

Our Stories are Stronger Than Hate



Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Define testimony
- Reflect on the personal impact of testimonies they have listened to
- Describe how stories shape and inspire their lives

Pre-VFT Activity

Students prepare for the *Our Stories are Stronger Than Hate* Virtual Field Trip by exploring the power of story. After they are introduced to the concept of testimony, students brainstorm testimonies they have personally heard as they uncover the various forms these stories can take. A class discussion helps students consider what gives stories the power to make an impression on others, inspire action, and even change the world.

Target Audience

Grades: 5-12

Procedure

Prepare: Place the labeled pieces of chart paper around the room.

1. Begin class by explaining to students that they will be exploring the power of story. If students have not previously viewed testimony from the *Teaching with Testimony* website, explain that a testimony is also a kind of story in which someone reflects on a life experience, often with the benefit of distance and time, and shares what that experience means to them. Instruct students to reflect individually on a time when they have heard, seen, or watched a testimony that stuck with them long after the story was told.
2. Bring students' attention to the chart paper around the room, and explain that stories can be shared in many forms. While some stories are heard from the mouths of friends or family members, other stories come from—or are about—people we have never met or are partially or entirely fictional. Often, these stories are told through some of the mediums highlighted around the room.
3. Instruct students to quietly rise and visit the chart paper posted around the classroom. As they do, they should write

Materials

11 pieces of chart paper, labeled each of the following:

- Movies
- Biographies & Autobiographies
- Short Stories & Novels
- Plays & Musicals
- Poems & Songs
- News Stories & Reports
- Speeches
- Blogs & Podcasts
- Videos
- Art & Photographs
- Other

the names of movies, poems, blogs, speeches, etc. that told stories that touched and affected them. Encourage students to contribute to as many pieces of chart paper as possible, but stress that it is not necessary to add to each one. Ask students to read what others have already written before they record their own idea. If they have the same thought as a peer, they should make a star next to the title.

4. After about 5 minutes, bring the class back together. Review the lists students have compiled and prompt them to consider *why* these stories were so impactful. Did the story teach them something important? Did the story help them learn something about themselves? Did it inspire them to take action in some way? Did it inspire them to tell their own story?
5. Next, engage the students in a discussion about the power of story to inspire. Ask questions such as the following to facilitate the discussion:
 - What gives stories the power to inspire others?
 - What makes a story powerful or meaningful?
 - Does everyone have a story to tell?
 - How are stories part of our human experience? How do they shape our identity?
 - How can stories change people's lives?
 - Can stories change the world? How?
6. Wrap up the discussion by explaining that the class is about to experience the power of story firsthand. As they participate in the *Our Stories are Stronger Than Hate* Virtual Field Trip, students will listen to the testimony of survivors and witnesses of genocide, as well as other accounts from young people around the country who have experienced hate. As the class hears these stories, students should think about the emotions they feel, consider questions they have, and think about connections they can make both to the storytellers, the events they describe, and the personal details they share.

Note: Leave the chart paper around the classroom for students to refer to during the Post Virtual Field Trip activity.

Post-VFT Activity

Following the *Our Stories are Stronger Than Hate* Virtual Field Trip, student groups debrief what they observed in the VFT and make connections to their own experiences. They then independently reflect on a story that made an impact on them and contribute to a class discussion in which they consider the value of testimony. Students ultimately apply what they have learned to create a plan for sharing a story that counters hate and inspires change in their community.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Analyze the value of testimonies and how they help
 - Shape how we understand the world;
 - Understand our place in it;
 - And recognize our ability to change it.
- Explain how the relationship formed between a storyteller and listener can connect both to their shared humanity.
- Describe how we all can be stronger than hate through the power of story.
- Identify actions they can take to support their communities.

Materials

- Reflect & Jot handout, one per student
- Our Stories are Stronger Than Hate handout (2 pages), one per student

Procedure

1. Begin with a small-group discussion that gives students a moment to debrief on the virtual field trip and the testimonies they witnessed. Encourage students to discuss with their peers any thoughts, questions, or emotions that are top of mind.
2. Next, provide students an opportunity for self-reflection and the chance to connect what they just watched to their own experiences. Distribute one Reflect & Jot handout to each student and allow students about 10 minutes to write independently.
3. Bring the class back together for a full-class discussion around the reflection they just completed. Facilitate the discussion with the following questions:
 - Why do you think the story you selected made such a powerful impression on you?
 - Were you compelled to share the story with others? Why or why not?

- Did the story inspire you to change or act in some way?
 - Why do you think stories are so important to us as humans?
 - Can you think of any particular stories that have struck a chord with people, bringing them together in discussion, celebration, or action?
 - Possible answers may include Hamilton, the musical; the experiences of people detained at the U.S. border, shared on the news or on social media; testimony they saw/heard on the Teaching with Testimony website; #MeToo stories
 - How can stories help us rise above hate?
4. Next, distribute one Our Stories are Stronger than Hate handout to each student. Explain that now that the class has considered the power of story, they will each be challenged to share a story that inspires positive change in their community. They may choose to share their own testimony or retell an existing story. No matter which they choose, they will develop a plan for sharing it in a way that resonates with listeners.
 5. Read through the handout's Steps 1-4 together. Reiterate that there are countless ways to bring a story to life, and it is up to students to choose a means of storytelling that they believe will tell their story best. Then encourage them to get to work!
- Note: If students need additional help brainstorming how to tell their story, encourage them to review the testimony brainstorming they completed before watching the Virtual Field Trip or the Examples of Cross-Curricular Story Connections section included at the end of this activity.*
6. Once the class has completed Steps 1-4 in the handout, assemble students in groups of three or four and instruct them to complete Step 5 together. As they listen to the ideas of their peers, they should offer suggestions on how to strengthen the storyteller/listener relationship and increase each story's impact.

Optional Extension

After incorporating their peers' feedback into their handout, students can use their plan as a guide as they develop or recreate their story and share this testimony.

Examples of Cross-Curricular Story Connections

Audiovisual Storytelling Examples:

- Photoblog: [Humans of New York](#)
- Song: [The Hamilton Mixtape: Immigrants \(We Get the Job Done\)](#)
- Podcast*: [The Moth: Strangers](#), [We Share the Same Sky](#)
- Speech: [March for our Lives](#)

- Verbal Account: [Remembering John Lewis' March on Washington Speech](#)
 - Social Media: [@LoveisLouder](#)
- *Some podcasts contain adult content, so be sure to screen your selection.

Texts

English/Language Arts

- *The Diary of Anne Frank* by Anne Frank
- *Dawn* by Elie Wiesel
- *Night* by Elie Wiesel
- *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry
- *Once* by Morris Gleitzman
- *Hidden: A Child's Story of the Holocaust* by Loic Dauvillier

Science

- *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot
- *The Road to Scientific Success (Vols. 1 and 2)* by Deborah Chung
- *Chesapeake Requiem: A Year with the Watermen of Disappearing Tangier Island* by Earl Swift
- *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate* by Naomi Klein

Mathematics

- *"Inspired by Genius: How a Mathematician Found His Way"* by John Pavlus
- *What Are You Figuring Now? A Story about Benjamin Banneker* by Jeri Ferris
- *Math Makers: The Lives and Works of 50 Famous Mathematics* by Alfred Posamentier and Christian Spreitzer

Additional Resources:

- Video: [Teaching with Testimony](#)
- [Good Storytelling at the Base of Modern Society](#)
- [How Stories Have Shaped the World](#)
- [StoryCorps](#)

National Standards

The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards

- 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.
- D.4.7.6-8: Assess their individual and collective capabilities to take action to address local, regional, and global problems, taking into account a range of possible levers of power, strategies, and potential outcomes.
- D2.Civ.14.6-8: Compare historical and contemporary means of changing societies, and promoting the common good.
- D2.Civ.10.9-12: Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interest and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.
- D2.Civ.14.9-12: Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights.
- D4.7.9-12: Assess options for individual and collective action to address local, regional and global problems by engaging in self-reflection, strategy, identification, and complex causal reasoning.

Common Core English Language Arts:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.5: Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Our Stories are Stronger Than Hate



STUDENT HANDOUT

Directions: Follow the steps below as you consider how to tell a story that inspires change.

Step 1: Choose a Story

Select a story that you believe has the potential to impact others, counter hate, and/or inspire change in your community. The story could be yours or one that you have heard in the past. Remember: Stories aren't limited to text! Art, music, photographs, podcasts, etc. tell stories too.

Describe the gist (or general idea) of the story below:

Step 2: Envision its Potential

Why did you select this story? Why do you think it has the power to impact others? What changes could it inspire?

Step 3: (Re)Imagine the Story

What details would you want to include, emphasize, edit, or add to this story in order to inspire others and/or promote this positive change?

Our Stories are Stronger Than Hate



STUDENT HANDOUT

Directions: Follow the steps below as you consider how to tell a story that inspires change.

Step 4: Prepare to Share

How could you share this story in a way that impacts listeners and inspires change?

Below, consider your audience and how you will communicate your story.

Audience

Who do you want to reach?

Brainstorm everything you know about this audience:

Communication

What form will you use to tell this story (performance, visual arts, verbal story-telling, written word, etc.) in order to have the biggest impact on your audience? Think about what form of storytelling is most likely to elicit emotion and create a sense of connection between the storyteller and listener!

What channel of communication could you use to share this story and make sure it is heard? (Ideas include social media, fliers, street art, local television, school newspaper, etc.)

Step 5: Learn from Others

- Take turns explaining the gist of your story, the change you hope it will inspire, and your communication plan.
- Give each group member one piece of positive feedback and one suggestion for how their story could form an even bigger connection with their listeners.
- Note the feedback you receive below so you can refer to it later: