaust Story**

### **A Lesson Plan using Centropa Materials**

**Teacher's name:** Hadar Vitman Baram

**Grade level:** 6th graders, EFL Band 1 (English as a Foreign Language)

**Participating school:** Plagim School – Kibbutz Hazore'a

**Subject:** English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

**Total time to teach this lesson:** Two single lessons (approx. 45–50 minutes each)

#### **Introduction**

This lesson plan is based on the **Return to Rivne** film from the Centropa archive, because a picture is worth a thousand words – and a film is even more powerful. The film makes the horrors of the Holocaust accessible to students in an age-appropriate way, enables them to identify with the characters' emotions, and creates a deeper connection to a subject that is not simple to grasp. I paired the film with the song "Afer ve' Avak" ("Ashes and Dust"), written by a second-generation Holocaust survivor, which tells the story of the poet's mother returning to her birthplace – a place that was once full of joy and life, and became a place of death and horror. This mirrors the story of the two cousins, Shelly and Raya, in the film.

#### **The film and its follow-up activities enable:**

1. Making the Holocaust accessible to children – the heroines of the film are young girls, which creates closeness to the characters and fosters identification with their feelings.
2. Enabling a deeper understanding of history – moving from dates and numbers to a human, personal story.
3. The medium of film, the song with its sand-art animation that deepens the emotional experience, and the interactive activities are all media that speak to students and allow a more natural connection to a sensitive and complex subject.
4. The activities address different areas of learning and enable teamwork, differentiated instruction, expression for all students – including those who struggle – and personal expression through a variety of creative channels.

#### **Aims:**

To help students develop an interest in history within an EFL class through:

- Learning vocabulary connected to the Holocaust and historical information.
- Developing listening comprehension and critical thinking skills by watching the documentary film "Return to Rivne" and discussing it using WH questions.
- Engaging in a digital tasks map (accessed by QR code) that includes vocabulary tasks, a short reading text, writing activity, understanding time lines and a creation task.

- Demonstrating understanding through a creation task: poster, comic strip, or written response.
- Reflecting on the lesson content through a verbal exit ticket.
- Students will be given homework to reinforce the vocabulary learned in class.

### **Assessment Statements:**

By the end of these lessons the students will be able to:

- 1. Recall and use new vocabulary from the film in speaking and writing tasks.
- 2. Answer comprehension questions about the film using WH question structures.
- 3. Complete digital tasks in groups, including the mandatory creation task.
- 4. Reflect on the themes of the lesson and express their personal response verbally.

### **Materials Needed:**

#### **Teacher:**

- A computer or laptop connected to the internet and a projector
- Dry erase markers and whiteboard
- Vocabulary slides (word - meaning - image) prepared in advance
- QR code linking to the digital activity map (projected on the board in Lesson 2)
- Presentation with information and data about the Holocaust victims - including a world map, which will have a more visible impact.

#### **Students:**

- One laptop per group (groups of 4-5 students) or mobile phones (for individual-pair work) for Lesson 2

#### **Primary Source:**

[Retuen to Rivne - Centropa Cinema \(English audio, Hebrew subtitles\)](#)

also can be presented via YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SOICFuKxBXY>

#### **Opening Activity:**

[Song: ואבק אפר - Yehuda Poliker & Yaakov Gilad \(March of the Living, Auschwitz\)](#)

## Lesson Breakdown:

|         | Time     | Brief Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Mode of Interaction             | Materials                                                                                              |
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| OPENING | LESSON 1 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                 |                                                                                                        |
|         | 8 min.   | <p><b>Warm-Up - Song &amp; Sand Art</b></p> <p>Play the song ואבק אפר (Efer ve'Avak) by Yehuda Poliker &amp; Yaakov Gilad, performed at the March of the Living in Auschwitz, with Ilana Yahav's sand art animation.</p> <p>Share the story behind the song:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• True story of Yaakov Gilad's mother - Halina Birenbaum, a survivor of Auschwitz-Birkenau.</li> <li>• Themes: the return to a place of pain; a son's concern for his mother; "Years have passed and nothing has been erased".</li> <li>• "Forever is only ashes and dust" - the fragility of existence and the destruction left by the Holocaust.</li> </ul> <p>Sets the emotional tone before we move into the historical background and the film.</p> | <p>Whole Class</p> <p>Video</p> | <p>YouTube link:</p> <p><a href="#">ואבק אפר - March of the Living</a></p> <p>Computer + projector</p> |

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| 5 min. | <b>Holocaust Background - Key Facts &amp; Map</b><br>Short teacher-led explanation with a projected world map.<br>Cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Years:</b> The Holocaust took place primarily between 1941 and 1945 during WWII.</li> <li>• <b>Victims:</b> Approx. 6 million Jews murdered - one third of world Jewry.</li> <li>• <b>Children:</b> Approx. 1.5 million Jewish children killed.</li> <li>• <b>Survivors:</b> Approx. 300,000-500,000 survivors.</li> <li>• <b>Righteous Among the Nations:</b> 28,000+ from 51 countries, recognised by Yad Vashem.</li> <li>• <b>Survivors in Israel today:</b> Tens of thousands still living - their time with us is precious.</li> </ul> | <b>Teacher Led</b><br><b>Whole Class</b>      | Presentation with world map (projected)                                 |
| 5 min. | <b>Vocabulary - Word - Image - Meaning</b><br>Teach key vocabulary using projected slides. Each entry includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The word in English</li> <li>• A supporting image</li> <li>• A simple definition in English (with</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Whole Class</b><br><b>Independent Work</b> | Vocabulary slides (prepared in advance) Students' notebooks and pencils |

|         |         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                          |                                                                                                      |
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|         |         | <p>Hebrew support for weaker students)</p> <p>Students write words in their vocabulary notebooks.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                          |                                                                                                      |
|         | 5 min.  | <p><b>Pre-Movie Predictions</b></p> <p>Show only the film title and thumbnail image. Ask students (using the frame: "I predict / I think the movie will be about..."): </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think the film is about, based only on the title and image?</li> <li>• Where might the story take place?</li> <li>• Who might the main character be?</li> </ul> <p>Collect a few responses before starting the film.</p> | <p><b>Whole Class</b></p> <p><b>Class Discussion</b></p> | Projector Film title & image                                                                         |
| BODY    | 22 min. | <p><b>Watching the Film</b></p> <p>"Back to Rivne" (English audio, Hebrew subtitles) - Centropa Cinema.</p> <p>Pause at key moments to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarify vocabulary</li> <li>• Provide historical context</li> <li>• Ask brief comprehension checks</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                        | <p><b>Whole Class</b></p> <p><b>Video</b></p>            | <p>Film link:</p> <p><a href="#">Back to Rivne - Centropa Cinema</a></p> <p>Computer + projector</p> |
| CLOSURE | 5 min.  | <p><b>Lesson 1 Wrap-Up - Impressions</b></p> <p>Invite each group to share:</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <p><b>Class Discussion</b></p> <p><b>Whole Class</b></p> | No additional materials required.                                                                    |

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| <div>OPENING</div> |          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their overall impressions of the film.</li> <li>• The moment or scene that moved them most.</li> </ul> <p>No formal writing required - this is an oral sharing moment to close the lesson with reflection.</p>                                                                                                               |                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|                    | LESSON 2 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|                    | 5 min.   | <b>Review</b><br>Brief whole-class recap of Lesson 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The song and its story.</li> <li>• Key facts about the Holocaust.</li> <li>• The film - characters, story, emotions.</li> </ul> <p>Invite students to share anything they thought about between lessons.</p>                                                           | <div>Whole Class</div> <div>Class Discussion</div> | Whiteboard Dry erase markers                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <div>BODY</div>    | 35 min.  | <b>Digital Activity - Task Map</b><br>Project the QR code on the board. Each group scans and opens the interactive activity map on their laptop.<br><b>Mandatory Tasks (all groups):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocabulary task</li> <li>• Short reading text with comprehension questions</li> <li>• Creation task - choose ONE: Poster</li> </ul> | <div>Group Work</div>                              | QR code presented on the whiteboard.<br>Laptop per group (1 per 5-6 students) QR code (projected)<br>Digital activity map (pre-prepared)<br><b>Digital Activity Task:</b><br><a href="https://claude.ai/public/artifacts/de6ab74e-e3b3-43b2-925f-b1e22942c8d8">https://claude.ai/public/artifacts/de6ab74e-e3b3-43b2-925f-b1e22942c8d8</a> |

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| CLOSURE |         | <p>/ Comic Strip /<br/>Written Piece</p> <p><b>Optional Tasks (choose at least 2 of 3):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three additional tasks are available - complete at least two.</li> </ul> <p>When a task is done, students press "I'm done" and move to the next task. Teacher circulates and monitors progress.</p> |                                            |                                   |
|         | 5 min.  | <p><b>Exit Ticket - Final Sharing</b></p> <p>Each student shares verbally:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the main message they are taking away from these two lessons?</li> <li>What will they remember?</li> </ul> <p>No written response required. A moment for personal reflection and collective closure.</p>     | <p>Whole Class</p> <p>Independent Work</p> | No additional materials required. |
|         | Ongoing | <p><b>Display</b></p> <p>Completed creative works (posters, comic strips, written pieces) will be displayed on the Holocaust Remembrance board in the English classroom.</p>                                                                                                                                                               | Whole Class                                | English classroom display board   |